



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, February 23, 2022

Day 2

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Third Session

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 Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)
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Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UC)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),
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Ellis, Hon. Mike, Calgary-West (UC)
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Frey, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
 Official Opposition House Leader
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UC)
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC),
 Deputy Government House Leader
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, Calgary-North (UC)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche

Party standings:

United Conservative: 60 New Democrat: 23 Independent: 3 Vacant: 1

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Bilous
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Lovely
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Sabir
Smith
Turton

Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply

Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon
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Amery
Frey
Milliken
Rosin
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Yao
Vacant
Vacant
Vacant

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Lovely
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Amery
Carson
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Hunter
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Reid
Sabir
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Select Special Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee

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Long
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Shepherd
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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Chair: Mr. Rutherford
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Dang
Frey
Irwin
Long
Nielsen
Rehn
Rosin
Sigurdson, L.

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Armstrong-Homeniuk
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

Hon. members, please remain standing as it is our custom that we pay tribute to members who have passed away since we last met.

Today I would like to welcome members of the Campbell family, who are present in the Speaker's gallery.

Murray John "Jack" Campbell
May 14, 1931, to December 21, 2021

The Speaker: Murray John "Jack" Campbell served three terms as the Progressive Conservative Member for Rocky Mountain House from 1979 to 1989. Born in Drumheller, Mr. Campbell graduated from SAIT to work as an electrical lineman and a construction foreman. His career then turned to farming and real estate. Mr. Campbell was active in his local community, serving on a variety of agriculture and recreational boards and associations. His time in the Legislature: Mr. Campbell admitted to enjoying, quote, the people, the travel, the situations, the questions, and the answers. He described his approach as one of perseverance and understanding. Jack Campbell passed away on December 21, 2021, at the age of 90.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask that you remember Mr. Campbell as each of you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let the light perpetual shine upon him.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration and respect there is a special gratitude that goes to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service. Today I would like to welcome some of those family members. Members of the Campbell family who are present in the Speaker's gallery, please rise as I call your name and remain standing until you have all been introduced: son of Jack Campbell, Jeff Campbell, and his wife, Lee-Ann Simmonds; step-daughter Susan Manning and her husband, John Manning; granddaughters Abby and Kate Manning.

Hon. members, also joining us in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon is a guest of the Minister of Seniors and Housing, a familiar face around the Legislative Assembly, the minister of, I think, just about everything and the former Member for Calgary-Nose Creek, Mr. Gary Mar.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements Chamber Practices during the Spring 2022 Sitting

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would like to just provide a brief statement about the daily Routine prior to us proceeding to the remainder of the Routine. I would like to inform you that my office

received a House leaders' agreement on February 18, 2022, with respect to the Oral Question Period and Members' Statements rotations. The agreement modifies the rotation to address the in-caucus composition in the Assembly since the fall sitting. The Member for Edmonton-South, who now sits as an independent, is entitled to one question per week starting with question 9 on day 4 of Oral Question Period rotation, which will be Tuesday, March 8, 2022. In addition, the member is allocated one member's statement in the first week of the three-week rotation starting February 24, Thursday. The Members' Statements rotation is outlined in the projected sitting days calendar, which was distributed to all members last week as part of my procedural memo, which I'm sure you have all read thoroughly. I will table a copy of the House leaders' agreement at the appropriate time in the daily Routine.

I would like to also inform members that we will resume the regular distribution of documents in the Chamber this session. Pages will distribute copies of bills, motions, and amendments as they are introduced. They will also resume the delivery of notes between members and collecting from members documents that have been tabled and petitions that are presented. As members can see, the pages have also resumed regular water service at each desk and will provide coffee and juice upon request following the Orders of the Day being called.

Members' Statements

Speech from the Throne

Ms Rosin: Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's throne speech the Lieutenant Governor laid out a strong vision for our Legislature to inspire hope and optimism across our province. After two difficult years Albertans are ready to move forward beyond the pandemic and into the next great chapter of our story.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is starting to feel like Alberta again. For the first time in a long time more people are moving to our province than leaving it. With lower taxes and massive red tape reduction Alberta is once again a global destination for workers, investors, entrepreneurs, innovators, and dreamers. We just had our best year of oil production and our highest agricultural receipts on record. Our economy isn't just growing; it's diversifying. Through massive investments in wind, solar, film, technology, hydrogen, and lithium Alberta's recovery plan is creating high-paying jobs in every corner of our province, including rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

This won't just be a session focused on the economy, however. This session will also focus on protecting the humanity of our people, particularly our most vulnerable, by expanding our health care, continuing care, and palliative care capacity, increasing prenatal benefits, providing supports for bereaved parents, and simplifying the adoption process. Our Minister of Education will also move forward with legislation to end once and for all the conflict of interests that allowed the teachers' union to investigate and protect its own members in cases of gross misconduct involving our kids.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans sent this government to Edmonton to get the job done, and that's exactly what we're doing. It's been a tough two years, but we have so much to look forward to. Our economy is rebounding, our finances are in good shape, and I'm confident that Alberta's best days are certainly yet to come.

Postsecondary Education

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, in the last three years postsecondaries have seen cut after cut after cut. Adjusted for inflation and

population growth, the total cuts so far have been more than \$690 million, and that's before tomorrow's budget. This has led to staff cuts, program closures, steep increases to tuition, and fee hikes for students. These cuts are felt deeply by students and right across our postsecondary sector. We must be investing in our colleges, universities, and polytechnics. An investment in advanced education is an investment in our communities, in our future, our young people and future leaders of our province.

That is why our caucus has worked hard together with students, faculty, schools, industry leaders, and subject matter experts to develop a series of proposals to strengthen advanced education. Our suggestions centre around a well-funded postsecondary system that can provide all students, staff, and faculty with high-quality education and learning environments. We would address the extraordinary tuition increases that are causing students to pile up debt. We will comprehensively review the student aid system to ensure that every Albertan has the opportunity to participate in postsecondary. We will support students in finding valuable work experience, apprenticeships, and access to digital and other work-ready skills in addition to core programming. In this environment Alberta will be best equipped to undertake world-leading research, support growth in emerging industries, and support all Albertans in developing skills they need in the labour market of now and the future.

Postsecondaries are a key factor in keeping young people here in the province. Last year Statistics Canada reported that for the first quarter since 1988 we saw a net out-migration of 18- to 24-year-olds from Alberta. We must address this challenge. That's why we're proposing the future leaders council to work collaboratively to keep young students learning and staying here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40 COVID-19 Related Restrictions Removal and Postpandemic Reflections

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, as we begin the spring session of 2022, I want to take this opportunity in my first member's statement of this session to address the removal of provincial restrictions that take place just days from today. The past two years have been one of the greatest challenges for many within our province, and most importantly the impact on our youth is a toll that we have yet to fully understand. I hear stories from new moms and dads of deep concern that their two-year-old children cry when they see individuals removing their masks. Examples like this sit heavy on my heart.

The need for restrictions to end and for a return to normal is abundantly clear. Unfortunately, for many this has not come soon enough. But is the end of restrictions enough, Mr. Speaker? Is merely returning to normal enough for Albertans? There is now an apparent and growing concern that the normalization of the use of emergency powers is something that elected officials must address. As well, as Alberta MLAs we must address the mistakes and shortcomings of the past two years. Moving forward, the most important conversation is: how do we prevent a similar situation in the future? I am confident in the move to remove all provincial COVID guidelines and to allow our society to begin to heal from the impacts of COVID.

I also stress the need for everyone to put behind us the differences that COVID has created. We must remember that we are a community, a community that needs each other. More importantly, I feel that each and every one of us in this Assembly and all politicians across Canada need to address the changes that will provide confidence to all Canadians on how we move together forward. We must acknowledge the division this has created among

Albertans. We must listen to those concerns and make changes to build a better path for the next generation, because the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Government Record

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've spent a lot of time recently knocking on doors in Mill Woods and asking my neighbours about issues that matter to them and their families. I've heard from families affected by the health care crisis this government has mismanaged and worsened, from parents with great concerns about the UCP's unsupported and untrusted new school curriculum, and I certainly heard concerns about exploding utility and insurance costs at almost every door. As I walked around and talked to more and more people in Mill Woods, a theme emerged. We are all suffering from what I call conservative chaos.

Many of my constituents expressed concerns about the recent breakdown in law and order and this government's tolerance for and even encouragement of those who chose to unlawfully set up blockades, blockades that reduced quality of life, freedom of mobility, and had real economic cost for fellow Albertans and Canadians. While I understand and respect the right to protest, it was seeing members of this own government caucus cheerleading and even participating in these blockades that reinforced for me that what we are seeing is conservative chaos. While the Legislature was out of session, Albertans were outraged to learn that the Alberta Justice minister called a chief of police after receiving a ticket, and that member still sits on the government front bench today. It's no wonder Albertans are rapidly losing faith in this UCP government's ability to keep the peace and to ensure law and order are maintained.

So on behalf of the people of Edmonton-Mill Woods I'm calling on this Premier to end conservative chaos. Alberta is looking for real leadership, something it hasn't had since the last election and something it needs now more than ever. It's time to reinvest in Alberta's public health care, reinvest in Alberta's public education, scrap the unsupported and untrusted UCP curriculum. It's time to get Albertans' skyrocketing bills under control, and it's time to end this conservative chaos.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat is next.

Federal Single-use Plastics Regulations

Mrs. Frey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all that's been going on, it's easy for things to get lost in the shuffle. For example, did you know that consultations for Trudeau's single-use plastic ban end on March 5? To recap, this plan aims to ban the manufacturing, import, sales of everything from checkout bags to stir sticks. Many disability advocates note that necessary items like plastic straws are already in scarce supply. Interestingly enough, research from the Columbia University Climate School found that plastic bags actually use fewer resources than their other options. In fact, for a plastic bag's pollution to be zeroed out, a reusable bag would have to be used 7,000 times and a paper bag 40 times. When does that happen, Mr. Speaker? All in all, this is just another left-wing fad.

Without being forced by government, businesses already use less carbon-intensive options like biodegradable cutlery, take-out containers, and even straws. Local greenhouses have switched to cardboard packaging alternatives, and local recycling agencies have stepped up in huge ways.

Trudeau's plastic ban is yet another direct attack on Alberta's energy industry, a leader in responsible petrochemical production,

a leader in plastic production. Alberta's government has taken steps to support the work that Albertans have already started, and Environment and Parks continues to work on extended producer responsibility plans to reduce plastic waste at the source, a very worthwhile objective. In addition, throughout the pandemic we relied on single-use plastics heavily, and they will continue to play a role in our recovery. From face shields to rapid tests to masks and other PPE, petrochemicals protected our communities and our most vulnerable. Right now, however, medical grade plastics are already in short supply.

The federal government is making headlines for all the wrong reasons, Mr. Speaker, and I don't need to tell you that. It's hard not to see that they have more pressing issues than a desire for plastic straws at a restaurant. We all agree that we need to take care of our environment. Pollution is a very real problem that needs serious solutions, not needless virtue signalling.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a statement to make.

Health Care Workers

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start today by thanking the hard-working, selfless health care workers in our province for their tireless work over the last two years protecting the health and saving the lives of Albertans. They fought on the front lines of a deadly pandemic that put pressure like we've never seen on our health care system and on them. They've had to put up with threats of violence, protests at their place of work, attacks on social media, and actual physical assaults simply for doing their jobs.

Sadly, they've also had to endure this while battling with a government that constantly undermined them, belittled them, mused about drastic cuts to their pay, accused them of holding knives to the throats of Albertans and more, a government whose incompetent management and lack of leadership nearly collapsed the health care system, caused tens of thousands of urgent surgeries to be cancelled, and caused wait times for ambulances to reach unacceptable levels.

No government in our history has done as much damage to our public health care system as the UCP, and now they're trying to blame the very workers who are left to clean up their mess. The Premier in recent days has ranted about union-run hospitals and talked about how more privatization would help address the huge backlog his government created. Mr. Speaker, unions don't run hospitals; they protect and support the tens of thousands of Alberta health care workers who do. Those Albertans are heroes, not the villains that this Premier and his government are trying to paint them as.

Only days ago our leader stood with two nurses who have seen the impact that this pandemic and the UCP government have had. They talked about the burnout, the stress, the long hours, the lack of time off or rest. They talked about how health care workers have given their all to protect Albertans. That's why it's deeply insulting to all Albertans to watch a Premier who attacks our public health care system and the incredible, hard-working people who kept it afloat after his government's incompetence nearly collapsed it.

To the Premier. During this pandemic health care workers saved countless lives, protected and provided support to countless more, and are owed our eternal gratitude. They deserve better than his insults and attacks. They deserve an apology.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Viking Cup

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the winter break many hockey games were played all around Alberta and the world, including just last week with the Canadian women's hockey team winning the gold medal at the Olympics. In the Camrose constituency we love our sports, especially hockey. In the past we have played host to an international hockey tournament called the Viking Cup.

A constituent in Camrose and former MLA, LeRoy Johnson, has written a book titled *The Viking Cup*. In the early days Camrose Lutheran College was challenged to compete in a hockey tournament with international teams. In 1980 it was their turn to host. This feat was accomplished with the international exchange program. During its 26-year lifetime the NHL successfully drafted 400 players from this talent pool. With his book Mr. Johnson has created a historical account of events with a vast collection of old photos and good memories. To borrow a quote from John Short, who prepared the forward for the book:

Here, you will read and sense the comfort of small, rural Camrose, Alberta, blended with the size and requirements of numerous nations, including Russia at a time when the world's political Cold War was an everyday reality. International politics, pure athletic competition, and large dollops of goodwill came together and created an event worth holding and a story worth telling.

I'm proud of the work LeRoy has done to preserve such a valuable piece of Camrose history. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for our community.

Speaking of communities, we have seen so much happen over the past few months. With the REP program gone and restrictions lifting, I look forward to getting back to normal. Alberta is well on the way to recovery, thanks to the Alberta recovery plan. As Alberta's swagger returns, everyday Albertans are top of mind, with record investments last year and a focus on getting Albertans back to work. I look forward to seeing what this year will bring to Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

Private Health Care Services

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, public health care is our greatest gift to one another as Canadians, a fundamental right that we cherish, yet for our Premier it's something that he wants to carve up and hollow out. We've been through two years of stress, hardship, and heartbreak in our hospitals, Albertans who lost loved ones, Albertans still waiting in pain. Doctors, nurses, and front-line staff are burnt out. Retention is a challenge, never mind recruitment. To the Premier: who exactly does he believe is going to get to staff his private, for-profit hospitals?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, Alberta is spending more on health care than ever in our history. Alberta is the second-biggest spender on health care per capita in Canada. Alberta has more doctors and nurses working in our hospitals and system today than at any point in our history, yet we have faced very serious capacity constraints through COVID that we must forthrightly address. That's why in last year's budget this government added nearly a billion dollars to speed up surgeries through the Alberta surgical initiative. Tomorrow the Minister of Finance will make an announcement about another historic investment, and that started

today with the largest ever hospital renovation program, \$1.8 billion, in Red Deer.

Ms Notley: When it comes to Red Deer, no one will believe it until long after they've seen it with these guys.

Mr. Speaker, we do know that we need more capacity, but padding the bottom line of private operators is not the solution. It only leads to less integrated care, more patchwork in delivery, and higher costs as the surgical system becomes beholden to profit motives. A B.C. study found that knee surgery in a for-profit clinic cost three grand; in a public hospital, \$900. Why doesn't the Premier stop the misinformation, stop attacking health care workers, and start investing in our public, front-line health care supports?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on the Red Deer hospital, in 2017 she got a report from AHS saying that there were serious shortages. She got a report saying that people were dying because of the lack of a cath lab in Red Deer, and you know what she did as Premier? Absolutely nothing. Not one cent for additional health care capacity in central Alberta. Today we made the largest ever taxpayer capital investment in the history of central Alberta, the largest ever single investment in a hospital renewal program, \$1.8 billion to \$190 million over the next three years to increase hospital capacity there by 54 per cent. But why was the NDP missing in action?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, we committed to that hospital at the beginning of 2019, and then the Premier did a few months later. Then the year after there was no money, and the year after there was also no money, just press releases. Everyone in Red Deer understands that the only thing they know how to do for that hospital is print press releases, and they have no trust that they can count on the Premier to deliver better health care in their city.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, they had the wheel for four years and not one cent invested in that hospital. Thanks to the hard-working central Alberta Conservative MLAs fighting for this project and thanks to this government getting our finances back in order by growing the economy, we can afford investments like this. When it comes to contracting out surgeries, I want to remind her that the NDP approved 42 private, chartered surgical facilities, was adding 40,000 private surgeries to Alberta every year, 15 per cent of the total. Apparently, it's fine when the NDP does it, but it's privatization when we do.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition. Second set of questions.

Government Policies and Cost of Living

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is budget day, but we know that the most important budget is the family budget. Under this Premier families have been hit with too many fee and tax hikes to count. With inflation at an all-time high this Premier's sneaky tax grab and his freeze on low-income benefits make things worse. Alberta families will lose an average of \$400 every year while seniors lose \$250, and an Albertan on AISH, the most vulnerable among us, loses \$1,000. To the Premier: will he reverse these bad decisions in the budget, or will he keep picking Albertans' pockets?

Mr. Kenney: What a question from the Premier who brought in the single largest tax hike in Alberta history, Mr. Speaker, the NDP carbon tax, that we repealed as Bill 1. Now, what crocodile tears to hear her raise concerns about the high cost of energy and of gas when she thinks that's a feature and not a bug. That's why the NDP

loves Justin Trudeau's carbon tax backstop. Why? It forces up the cost of heating your home and filling up your gas tank. The NDP wants to punish people for doing things like that, but we are opposed to those carbon taxes.

The Speaker: I just might remind both members to direct their comments through the chair. The member or the Premier using directly "he" or "she" creates the sense that it is a personal attack that either of you may be making on each other, and I know that wouldn't be the case.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, most of what the Premier just said is not true, but if he wants to play the blame game, fine. Who hiked tuition on students? He did. School fees on parents? That's him, too. Property tax hikes? That's because of his cuts to municipalities. Car insurance? He removed the cap on premiums. Power prices? Three times higher than the cap our government had in place. The Premier can't deny it. His reckless decisions have led to massive costs for Albertans. Will the Premier act now and reverse any of these bad UCP decisions that have hammered household budgets?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we did reverse the NDP cash grab, their carbon tax. We did fight their friend Justin Trudeau's carbon tax all the way to the Supreme Court with six other provinces. But here's the problem: the biggest government cost driver on the cost of living now is the carbon tax. It went up by another 10 bucks on January 1, and they want to do it again and again and again. They are aligned with Justin Trudeau wanting to move it from \$50 a tonne to \$170 a tonne. We will fight that every step of the way to try to reduce the cost of living on Albertans.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about utility bills. Last week, when the associate minister was asked about an Albertan's \$1,200 bill, his answer was to blame that poor woman for not asking for price protection. Seriously? Albertans should not be choosing between the power bills and the grocery bills. We want to talk about what's rising? How about a 300 per cent increase in electricity bills because they removed the price cap that was protecting Alberta families. When are you going to do something for those families?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons for higher electricity prices was the NDP's fiasco on the Balancing Pool, where because of their ideological zeal to shut down inexpensive and reliable forms of power production – guess what? – they passed on a \$1.3 billion bill to Alberta electricity ratepayers. I've got news for you. In the days to come we'll be keeping our platform commitment to release an independent audit into the NDP electricity Balancing Pool fiasco. It's going to throw a spotlight on how they drove up electricity prices.

The Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Coutts Border Crossing Blockade

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, our largest border crossing was blockaded for 18 days. Not only did it blockade emergency vehicles and damage our economy to the tune of nearly a billion dollars; it also threatened public safety in Coutts as it contained an extremist cell stockpiling weapons. Simple question. Does the Premier believe it was okay for members of his caucus to support, participate in, attend, and negotiate with those blockading Alberta's economy and plotting violence? If not, will he remove those MLAs from his caucus today?

Mr. Kenney: Of course, the question is false, Mr. Speaker. Nobody was negotiating with these individuals. I was absolutely clear that the law should have been enforced, and ultimately it was by the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, a member of the Legislature visiting constituents to hear their concerns is actually their job. I know the NDP doesn't believe that, and like Justin Trudeau they regard everybody – everybody – involved in all of these protests as just a bunch of Nazis and deplorables. It's that kind of language that has inflamed a combustible situation and is completely irresponsible. [interjections]

2:00

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, on January 29 the Member for Taber-Warner attended the blockade at Coutts. On February 1 the Premier said that he was, quote, concerned but that the member had apologized and wouldn't go back. For the next week the blockade stole \$40 million a day from Alberta's economy, but on February 8 – guess what? – that same MLA went back and called them inspiring on the same day the Attorney General called them illegal. To the Premier: why is this MLA still in his caucus?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the real question is: why didn't the NDP respect the operational independence of the RCMP? Why day after day did they shout, demanding immediate enforcement action, when the RCMP was in possession of intelligence of an extremely dangerous and combustible situation? All I can say is thank goodness the NDP wasn't in office during that situation because, like their friend Justin Trudeau, they would have made a bad situation much worse.

Ms Notley: Well, speaking to members of the police, the MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland openly posted a request to law enforcement to consider disobeying orders, orders that actually flow from laws made by democratically elected members of this House. Right as that MLA was encouraging sedition, RCMP seized body armour, 13 rifles, and high-capacity ammunition stockpiled in a plot to murder officers. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: how on earth is the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland still in this caucus? What in heaven's name is he thinking?

Mr. Kenney: More deceit and division from the NDP. He did no such thing, Mr. Speaker. He called on law enforcement officers to respect their oaths, and you know what their oath is? To uphold and defend the law, and that's exactly what RCMP members did with great care and precision to deal with the situation at Coutts. Meanwhile the NDP is onside with Justin Trudeau's invocation of the successor law to the War Measures Act. The NDP used to stand up for civil liberties. Now they just lie down for Justin Trudeau like a rug.

Premier's Leadership

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we don't have to wonder why the Premier is defending these MLAs who were supporting illegal occupiers and blockaders or why he's making public health decisions based on his politics. It's because the Premier is weak and desperate and facing a leadership review he knows he may well lose. He's so scared that rather than working to address the many, many issues facing this province, he's dispatched his top and most senior staff member to campaign for his job. To the Premier: why do the lives and livelihoods of Albertans always come second to your issues?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I never saw the NDP so concerned about what Conservative political staff are doing. I can tell her this. This government tomorrow will present a moment of historic importance in this province, demonstrating the progress of our platform commitments, the Alberta recovery plan, and an amazing Alberta turnaround story. I know the NDP leader. She's angry. She's angry that we're lifting restrictions. She's angry that six-year-olds aren't being forced to wear masks. She's angry that Alberta's government is standing up against the invocation of virtual martial law. Albertans support the forward focus of this government.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the people who are angry are the 20,000 Albertans waiting for surgery, the 30,000 people in Lethbridge with no family doctor, the 32,000 Albertans who've been looking for work for over a year, the hundreds of thousands of families who can't pay their car insurance or their power bill. Why doesn't the Premier understand that those issues matter more than his leadership campaign, and why did he send his most senior official in his office to focus on his future rather than what Albertans are looking for?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what Albertans are looking for is economic growth, and what they're getting is a government that has led the country in economic growth last year and is projected to do so again this year. A hundred and thirty thousand net new jobs created last year, record investments across our economy, unprecedented diversification, the finances coming back in order: none of this would have happened if the NDP had continued their reckless spending, their job-killing taxes, their burdensome red tape, and their antibusiness attitude. Alberta is back on track.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's recap. The Premier who signed a public health guarantee is expanding private health care, the Premier facing a massive surplus won't stop raising costs on families, the Premier who preaches law and order allows his own MLAs to blockade the economy, and the Premier with a million problems is only focused on one, saving his own job. So here's a question to the whole front bench: will anybody who thinks that the Premier's office's biggest priority should be saving the job of the Premier stand up and say so?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, that NDP leader: she's angry. She's angry still that Albertans fired her after the last election. She's angry that Albertans didn't agree with her carbon tax cash grab. She's angry that this government is not imposing a hard and endless lockdown on this province. She and her friends in the Federation of Labour and the Teachers' Association are angry that five-year-olds are not being forced to wear masks indefinitely. Albertans are happy to see these restrictions lifted, to see this economy recovering, to see a government that's keeping its word.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is next.

Road Construction and Maintenance in Fort McMurray

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all acknowledge that the oil sands are a key driver of Alberta's and Canada's economy, creating jobs and tax revenue, supporting social programs and infrastructure projects across the province and the nation. Unfortunately, we don't necessarily feel we get our fair share of government reinvestment in Fort McMurray. I still drive 190 kilometres on a single-lane highway to go home. To the Minister of Transportation: in this upcoming budget how much will you be investing in ensuring that

our road infrastructure is taken care of considering the economic contributions from this region? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for this question. Public safety is a top priority for Alberta's government and is considered in every single decision we make. Priority is given to highways with higher volumes, including our economic corridors, and that includes Alberta's oil sands. Budget 2022 will be tabled tomorrow, but I can tell you that Alberta's government will continue to invest in road safety improvements across the province.

Mr. Yao: It is given that, Mr. Speaker, the freeze-thaw cycle affects our roads every year, creating kilometres of pothole-ridden highways. Compounding the situation is the fact that so much heavy machinery traverses these highways, further damaging the roads. I drive these highways, and my vehicle is getting absolutely destroyed by the sheer size of these potholes and ruts as I drive back and forth between Edmonton and Fort McMurray. Can this government give me assurances that these highways will be maintained? Do they hold these contractors accountable and ensure that they do a good job?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Transportation has and will continue to invest in highway maintenance. Highway conditions are closely monitored to ensure a safe and reliable transportation network. That includes having crews filling potholes, crack sealing, and line painting. Thank you to highway maintenance contractors for the work they do to keep Albertans moving safely on our roads.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, it is given that road infrastructure is vital to the prosperity of a region, allowing access to resources as well as services, and as an escape route when the occasional wildfire passes through an isolated community. During the wildfires of 2016 lives were at risk because we only had one escape route out of the city, highway 63. In 2017 in Portugal 62 people died under very similar circumstances on the highways. Can the minister tell me if they will be investing in or at least investigating investments in road infrastructure for Fort McMurray?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, as someone who worked in the oil and gas industry for over 20 years, I'm very cognizant of and sensitive to the importance of the oil sands to our province, and my government colleagues would agree. Alberta Transportation is investing in critical infrastructure that northeastern Albertans can rely on. My department is in the designing phase of a twinning project on highway 63 north of Fort McMurray. We hope to have more to announce this summer. We have also undertaken extensive paving projects in the region over the last few years worth \$27 million.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has a question.

Government Policies and Cost of Living

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week Albertans can expect to hear the Finance minister crow about his fiscal genius when the budget is tabled. But the truth hurts, and the fact is that Albertans know that with oil prices where they are, a traffic pylon could balance this budget. Rather than unseemly gloating and swaggering, will the Finance minister explain whether he will use this opportunity to invest in Alberta families, or will he continue to add to the cost of living as he has done since taking office?

Specifically, will he take action now on out-of-control electricity bills? Now.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

2:10

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the hon. member; the Finance minister is brilliant. As the member knows, the budget will be presented tomorrow by the Finance minister, and it will be a good budget for Albertans. My prediction is that the only Albertans that will be really unhappy are the ones across the aisle, because they don't put Alberta first. On this side of the aisle we do.

Ms Phillips: Given that under this government Albertans have dealt with a sneaky income tax hike, higher property taxes, higher school fees, higher insurance costs, higher electricity bills – the list goes on – and given that for the last two years it's been the UCP MO to reward their friends and insiders with billions while Alberta families watch their cost of living rise, will the Finance minister admit that the billions he's given away to the already wealthy have done nothing to help ordinary people and that that is why his Premier remains so deeply unpopular and no one trusts this government?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, people distrusted the NDP government so much that they fired them after one term. You know what? When the hon. member talks about ordinary Albertans, you know what would help them pay their bills? A job. Their business being successful. This government has put policies in place that have brought in record investment, high numbers of job growth. Those are the things that allow Albertans to pay their bills. It happens under this government. It never would have happened under the NDP. They made it worse and worse and worse, piling on costs and showing disrespect for job creators. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Phillips: Well, given that a good way to test the minister's theory would be to call the election now and given that balancing this budget does not have a single thing to do with any decision made by this Finance minister, will the Finance minister rise where the Speech from the Throne has fallen and commit to action on cost of living, solving real problems like electricity and car insurance, and commit that this one-time windfall will actually be invested in our people and province for the long term? Or is it just short-term politics to get the Premier through his April leadership review? Albertans want a real plan.

Mr. McIver: The hon. member thinks that the Finance minister isn't concerned with balancing. Apparently, she agrees with Justin Trudeau that the budget will balance itself. Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. On this side of the House we understand that. Our Finance minister has worked very hard and diligently to put a responsible plan in place, supporting Alberta's families, growth, jobs, investment, all of the things Albertans want, all of the things we're concerned about on this side of the House, and the things that the folks on the other side never cared about, which is why they got fired after one term. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Red Deer Regional Hospital Expansion

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost exactly two years ago the Premier stood in the Red Deer regional hospital and

promised \$100 million to redevelop it, but there was only \$5 million for that hospital in the entire 2020 four-year capital plan. The promised \$100 million didn't show up in the 2021 capital plan either. The UCP was back in Red Deer today, but Albertans know they can't be trusted. The Premier has never delivered on a tiny fraction of any of his promises in 2020. Why on earth would a single Albertan or the residents of Red Deer believe him today?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. I was very pleased to be part of the announcement today, a historic announcement in Red Deer, \$1.8 billion for a new hospital, and I thanked the folks at AHS, our front-line health care workers, who have been working incredibly hard in doing the detailed budget, the plan for actually increasing capacity. We know that we need to increase capacity. We made a commitment in this government to increase capacity. We made that commitment today in Red Deer, and we're going to make that commitment to Albertans and do it across the entire province.

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that it's lovely that this minister also got a chance to reannounce the same thing that the government didn't follow through on but given that when it comes to the Red Deer hospital, the Premier said in 2020 that the bottom line is that construction work will begin on the expansion refurbishment of the Red Deer hospital next year, in 2021, and given that that construction work did not start in 2021 – as recently as December Alberta Health had no idea when it might – and given that the UCP broke their promise to the people of central Alberta, why should anyone believe this new pack of promises that they're claiming to make today?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased that as part of this \$1.8 billion historic announcement – and this is the largest amount announcement, the largest infrastructure project in the central zone in the history of health care and actually in the history of all infrastructure projects of the government in the central zone in the history of the province – we announced that this project will provide up to 570 beds. That's an increase of 200 beds; 54 per cent. This announcement – and we confirmed today about three more operating rooms and a cath lab. We will provide better services for Albertans in health care.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government can wrap itself in its promises but it's clear to Albertans that these emperors have no clothes, given that the Red Deer hospital is only a few minutes' walk from the hotel ballroom where UCP members will gather in six weeks to decide whether or not to remove their leader and given that the Premier is so desperate for votes that he's sent his own chief of staff away on unpaid leave to find them, isn't it true that this Premier is simply repeating the same promise that he broke and failed to follow through on two years ago in a desperate bid to save his political career?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This historic announcement that we made today, \$1.8 billion for the Red Deer regional hospital, a commitment that we made – as indicated by the Premier, the other side didn't make such a commitment, but we made this commitment. Not only is it \$300 million over the next three years, but the commitment on the books, \$1.8 billion to deliver on the

infrastructure project, is about our commitment to deliver increased capacity in health care for our entire province. This is the start, and you'll hear more about this tomorrow in our budget. We are going to deliver on surgeries. We're going to deliver on better access for Albertans because that's what Albertans deserve, and that's what they're going to get.

Hydrogen Industry

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is coming back stronger than ever. Throughout 2021 our province saw billions of dollars in investments. Our government is focused on diversifying our economy to support up-and-coming industries like hydrogen and carbon capture while reducing carbon emissions. Many of these investments were made in the capital region and in Alberta's Industrial Heartland. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity: what do these kinds of investments mean for Albertans in the capital region in this new year?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is absolutely correct. We have seen an incredible amount of interest in the Industrial Heartland. We have seen Air Products. We've seen ATCO and Suncor. We've seen the largest private-sector investment in 15 years: Dow Chemical. These are mortgage-paying jobs for Albertans. And do you know what the NDP had to say about these investments? Absolutely nothing. The silence was deafening.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that we see increasing investments in various industries – some of these industries are brand new to Alberta – and given that hydrogen has played a significant part in our economic diversification and will place Alberta as a leader in emissions reduction, can the minister elaborate on how investment in hydrogen will benefit Albertans in the short and the long term?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. While the opposition has proven that they are agnostic to investment, I am proud to say that we are not doing that on this side. We have embraced the hydrogen industry because we know it's going to be a 2 and a half trillion to 11 trillion dollar industry by 2050. It's going to create tens of thousands of jobs for Albertans. It's going to diversify our economy. It's going to create royalties for the government. I look forward to revealing more information as we continue to roll out the hydrogen road map in the very near future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Alberta's hydrogen road map came out in November 2021, outlining a plan to increase clean hydrogen production, increase exports, and expand the use across the province and given that Air Products will build the world's largest net zero hydrogen energy facility in the capital region, to the minister: what is the total capital expenditure that this project brings, and how many jobs will be created right here in the capital region?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I am thrilled to tell members of this House that the expected capital investment for Air Products is \$1.3 billion. We anticipate 2,500 skilled trades during peak construction. This project is so exciting. They're actually going to be using autothermal reforming. It will capture 95 per cent of the carbon emissions from this facility. It's a made-in-Alberta technological advancement that will help create generational wealth for Albertans.

2:20 Calgary Downtown Revitalization

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, the government claims that yesterday's throne speech offered a vision for Alberta as it comes out of the pandemic and charts a course for the future. Well, you wouldn't know it if you're a Calgarian. Calgary was mentioned one time in the speech – once – and that was the Calgary cancer centre, which, to be clear, the NDP government funded after a decade of Conservative neglect. Will the Minister of Finance explain why he has no plan for Calgary's future? Why hasn't he created any jobs for the people of my city, and why has he failed to provide any plan to revitalize the downtown?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, the hon. member may be spending too much time in Edmonton, because if he spent any time in Calgary, he would notice that beside the cancer centre there's a little thing called the ring road under construction. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of good-paying jobs. There's the green line LRT, that the government's committed to. Listen, it's all good that he wants to support Calgary, but he may need to pay attention to what's happening there. My advice: go home. Have a visit. Look around. You'll see lots of good stuff being done there.

Member Ceci: Given that it was the Minister of Finance who claimed that it wasn't his job to revitalize Calgary's downtown and given that this government has stalled on major infrastructure projects like the Calgary green line, which, by the way, would transport Calgarians downtown, and given that the Premier is a representative of Calgary himself and has sat by and done nothing as the unemployment in the city topped all major cities in Canada and we saw record vacancy rates in downtown Calgary, my question is simple: will somebody on that side of the House apologize to the people of Calgary for failing them over and over?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member actually finds time in his busy schedule to visit Calgary, where he lives, he might also note that the Deerfoot needs fixing, and our government has committed to a major project to do that. It's well known. For someone complaining about nothing happening, you can hardly look around from the top of any hill in Calgary without seeing more than one major project that this government is performing right now. I guess it'll probably hurt the hon. member's feelings when we see the budget tomorrow, because there's lots of support for Alberta projects and for Alberta families, including Calgary.

Member Ceci: Given that Alberta's NDP is working on a strategy to bring new life into downtown Calgary and given that our proposal will include funding for building retrofits, a renewed focus on affordable housing, and a push to establish new faculties and a postsecondary campus in downtown Calgary and given that the UCP government has produced nothing even close to a plan despite having a full year and all the resources of the public service at their disposal, will the minister of economic development commit to

reading my proposal when I release it next week and adopting the ideas since he can't come up with anything original himself?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm out of breath talking about all the things this government is doing in Calgary and area. The downtown is obviously always a support. It's historically been a driver of economic activity. Our government is well aware of that. We will not take advice from the other side. The biggest thing they did was to promise \$10 billion worth of stuff just before they lost government two and a half years ago, none of which was funded, none of which would have been done. No promises were kept. We've cleaned up the mess. We got things better, on the right track, which they never did.

Government Policies and Women

Member Irwin: For women across the province the throne speech was yet another disappointment. Women in Alberta are powerful pillars of their communities as advocates, caregivers, business leaders, and so much more. Shamefully, this UCP government continues to repeatedly treat women as the most vulnerable in our society, women in need of saving. We, the NDP, know that as women thrive, society thrives, the economy grows. We acknowledge the critical role that women play. We're listening to Alberta women. Why aren't the UCP, and why are they ignoring the lived realities of women?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Status of Women.

Ms Issik: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's interesting. I could have sworn that I spent the entire summer doing nothing but travelling the province and listening to women, listening to their lived experiences. Then do you know what I did? I came up with a plan to deal with issues that women face every day, like appointing a parliamentary secretary to deal with elder women issues, to deal with women in STEM. That's what I've done, and that's what I'm going to continue to do. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. When the Speaker stands, you're welcome to wait, and then I'll provide you the time remaining to conclude your answer once I can hear your answer.

The minister has eight seconds remaining.

Ms Issik: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've listened. I've worked a plan. I'm going to continue to work a plan to deal with the lived experiences of women in this province. I'm going to continue to do it.

Member Irwin: Given that women are looking for concrete action – they're not looking for committees; they're not looking for parliamentary secretaries – and given that there are countless women who need support in our province and many of them are still being ignored by the UCP and given that AISH and income supports under the UCP have declined and that the costs associated with children only increase after giving birth, to the minister apparently responsible for status of women: why is this government only providing nominal support to prenatal mothers, and why are they refusing to provide support, resources, solutions for low-income women and parents when they need the help the most?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Status of Women.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm guessing that perhaps there was some gap in somebody's memory somewhere where we missed the entire announcement about child care in this province.

Our Minister of Children's Services put together an amazing deal that has helped parents to make sure that child care is available to every single parent in the way families need it. It's an Alberta plan. She worked hard on that plan. I can't believe it seems to have slipped their memory.

Member Irwin: Given that that's an excellent segue, let's talk about child care. We know that child care has long-term positive impacts for workforce participation, for the economy, for education outcomes, and given that we lost 20 per cent . . .

The Speaker: I would remind the member – and I know that it's the first day back after a break – that the preamble after question 4 is not allowed. I think it's difficult to make the case that starting your question with "That is a really great segue to talk about something else" isn't a preamble. I appreciate that you might disagree, but that's not correct. You're more than welcome to continue your question without a preamble.

Member Irwin: Given that we lost 20 per cent of our child care workers in the last few years due to low wages, especially in areas like Fort McMurray, that saw wages decrease by up to \$1,000 per month by this government, to that same minister: does she agree with the Minister of Children's Services that the low-income workers in this sector, many of them women, don't deserve the same wage security that workers in other provinces are getting?

The Speaker: That was much better.

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about our made-in-Alberta child care plan any day and compare it to their record and their plan, which would have left out 70 per cent of those licensed child care spaces across Alberta. We listened to parents. We listened to operators. There is \$300 million earmarked to support educators. We have been rolling out this plan. Child care fees have been reduced by half already for parents in every single licensed space right across this province, not just centres or spaces of our choice like the members opposite chose to do. Why? Because we listened, we learned, and we're rolling this out right now. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Hospital Emergency and Obstetric Services in Northeast Alberta

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I recently received an e-mail stating that the Cold Lake emergency room will be closed for 45 eight-hour time slots due to physician shifts needing coverage between now and March 31. In addition, Bonnyville is losing their obstetrics department because of a shortage of nurses for the entire month of March. My constituents are worried about the inconsistent coverage in the ER, and they are worried about expectant mothers being unable to deliver their newborns close to home. To the Minister of Health: what are we doing to address the current and severe shortage of ER physicians, nurses, and anesthesiologists in the northeast?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Emergency room disruptions are an all too frequent reality in rural and remote parts of our province. Rural doctor coverage is a problem across the entire country and something that we are taking head-on. I can confirm that at Cold Lake

nursing staff have been on-site providing triage and assessments. EMS emergency calls have been rerouted to the surrounding health care centres to ensure local residents continue to have access to emergency services that they need. Meanwhile AHS continues to work to secure locum coverage and recruit additional doctors to the Cold Lake health care centre. We are working on this, and we will deliver on it.

2:30

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Minister, for the answer there. Given that Cold Lake has continuously seen shortages in ER doctors and given that their current compensation for doctors is being negatively affected by the hospital being classified as urban despite their 293-kilometre distance from the Edmonton metro region and given that the Ministry of Health recognizes Cold Lake as rural enough to permit the department as eligible for rural education and supplement an integrated doctor experience program, to the minister: where are we at with the redesignation of the ER department in Cold Lake hospital from urban to rural?

Mr. Copping: Thank you to the hon. member again for the question on this topic, and I want to thank the hon. member for his support of the RESIDE program. As I announced a couple of weeks ago, RESIDE will provide 20 medical residents per year for the next three years for health care in 15 rural communities across Alberta, including Cold Lake. RESIDE is part of our \$90 million commitment to recruit and retain rural doctors in Budget 2021. Now, our review of Cold Lake's ER department is ongoing, Mr. Speaker, but I want to commit to the member that we will keep him and the residents in his community aware of any decision on this matter, and we are committed to providing service across the entire province, including . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the rural, remote, northern program is in place to ensure that all Albertans receive proper medical care in the right place and at the right time and given that Cold Lake is 293 kilometres from Edmonton and that their variable fee premium is currently at 9 per cent and a community only 146 kilometres from Edmonton receives 21 per cent and given that Cold Lake's ER department is currently struggling to provide the care my constituents deserve, to the Minister of Health: what steps are we taking in regard to the variable fee premium to ensure Cold Lake and Bonnyville residents are receiving proper care by making them more attractive in terms of recruitment?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows, we're providing \$57 million through Budget 2021 to directly compensate physicians who practise in underserved areas in the province and, particularly, northern Alberta, and that's part of one of the most generous rural recruitment and retention programs in the entire country. Now, under the rural, remote, northern program high-percentage premiums are in place to attract physicians to more remote communities based on a number of factors, including the availability of GPs and specialists, proximity to regional centres, and proximity to Calgary and Edmonton. The more remote a community, the higher the premium. We'll continue to look at the premiums along with the ER designation . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

Teacher Retention

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, a recent survey revealed that a third of Alberta's teachers probably won't be teaching in our province next year. Two years of the pandemic, mishandled by an unsupportive and uncaring government, has left them exhausted and anxious. Teachers are seeing cuts to the education budget, unmanageable class sizes, and a failure of this government to prioritize the safety of staff, students, and their families during a global pandemic. Will the government admit that their attacks on public education and teachers are to blame for this morale and staffing crisis?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I disagree wholeheartedly with what's just been said. In fact, we have supplied school divisions with over a billion dollars of supports so that they could address the pandemic. We continue to supply supports for our students and our teachers, and we recognize the invaluable work that our teachers have been doing each and every day. They have the best interests of their children at heart, and we value our teachers, and I just can't say enough good things about them. In fact, we will continue to support our teachers and our schools to the highest level.

Ms Hoffman: Given that many teachers are finding it unbearable to work with this UCP government, like Patricia Mosby, who says that even on the hardest day she still loves her job but that for the sake of her own physical and mental health she will be leaving Alberta, and given that there are many reasons teachers like Patricia are feeling disrespected by this government – like having to pivot between in-person and online, losing their educational assistants, managing COVID with no supports, paying for classroom supplies personally – will the minister admit what Albertans already know, that the UCP can't be trusted with public education?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the ATA and the NDP's claims are based on a survey where approximately 1,300 K to 12 teachers, representing only 2.8 per cent of 46,000 teachers in Alberta – a very small sample. Of that percentage that was asked, 16.4 per cent of respondents indicated that they are retiring, approximately .5 per cent of all teachers in the province. This is in keeping with what happens in retirement each and every year.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, given that that scientifically sound, peer-reviewed survey shows that a third of teachers have lost faith in serving this minister, this UCP government, and given that teachers feel disrespected every day by this government, who tries to seize their pensions, force a disgraceful curriculum on them, underfunds classrooms, ignores concerns about safety – and still these teachers are professionals. They stand up in front of their classrooms each and every day with calm confidence, a smile on their face, because that's what kids need. Today is Pink Shirt Day. We're supposed to stand up to bullies, so will the government apologize for the bullying that they've done to so many teachers and their profession?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I could say the same to the member opposite, but I won't.

This was a poll survey of a self-identified group of teachers who indicated that they will participate in surveys from the union, so this does not represent a random sample of teachers and does not paint an accurate picture of the more than 46,000 teachers in our province who do an amazing job each and every day and who I have heard

from directly thanking us for the great work that we're doing. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

AISH and Income Support Indexation

Ms Renaud: The added cost pressures of inflation are hitting Albertans with the least money the hardest. Rising costs, from utilities to groceries, are the difference between being able to pay for a place to live or not. For so many people receiving AISH and income support, this is the reality. The NDP government indexed benefits to inflation so people could meet their needs. The UCP pretended to support this, the current Premier promised he would never cut it, but the Premier and the UCP broke that promise as soon as they could. Will the minister of social services commit to tying benefits to inflation so all Albertans have a fighting chance?

Mr. Luan: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government continues to help Albertans with permanent disabilities to meet their daily needs and help them live independently and reach their full potential. At about \$1.3 billion the AISH budget is the highest in Alberta history. The monthly AISH benefit of \$1,685 is the highest in the country. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Luan: Shame on the opposition; they can't behave themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the \$1,685 monthly AISH benefit is the highest in the country. We are very proud of the strong stand we took in this government. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. I see lots of finger pointing across aisles from various individuals. I can assure you that that rarely helps decorum.

Ms Renaud: Given that high oil prices provided the UCP with an opportunity to present a balanced budget tomorrow, given that the most vulnerable in this province have never really had a voice in this government – in fact, the Premier went out and gloated about cutting AISH in his first budget and has never apologized since – and given that while the Premier continues to gloat, when factoring in the cost of living and inflation, his broken promise will cost Albertans on AISH nearly \$1,000 a year by 2023. This isn't a funny, laughing matter. I don't know what the government finds funny. Will you reindex AISH?

Mr. Luan: Mr. Speaker, sometimes it feels like the opposition is falling on a deaf ear. Not only will this government continue to be there, to protect the most vulnerable, but also we will create every opportunity to help vulnerable Albertans to reach their full potential. As we unveil the budget tomorrow, stay tuned. There is more good news for Albertans.

2:40

Ms Renaud: Given that the UCP's ridiculous, stale talking points of AISH and income support are profoundly false and all the stats they throw in mean absolutely nothing when poverty and homelessness increase in this province, to the minister: why does your government continue to ignore calls and pleas of the most vulnerable in this province, who simply want to pay their rent, put food on the table? Why are Albertans with disabilities living in poverty still and are continually ignored by this government?

Mr. Luan: Mr. Speaker, what's ridiculous is that the opposition never understand the fundamentals. When we increase our economy,

when we have wealth added to Alberta, when we have the money to help the most vulnerable: those are tangible ways how we protect most Albertans. I will ask the opposition to stay tuned until we release our budget tomorrow. We have more good news on the way for Albertans.

The Speaker: That concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of the Routine.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River has a statement to make.

Prime Minister of Canada

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canadians are watching. They are watching as their own Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, plays political games and brinkmanship and cynical politics with our political and parliamentary institutions. The truth is that I can't use the kind of language my constituents are using in the constituency about the Prime Minister; it's unparliamentary. To be honest, it's, appropriately, words that rhyme with "trucker." Never in a million years would I imagine living in a Canada where leaders call their own citizens, simply because they disagree, racist, misogynist, Nazis. Never could I imagine those Members of Parliament sitting in the Chamber of our House of Commons in Ottawa listening to that same Prime Minister accuse Jewish opposition members of standing with those waving swastika flags. Embarrassing and inappropriate, Mr. Speaker. These are not the actions of a leader, and Canadians are starting to catch on to Justin Trudeau's game.

The Coastal GasLink suffered yet another extremist attack on the pipeline and its equipment. We hear nothing from the Liberals and the Prime Minister. Is it not worth condemning as well? Are these oil and gas workers who are threatened not worthy of acknowledgment from our Prime Minister? Clearly, the answer is no. Mr. Trudeau has no interest in supporting Canada's most prominent industry.

Canada's economy continues to inflate like a balloon, and Justin Trudeau is losing support and doing nothing to stop it. Alberta has the solution, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Alberta is the solution. Our oil and gas industry is the beating heart of Canada's economy, and it is what is going to fix our problems. It would be best if the Prime Minister stopped trying to kill it every single day when he woke up.

While Mr. Trudeau has long passed his opportunity to support Alberta and support our oil and gas industry and support the economy that is going to bring Alberta back and Canada back from the edge of oblivion in this inflation that is creeping up, I do look forward to a day when he is not Prime Minister, when we have a leader that can bring people together, empower Canadians, unite Albertans to the rest of the country, knowing that Alberta will be the recovery, and lead this country forward. Mr. Speaker, we've had enough.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

University of Calgary

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Did you know that according to research Infosource's latest list of top 50 research universities for the first time the University of Calgary is ranked in the top five of Canada's best research universities? This is an important acknowledgement of the great work that's taking place at the University of Calgary, especially as Alberta is diversifying and growing its economy. The university is helping to pave the way. In

addition, the university's Faculty of Kinesiology was ranked number one in Canada for the third consecutive year. I am excited that the dedication and excellence at the University of Calgary is being recognized nationally.

In just five years Creative Destruction Lab, housed at the Haskayne School of Business, has helped participating ventures generate well over \$1 billion in equity value. Programs like this support the diversity and innovation we see in our job market and our economy.

Lastly, I wanted to talk about the monumental partnership between the University of Calgary and Mphasis to launch the Quantum City Centre of Excellence. This initiative will create up to a thousand jobs and solidify Calgary as a hub in the emergent quantum sector.

In my riding of Calgary-Klein there are 577 students, 5,184 alumni, 351 staff at the University of Calgary. I wanted to thank the hard work and diligence of students and staff throughout the last two years. Undoubtedly, there have been challenges, and they have overcome these obstacles, stronger and more resilient than ever. I'm excited to see the impacts that the University of Calgary students and new graduates will continue to have on our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has the call.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future I'm pleased to present on behalf of the committee its report on the presentation by Radicle Balance on December 9, 2021. I would like to thank Radicle Balance for taking the time to present to the committee. This report will be posted on the committee's public website shortly.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide notice pursuant to Standing Order 42 that I will be moving a motion at the appropriate time which reads as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly acknowledge (a) the importance of the border crossing at Coutts to Alberta's economic security; (b) that aiding the blockade of the border crossing at Coutts from January 29, 2022, to February 15, 2022, represented, according to the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, a direct loss to the economy, particularly in the agriculture, oil and gas, manufacturing, forestry, and retail sectors, of \$44 million per day in trade, for a total of almost \$800 million; (c) that the government of Alberta has the authority and resources to prevent and dismantle a border blockade of an economic corridor such as the one at Coutts, including resources that can be mobilized through the Provincial Operations Centre under the authority of the Minister of Municipal Affairs; (d) that the government of Alberta, particularly the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General and the Minister of Transportation, did not carry out any of the following actions in respect of the border blockade at Coutts: (i) apply for a court injunction in respect of any activities associated with the blockade, (ii) invoke the Emergency Management Act for the purpose of marshalling resources, and (iii) use existing authority under the Traffic Safety Act to revoke commercial licences of those participating in the blockade; (e) that on February 5, 2022, more than a week after the Coutts border blockade began, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, being the minister responsible for the Alberta Emergency

Management Agency, rather than take other actions available to him, wrote to the federal ministers of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness requesting personnel and equipment to assist the government of Alberta in moving the blockade.

Be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly call on the government of Alberta to apologize to the people and businesses of Alberta for failing during the period of January 29 to February 15, 2022, to effectively mobilize resources or take any effective action to disperse, relocate, or otherwise abate the border blockade at Coutts.

Be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly order (a) that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities meet for the purpose of questioning the members of the Assembly representing the electoral divisions of Taber-Warner and Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland in respect of their activities during the border blockade at Coutts, which may have encouraged or otherwise abetted the disruption of trade and traffic at that border crossing and (b) that these members appear before the standing committee to answer those questions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have the appropriate number of copies when needed.

2:50 **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika and Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(3) I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of the 2022-2023 main estimates schedule.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 20(1) of the Auditor General Act it's my pleasure as the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to table the following report from the office of the Auditor General: Alberta Advanced Education Report on Post-secondary Institutions 2021.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings?

Seeing none, I do have a tabling today. I rise to table six copies of the House leader agreement which was signed February 18.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: Hon. members, at the appropriate time the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall gave oral notice of Standing Order 42. He will have up to five minutes to briefly describe the urgency for such a motion. Having said that, given the short period of time between his providing of notice and the distribution of the motion, I will allow the pages about 30 seconds to make sure that the appropriate members of the House have that motion, and then I'll call upon the member momentarily.

Hon. member, we just need you to provide your original signature on the document. Then once we have that back, we'll proceed.

Mr. Sabir: That was with a black pen but the original.

The Speaker: Sorry. I couldn't hear you. Go ahead. You can rise and speak.

Mr. Sabir: They wrote with a black pen, but I think I signed one with this pen. But there was the original copy included with that one.

The Speaker: Okay. One second.

It's fine. You can sign that document again, and it will become the original. Then we'll proceed.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Coutts Border Crossing Blockade

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I provided the notice of Standing Order 42, and it was my first opportunity to rise in this House and provide notice in relation to what happened starting on January 29. There was one of the most significant incidents that I have witnessed as a member of this House, where a group of people, in the name of protest, blocked Alberta's major economic corridor. Those blockades were related, and they also happened elsewhere in Canada – on the Ambassador Bridge and in Ottawa – and essentially the whole country was shut down by these protesters. That was a significant event, and I would say that that was a significant attack on our democracy, where the writ of the state was challenged by these illegal blockades, and we had a government sitting here in Alberta whose caucus members were participating in and cheering on those illegal activities.

That's why it's important that we debate this motion and that this Assembly order those members to come before the Families and Communities Committee and explain why they think that it was okay for them as part of the government caucus to cheer on those illegal activities that cost Albertans \$44 million to \$48 million every day, that caused significant problems for many Albertans who were trying to move around, who were trying to exercise their Charter rights, mobility rights. People were not able to attend their family funerals because of those activities, and members in the government caucus were cheering on those activities.

It's important that we talk about this blockade, that we talk about what we could have done differently, and that we talk about what resources we have available should there be similar blockades in the future, because those blockaders have not gone away, and this Legislature, as the representative of Albertans, needs to take that threat seriously and discuss this. That's the first opportunity that I had to raise this issue. I hope that all members of this Legislature take this motion seriously and stand up for Albertans who were impacted by, threatened by these illegal blockades and activities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 42(1.2) a member of Executive Council has up to five minutes to respond to the request for the SO 42. I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and address what's before us. The member opposite said lots of words, and none of them indicated any need for urgency on this matter. It's an important matter. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that the blockade is gone and has been since February 14. It is now more than a week after that, so there clearly is no urgency.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say the important things that Albertans and Canadians had to think about during this period of time. One is that the Charter rightly protects Canadians' right to protest things that they may be happy or unhappy about. I hope we can all agree on that. That is what happened, but that's not the only thing that happened. Also, there were illegal activities: blocking roadways, blocking border crossings. None of that is okay. Those two things need to be kept separately. I hope all members of the House can agree that the right to protest is protected. The right to block a road is not part of that right to protest. When you block a road, you're no longer protesting; you're breaking the law.

The police dealt with it. Some may complain that they didn't deal with it fast enough, but the fact is that it's certainly my opinion that the RCMP did their jobs. They obtained, as I understand it, some information about caches of firearms and intentions to do harm to police officers and others, for which I understand now there are

charges laid, and the courts are the right places to dispose of those charges, not this important room.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue, but the blockade is gone. I guess there's no guarantee that somebody in the future won't decide to try to re-create it, but I think the police and many others have learned what they can from what occurred. None of us can predict the future for sure, but I believe the police are better situated to prevent a reoccurrence at this point than they were a month or two ago, before this all happened.

So, Mr. Speaker, I won't be supporting the debate of this. The issue has been resolved. I certainly don't want to downplay how important this is. Millions of dollars of trade were stopped daily. Our government certainly took it seriously, worked co-operatively with the police. Thankfully, due to the professionalism of the police and the activities that they took, the arrests were made on February 14. On that day there was an agreement to take down the blockade, and that's what happened.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 42 is a request for unanimous consent to do away with the remainder of the business of the Assembly to proceed immediately to the motion as proposed.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

2. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain bills on the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(a).

[Government Motion 2 carried]

3. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(a).

[Government Motion 3 carried]

Committee Membership Appointments

5. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
 - A. on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that Mr. Dach replace Ms Sweet;
 - B. on the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills that Ms Sweet replace Mr. Dang;
 - C. on the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services that Ms Gray replace Mr. Dang;
 - D. on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities that Mr. Dang replace Ms Pancholi;
 - E. on the Select Special Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee that Mr. Sabir replace Mr. Dang.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(h). Are there any members that would like to provide additional comment, question, or engage in a debate this afternoon?

Seeing and hearing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

Child and Youth Advocate

6. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Select Special Child and Youth Advocate Search Committee tabled on February 14, 2022 (Sessional Paper 974/2020-22), and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Terri Pelton be appointed as Child and Youth Advocate for the province of Alberta for a term of five years effective April 1, 2022.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Is there any member of the Assembly that wishes to join in the debate?

Hearing and seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Government Motion 6 carried]

Evening Sitings

7. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) and for the duration of the 2022 spring sitting of the Third Session of the 30th Legislature the Assembly must meet to consider government business on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings unless, during Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or before 6 p.m. on a sitting day, the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that no evening sitting is required on that sitting day.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Government Motion 7 is not debatable pursuant to Standing Order 4(1).

[Government Motion 7 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Amendments to Standing Orders

8. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:
Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, effective July 1, 2021, be amended as follows:
 - (a) in Standing Order 5
 - (i) in suborder (1) by striking out "20 Members" and substituting "10 Members" and
 - (ii) by striking out suborder (2) and substituting the following:
 - (2) If, during a sitting of the Assembly, a question of quorum arises, the Speaker must, on determining that a quorum is lacking
 - (a) order that the bells be sounded at the beginning of a 15-minute interval and during the last minute of that interval,
 - (b) on conclusion of the 15-minute interval, conduct a count of the

- Members present in the Chamber, and
- (c) if, on conclusion of the count the Speaker determines that quorum is still lacking, the Speaker may declare a recess or adjourn the Assembly until the next sitting day.
- (b) in Standing Order 7(8) by striking out “or member of the Executive Council” and substituting “or member of the Executive Council or Deputy Government House Leader”;
 - (c) in Standing Order 52.01
 - (i) in suborder (b) by striking out “Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women” and substituting “Culture and Status of Women” and
 - (ii) in suborder (c) by striking out “Agriculture and Forestry” and substituting “Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development.”

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These changes update the names of two government departments which changed last year. It clarifies that the Deputy Government House Leader is able to extend the daily Routine past 3 p.m. if needed. It also clarifies the process for a quorum call, and by extending the division bells to 15 minutes, it allows MLAs in the Federal Building the opportunity to return to the Chamber.

Finally, we are making a permanent reduction in quorum to 10. This change comes as a result of the temporary changes that had been made during COVID to reduce quorum and allows greater flexibility for MLAs to take a phone call while the Chamber is in session. I would note that this reduction isn't out of place with other Canadian jurisdictions. For example, quorum in B.C. is 10 out of their 85 MLAs, Ontario quorum is 12 out of 107, and the House of Commons is 20 out of 338.

In closing, I would ask all members to support these changes.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Government Motion 8 is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(j). I see the Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On Government Motion 8 I want to speak specifically to section (a), the changes to quorum, as the Official Opposition has no concerns with sections (b) or (c). But the change to quorum, I think, deserves a little bit of discussion because, as the member opposite has put it forward, the change to 10 is a result of COVID and provides greater flexibility. When we are thinking about quorum, when we are thinking about the business of this place, quorum should be an accurate reflection of the number of people you can reasonably expect to attend a regular meeting. Quorum should be based on: how many people does it make sense to have in this space in order to make good decisions that are well rounded and balanced?

3:10

The Official Opposition objects to quorum being reduced from 20 down to 10 and suggesting that it could be tied to COVID. Specifically, there's a serious issue with trust when it comes to this government. The change in quorum is going to allow this government to have fewer MLAs attending in this Chamber to conduct business.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, in his introduction of Government Motion 8 the hon. minister did talk about the quorum levels in other provincial jurisdictions, and that is appropriate to enter into this debate, but he neglected to mention that none of the other provincial jurisdictions

allow for 15-minute bells so that someone in the Federal Building counts as the quorum for the business of the Legislature here. That is completely out of step with the Canadian norm. That is out of step with what other provinces – B.C. doesn't have a 15-minute bell for MLAs to be doing work somewhere else and then to arrive here at the last moment for a vote.

Having, out of 87 elected members, 10 as the minimum for important decisions – when we think about the bills that are debated, when we think about the budgets that are passed in this Chamber, I believe strongly that Albertans expect more from their elected representatives and do expect to be able to count on their elected representatives to be here. I am certainly not suggesting that all 87 members must be in the Chamber at all times. Quorum is important as a minimum, but we also, I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, have not had issues with quorum even during COVID, so the logic as to why this government is now choosing to drop that from 20 down to 10 does not make sense to me and again brings up the issues that I and many of my constituents in Edmonton-Mill Woods and others across Alberta have when it comes to trust in this government. Making this change really, in my view, lets the government caucus focus on things other than the business that's happening in this Legislature during the times that we are sitting.

As a member of the Official Opposition I certainly do not support the change to this quorum rule that we see here. As well, Madam Speaker, I would suggest that all members would reject Government Motion 8 because, again, there has not been a good reason for this change to be put in and the government seems to have deliberately ignored the change and the difference in Alberta of having that 15 minutes. We are literally talking about 10 people being in this room for a vote or a decision. Why do we need 15 minutes to achieve that minimum threshold? Is the government intending to have all of their MLAs work in the Federal Building while the Legislature is sitting? Like, it just logically does not make sense. Again, I certainly object to the way that this change has been brought forward into this House.

I believe I've made my main point, which is that I don't trust why this government has brought this forward. They have not provided a reason for why the 15-minute bells are so different here than other jurisdictions. The minister did mention people coming from the Federal Building. Why the government does not have 10 MLAs here in the Legislature Building, especially when so many of their Executive Council members have offices in this Legislature Building, raises great questions for me. So I would recommend that all members vote against this change, and certainly I know that all members of the Official Opposition will be voting against this change, Government Motion 8.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to join the debate on Government Motion 8?

[Government Motion 8 carried]

Physical Distancing in Legislature Chamber

9. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:

Be it resolved that despite Standing Orders 13(7), 16, and 32(4)(b) and for the duration of the 2022 spring sitting of the Third Session of the 30th Legislature a member may sit in and speak from any seat that has not been assigned to that member provided that the member immediately relinquishes that seat upon the request of

 - (a) the member who has been assigned that seat or
 - (b) the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to join the debate on Government Motion 9?

Seeing none, I will call the question on Government Motion 9 as moved by the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs on behalf of the hon. Government House Leader.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mr. Williams moved, seconded by Ms Lovely, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LL.D, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to first note that I am happily and proudly a monarchist. I believe in our constitutional monarchy that we have in Canada and that Alberta has a direct relationship with Her Honour the Queen, as outlined in the BNA Act and our Constitution. The reason I'm so proud, contrary to what many of my good republican friends think, having a monarch does not mean a dictatorship or a tyrant relationship. Throughout the history of the English-speaking world, beginning with Alfred the Great and then moving on to Magna Carta in 1215, the truth is that the entire history of our Constitution as we have it today is passed down with rule by consent between the monarch and the people.

I think it's important that we understand that it's a relationship of service between the monarch, developed into now service for us in this parliament and especially for Executive Council, to the people. It's my pleasure now to be able to address what Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor brought forward to us in this speech and why I wholeheartedly support it and encourage the Chamber to support the speech as well.

Now, one thing more important than the other is this government's focus on average families and making sure we fulfill our commitment to look out for jobs and the economy. That, I think, was laser focused in that speech right from the very start. While the pandemic has disrupted many plans, it's clear our province has persevered and is back on a path of normality, balance, and prosperity. Alberta's nation-leading economic recovery, highlighted in the throne speech, can be felt in every corner of our province, including a northern constituency like mine, where families are going back to work in high-paying jobs after two challenging years.

In my riding in particular oil and gas but, even more so, forestry is our largest employer. It isn't just back to normal; it's booming. We have not seen forestry levels like this for the price of lumber in, I think, the history of the industry. That's good, that we see that our biggest problem now is a demand on labour. I think that that is something that I'm happy to try and deal with. It's a challenge in my constituency, and I know many of my colleagues are dealing with the same. It's much better than the problems we had in years past, especially under previous governments, where unemployment was much higher, and they had no pandemic to deal with. This economic boom is what is going to be creating jobs, and that is going to put a roof over the head and food on the plate for average families in each of our constituencies. No matter who you voted for,

no matter what part of the province you're in, this tide will raise all boats with the boom that we're seeing.

But the recent good news in our energy sector isn't just for the sole reason of a vastly improved economic picture that I expect to see in this budget next week. As the Finance minister said, to get into the position we're in today, the government has had to bring its per capita spending in line with other provinces and keep its net debt to GDP ratio under 30 per cent throughout the pandemic and re-establish a time frame to get back to balance in our budget. I'm very optimistic with what the Minister of Finance is going to be bringing to this Chamber tomorrow for us to be voting on.

I'm sure it wasn't easy, Madam Speaker, to get to this point. I know the minister has worked hard, but I think Albertans are about to see the payoff of the hard work that they have put forward, collaborating with rule by consent with our government to make sure that we are fiscally responsible and that we are looking after the interests of Albertans today and into the future. This is something we never would have seen under previous governments, which lost hundreds of thousands of jobs, including in my own constituency. We saw in the year the first budget came out in 2015, under the NDP, Carmon Creek effectively shutting down. We saw Shell pull out of my constituency and across the province because of decisions made by former governments.

3:20

The truth is that Alberta has had a tough couple of years going and has been battling over the last two years, but it's starting to feel like our provincial motto again, *Fortis et Liber, strong and free*. Mr. Speaker, this isn't coming out of nowhere. The truth is that our strength comes from our freedom. The truth is, for example, that our economic freedom, the decisions we made early in our term to support industry, to support businesses that employ families, that work in our communities are exactly why we have the strong, booming economy that we're seeing right now.

It has been carefully built on a foundation of strong conservative principles that embrace Albertans' entrepreneurial and free spirit and launch new ideas into fruition. We saw more businesses open up in the downturn than we've seen in many, many years past because Albertans are entrepreneurial and cannot be held down. Their strength and their freedom are built into who they are, hard-wired into our nature.

The Alberta being built today is reminiscent of the past and recent province of Alberta where it was a global destination, either at our foundation or even just a few years ago, before the NDP, where immigrants, entrepreneurs, skilled workers, and job seekers and dreamers alike all sought out the province of Alberta to get the best education with the best opportunities for their families and the best chance of being able to have a lifelong career in the industry of their choice and continue to provide for themselves and for their communities.

As our Lieutenant Governor said, for the first time in a long time more Albertans are coming to Alberta than leaving it. I think this is a sign, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is a sign that Alberta is back and we're moving in a direction where people want to be a part of our economy and our communities again. If I don't know what's a signal of our growth and that we're doing something right in this government – other than that, I'm not sure what could be a better advocate for our province and for our government's policies.

Alberta is already leading Canada in economic growth, but I believe the legislation initiatives outlined in the throne speech will only further accentuate and enhance the momentum we're currently seeing in our economy. This is more than just a session focused on economic prosperity, Madam Deputy Speaker, however. The throne speech has confirmed that this upcoming sitting of the

Legislature will have a strong focus on the dignity of every single Albertan and particularly those who are most vulnerable.

One of my favourite quotes from Karol Wojtyła says: we will be judged by how we treat the most vulnerable. I know members opposite have a deep heart for the vulnerable, and I know we would disagree sometimes on how to achieve that, but I think it's important that this throne speech highlighted, above almost any other aspect, the dignity of every single individual Albertan and the fact that the vulnerable deserve the protection and support of our government and our society.

Among other things, I'm very humbled that the report that I helped produce in my review of palliative and end-of-life care was used to bring forward initiatives. The truth is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that when I started that report, I was asked by the Minister of Health to begin a month-long review to see where we're at, not only to fulfill the \$20 million above and beyond any previous commitment, that this government made in its election campaign for palliative and end-of-life care, but also provide a road map for where we should go in the future and how we can highlight this.

Madam Deputy Speaker, every single Albertan or a family member is going to pass through palliative or end-of-life care. It is not a sexy, hot topic and is not the kind of thing that is going to get many front-line headlines, but the truth is that it is important. It is important for those individuals who go through it to have dignified and loving, charitable, caring support for them as they pass away. It's also important for the family members to know that those supports and offers are there.

I did not know when I started that my own mother was going to be diagnosed with a very aggressive form of terminal cancer halfway through the report. I did not know before I finished the report that my mother was going to pass away. I was very, very grateful to have what we have in Alberta, being a leader internationally when it comes to palliative care.

I mentioned this at the news conference with Minister Copping, how important it was for me to make sure that we got this right. I think that no matter who you are, you should be supporting access to charitable, loving, and dignified care in our end-of-life and palliative care to make sure there are options for families, for caregivers, for support of their family members who are passing away.

It will come for us all, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a sad reality, but it's a true one. It's important that we as a province and a society face that head-on. That's why I'm so happy that the government has taken the initiatives that I worked with with the minister and, more importantly, with thousands of average Albertans who work in the field who are almost exclusively volunteers in many of these communities, especially when it comes to hospice centres and societies across the province. It's important that we heard them and listened to their key recommendations, and the Speech from the Throne, that the Lieutenant Governor offered, did highlight a number of these and two of them in particular, one of which is early access for palliative care.

The reason that's so important is because no matter why someone is feeling sick, we have to know that their pain can be alleviated. No matter what you have, we have the ability to be able to alleviate the most aggressive pain. We can do the work that we need to do to make sure everyone can pass away in comfort and do so with dignity intact. It's important that we continue moving forward on this initiative, Madam Deputy Speaker, because without this we will end up in a society where we're not caring for the most vulnerable, those who often are dealing with end-of-life crises, who have life-limiting illnesses, who will end up passing away perhaps not knowing that these services are there, not knowing that the

province and our medical community can continue to support them even in their difficult days.

I hear members opposite talking about those on AISH. This applies to every single Albertan. These are supports that'll be accessible no matter who you are, and that's rightfully so. It needs to be that no matter who you are, you know you can have access, because the fear of passing away in pain and alone, without support, the fear of being unwanted is one of the saddest things that I contemplate in my job as an elected official that I had to consider head-on. But the good news is that for Albertans who otherwise would feel sad and alone and isolated, because of the supports that we can give them, because of the volunteer networks and the average Albertans there, they can move forward knowing that they have the comfort provided by the province. I'm very, very grateful for that, and no matter who you are, what side of the House you're on, I believe that those individuals and their family members will be grateful for that as well. It's important that we recognize that no matter what we do, we have to be held accountable to the Albertans we serve.

Another important initiative brought forward in the throne speech, Madam Deputy Speaker, is bereavement leave, currently offered for a limited time, three days, but now is going to be expanded for those women who have had miscarriages or stillbirth. A few weeks ago, when my hon. friend the Member for Sherwood Park presented this as a private member's bill, I rose in the House and I spoke to how important it was. I had just, by providence and chance, gotten off the phone with one of my constituents. This young woman had had seven miscarriages, and she had the fear every single month that she and her husband might not have a child. She so desperately wanted to be able to raise her son or her daughter, hold and kiss and love that individual child. She couldn't. She also was afraid that maybe she would be pregnant but that it would end in another miscarriage, and that was unbearable. She was afraid to continue trying to have a child for all the hardship and pain that she had.

This is probably one of the most emotionally difficult situations that any young mother can find herself in. It is hardship month after month, either being afraid that there is no child or that if there is a baby, that unborn baby is lost. We have to recognize the dignity of that baby but also the mother who suffers. We have to recognize that that is real loss, and I think not only is it important that we pass this law but that we in this Chamber all speak to those young mothers, recognize that they are mothers, that nothing can take that away from them no matter what, that they are mothers even if they've had miscarriages, that those are just as real losses as any other. I think it's important that this bill passes to afford respect to those young women, and I'm so very happy that it seems we'll have bipartisan support for this, from what I could gather in the last debate.

Further to this, I am pleased to see that the 20-day limit for unpaid military reservists for leave will be removed as reservists often train for longer periods of time. This government is very happy to support our armed services, and I know every single member that I've spoken to is very, very supportive of the work that they have done, both past and present, to ensure that Canada is the great country that it is. I know that it is also the envy of many other countries in the world, and it's in large part due to the sacrifices men and women have made to defend this country, including, especially, those volunteer reservists, who maintain their day-to-day lives, who still raise their children, who work in their communities, who participate in civil society but, on top of that, know that they have a service to our country as a reservist.

I'm proud to know that the government will be tackling the scourge of human trafficking, which is tantamount to modern-day

slavery, Madam Deputy Speaker. By acting on recommendations from the Human Trafficking Task Force, this work will be completed by implementation of recommendations from Alberta's Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It is so important, especially for those of us who have communities with high numbers of First Nation and Métis, that we do tackle this problem and we tackle it seriously. They have been deeply harmed and grieved because of the violence committed against their individual women and their communities at large.

3:30

We need to take action as a province and defend these individuals. Yes, at times they're vulnerable, and we have to take the responsibility as a province to look after them. My riding, Peace River, has one of the highest First Nation populations in the province. I know that without initiatives like this, my riding will suffer because of that more than any other.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The government is also smart to move forward with right-to-know legislation, which will allow more information to be shared with the public about individuals on bail, probation, and parole and criminals pending deportation, as well as Clare's law, which will allow Albertans to be informed if their partner has a violent criminal past. This is an incredibly important initiative, again, for protecting women and those who are vulnerable. Now, those two are not always overlapping groups, but all Albertans at some time can be vulnerable, whether it is a mother who has a miscarriage, whether it could be an elderly or sometimes even a young individual with a life-limiting illness that needs palliative care. That could be an individual who is stuck in a difficult position and is faced with sexual violence in my communities.

The work that this government is doing, announced in the Speech from the Throne, prohibiting and fighting against female genital mutilation, a barbaric, tragic practice that has unfortunately made its way into our province in some communities – we must fight against it. We must recognize the dignity of those young girls who are being abused and who are being tortured and manipulated, to be perfectly frank, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important that we stand up and we voice that in this Chamber loudly and clearly, united, that we as Alberta's Legislature and the government, with its legislation, oppose that kind of barbaric practice.

As you know, my constituency has also been affected by the scourge that is rural crime, increasing all the time, spiralling out of control. I'm happy this government is bringing forward legislation that will broaden services and supports for victims of crime and support new regional approaches so that my constituency and my communities can find tailor-made approaches that will work for our communities. We do not need to have a one size fits all across the province. This is not just an issue in my own constituency, Mr. Speaker; all of my colleagues, many rural and urban both, fight with this problem. These problems are, sadly, unique and widespread, but with the kind of tailor-made solutions that we're offering, we are hoping to see solutions that will be able to reduce rural crime and bring security and comfort to communities that are afraid of the kind of violence that can happen and the threat to their private property. A government has no higher quality than protecting the lives of its people, and the throne speech has confirmed that this session will have a strong focus on the dignity and lives of Albertans.

As my time here comes to an end, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it's been an honour to speak to the Legislature on behalf of the people of Peace River. It's been an honour to move this thanks of the accepting of the throne speech from Her Honour Salma Lakhani, the

Lieutenant Governor of our province. After these two difficult years that we've been through as a province, I want families and businesses across this province and in my riding in particular to know that we are moving forward, that better days are ahead, that this Conservative government cares about your dignity and your communities. We will fight for, yes, freedom, economic and otherwise. I will continue to do that, but we also care about the dignity of you and the social lives that you have. We want them to be improved. We care about the most vulnerable in our communities.

This Speech from the Throne articulates a broad vision of Alberta moving forward that is inclusive and welcoming to those who come, whether it's for economic opportunities because of where they're coming from or fleeing tyrannies and a lack of economic freedom or because they come here for the opportunity to practise their faith and religion as they see fit. Whoever they are, Alberta will be that place and a beacon of hope for the rest of the country to lead forward with these values that are infused into every single Albertan and infused into our past, the past that has made us and brought us to where we are today.

It may be the beginning of a new chapter in Alberta's story. I believe it is, but we have to understand that it's one chapter in a longer book. My grandparents moved to Canada from Poland, and they settled one quarter section in what was the edge of the wilderness at the time in my colleague from Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock's constituency. From that quarter section there are pipefitters. There are janitors. There are doctors. There are journalists. There are members of the Alberta Legislature. There are a number of different Albertans who give back in their vocation, in civil society, in their faith communities, and by raising families.

This new chapter that we're embarking on today with our throne speech is a continuation of that book. It might not be another quarter section across the province. It could be a fintech company coming to Calgary. It could be the opportunity provided by a young girl who knows she does not have to be threatened by female genital mutilation because of the work that we've done, or that an elderly couple knows that they will have the opportunity to die with dignity that is bestowed upon them by having the opportunity to have palliative care accessible.

This is the Alberta that I believe in, and I'm very grateful that I've had the chance to accept the speech from the Lieutenant Governor.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and second the motion to accept the throne speech presented by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. I'd also like to extend my gratitude to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for putting forward her vision for the Legislature and the province we all hold dear. This week's throne speech clearly laid out the core priorities that this government will seek to achieve in the upcoming legislative session.

After two challenging years marked by pandemic, Alberta is ready to move forward into a bright and prosperous future. Alberta is leading Canada in economic growth. Investment is coming back in our communities, and our people are going back to work. This session will ensure that the momentum we have seen in our economy continues and that our province comes out of this pandemic not just strong but stronger than ever.

It's ridings like mine, the beautiful constituency of Camrose, where the rebound in the economy can be felt in traditional industries like energy and agriculture. But our economy is diversifying as well, with record private investment being seen in burgeoning industries like technology, film and television,

hydrogen, and renewables. The basis for this strong recovery has been and will continue to be Alberta's recovery plan. Strengthening the workforce, growing our resources, building for the future, helping everyday Albertans, and diversifying the economy: these are the pillars upon which the brightest chapter of the Alberta story will be written.

The government is trusting in time-tested conservative philosophies of fiscal restraint and responsibility, but it is also looking forward to the jobs and the economies of the future. I'm inspired to know that the government is telling Alberta's story and that investors across the world are taking note. Alberta is back, and we are once again the best place to live, work, play, start a business, or raise a family in the entire world.

The legislative agenda ahead is robust and will benefit our entire province. As a rural legislator I am proud to see the government expanding access to broadband Internet to rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. This will ensure that all Albertans can participate in the digital economy and achieve their full potential as citizens.

As we move past this pandemic, it is important that we nurture the entrepreneurial spirit of Albertans. That is why I am also proud to see the government continuing its red tape reduction efforts, which have already reduced Alberta's red tape burden by 21 per cent and saved taxpayers an impressive \$1.2 billion. Well done.

We know that Alberta could be a global hub for renewable power, which is why I'm pleased to see the government continuing to work towards diversification in the energy sector, pledging to create a clean hydrogen centre of excellence to help Alberta become a major player in this multitrillion-dollar industry.

I'm also pleased to see the government acting to protect consumers from higher utility costs by introducing a natural gas consumer protection program and by bringing forward new legislation to modernize the electricity market and further fix the \$2 billion electricity boondoggle that the disastrous previous government left behind.

As we have learned, we must ensure that our health care system is strong and resilient for future crises. Despite our health care system being one of the best funded in the world, I'm happy to know that the government is investing further towards building capacity in our health care system, in part by accelerating the Alberta surgical initiative. Further, I'm happy to know that the government is making major investments in infrastructure to expand hospital capacity, like completing the Calgary cancer centre and a historic expansion of the Red Deer hospital. This will also help ease the burden on our system and deliver high-quality patient care to every Albertan that needs it.

There is no higher duty of government than protecting its people, particularly its children. As a mother I'm beyond grateful to hear that the government will be taking steps to protect Alberta children by ending the egregious conflict of interest that allows the Alberta Teachers' Association to investigate its own members in disciplinary matters. This follows high-profile cases of abuse that have shocked our province and fuelled calls for change.

3:40

I'm also grateful to note that the government is taking steps to expand education choice, and I am overjoyed to know that the government will be increasing prenatal financial aid to mothers receiving AISH and income support, as we must do all we can to support our most vulnerable in this fragile time of our economic recovery.

The throne speech, presented by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, outlined a long list of actions that this government is taking to make life better for Alberta workers and

families. As a proud Albertan I was particularly proud to see that the government will continue our province's fight for a fair deal in federation, following a first-of-its-kind referendum in which Albertans called for major changes to Canada's broken equalization system. With 62 per cent of Albertans endorsing a proposed change to the Canadian Constitution regarding equalization, I hope to see the government use this mandate to press for serious negotiations on equalization with Ottawa.

The throne speech laid out our pathway to opportunity, prosperity, and balance. As we enter this new session of the Legislature, I can confidently say to the people of Alberta that our province is rebuilding the Alberta advantage for all and that this session will be a continuation of that work. Soon we will learn the details of the budget, which will likely reflect a dramatic improvement of our province's fiscal fortitudes, resulting not only from increasing commodity prices but careful fiscal management and restraint. I look forward to learning more about the budget and how it will help to boost our economy and recovery.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is coming back stronger than ever. Just as previous generations did, we have preserved through challenging circumstances and we are ready to be leaders. We were born to be. We will not succumb to the politics of fear or cynicism. We will move forward to the next chapter of the Alberta story with the fortitude of those who came before us. I want to thank each and every Albertan for their courage and sacrifice over the past two years. The government is working tirelessly to ensure the benefits of our rapidly growing economy affect every one of them in a positive way today and for generations to come. With that, I'm pleased to have this chance to second the throne speech.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to now adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

(continued)

Emergencies Act

10. Mr. Kenney moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon: Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly
 - (a) condemn the unnecessary invocation of the Emergencies Act by the government of Canada as the Assembly is of the view that this is a measure which infringes upon the constitutionally guaranteed rights of Albertans and all Canadians, including the right to due process and natural justice;
 - (b) is of the view that the government of Canada has failed to demonstrate that the present circumstances meet the threshold that the law requires to invoke the Emergencies Act and that, as demonstrated in Alberta, governments and law enforcement agencies already have adequate authority and resources to end illegal blockades and restore order; and
 - (c) is further of the view that this invocation of the Emergencies Act constitutes an unnecessary intrusion into provincial jurisdiction under the Constitution of Canada.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to one of the most obvious overreaches of government power in my lifetime and, I believe, in modern Canadian history: the recent invocation of the Emergencies Act by the government of Prime Minister Trudeau.

Mr. Speaker, I note that the Prime Minister, just 90 minutes ago, announced that the application of the Emergencies Act has been suspended. That, however, does not change at all the profound

concerns of Canadians, of Albertans, of this government and this Assembly with this unnecessary, unjustified, and disproportionate use of arbitrary police power in our own time with no good reason, so we will proceed with this debate.

I can inform the Assembly, right at the beginning, that Her Majesty's Alberta government intends to proceed with an application for a judicial review about what we regard as the unlawful application of the Emergencies Act before the judiciary, Mr. Speaker, because while the act may no longer be in operation, the rights of Canadians and Albertans have been violated. Provincial jurisdiction has been violated, and a dangerous precedent has been created, so Alberta's government will give the independent judiciary the opportunity to speak to these critical issues and we hope, in our pleadings, will result with clear limits around the exercise of these emergency powers to constrain such arbitrary application of them in the future.

Let me begin with some historical context. In the First World War some 9,000 Canadians, largely of eastern and central European origin, were unjustly detained as, quotes, enemy aliens, the majority of whom were people of Ukrainian ethnicity, and their detention was under the War Measures Act. These were loyal Canadians from communities that had a disproportionately high level of volunteerism to defend Canada in the Great War, yet because they had arrived in Canada as subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they were regarded as suspect by the then authorities at a time of popular xenophobia against Galicians, Ruthenians, and other then-pejorative expressions for people of Ukrainian origin. Nine thousand were interned between 1914 and 1920, many pressed into forced labour. Now, Mr. Speaker, we now recognize the historical injustice of this. As the Canadian minister for multiculturalism I signed an agreement with the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to redress that injustice.

From 1939 to 1945 thousands of Canadians of Italian origin were unjustly interned under the War Measures Act for precisely the same reasons, an injustice which led to a formal apology by the former Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney.

In 1970 the same law, the War Measures Act, was invoked by a different Prime Minister Trudeau to roll tanks and soldiers into the streets of Canadian cities and to arbitrarily arrest thousands of Canadians because of their suspected political affiliations during the October Crisis. Now, undoubtedly, Mr. Speaker, there was a serious risk to law and order and to national security with the violence of the Front de Libération du Québec, but there is now, I think, a clear historical and political consensus that invocation of the War Measures Act, thousands of detentions, and the use of the military in our streets was a massive and unjustified, disproportionate overreach and a shameful mark in modern Canadian history.

3:50

In fact, that consensus was so strong that even Pierre Trudeau subsequently recognized the overreach, which is one of the reasons that he campaigned so hard to patriate the Constitution and write into it the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. That is further why Prime Minister Mulroney's government was elected on a commitment to repeal the War Measures Act, as they did in 1988, replacing it with the Emergencies Act. The new Emergencies Act sought to remove some of the extraordinary martial powers of the War Measures Act yet, of course, retained truly extraordinary powers.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that in a truly extreme context the state must have extraordinary powers to deal with potentially overwhelming context of warfare, civil war, insurrection, of situations of mass violence and gross social disorder, of anarchy. Every sovereign state governed by the rule of law must have access

to certain extraordinary powers for extraordinary times, and that was the purpose behind the 1988 Emergencies Act.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that the recent invocation of this extraordinary and arbitrary police power by Prime Minister Trudeau's government is completely unjustified, totally disproportionate, without precedent, and that it will not pass the test of our courts nor the test of history. I think this has been a grave and shameful mistake.

Casting back to the earlier Prime Minister Trudeau's application of the War Measures Act in 1970, the late leader of the NDP famously said in his principled opposition to that decision that it was the equivalent of using a hammer to crush a peanut. You know, Tommy Douglas was speaking against the popular sentiment at that time. His was a minority view, but it was a principled defence of civil liberties, something that we used to be able to expect from the NDP and the Canadian left but no longer, Mr. Speaker, as they've shamefully and cravenly folded to the political whims of Justin Trudeau to invoke arbitrary police powers in trampling civil liberties. Whatever happened to that principled NDP? They sold out. They gave away their soul as a principled voice of civil liberties.

Mr. Speaker, let's move the analysis to recent events. Over the past two years we have seen extraordinary applications of government power, unprecedented certainly in our lifetimes, to deal with the challenge of COVID-19, and these unprecedented applications of government power, at least unprecedented for a hundred years, have caused great social division and discord. We must admit it, and that is true in Alberta as elsewhere across Canada and the entire world.

Mr. Speaker, no government has had a textbook about how perfectly to respond to a new and unknown pandemic of this lethal nature, and every government has sought to respond in a way that would avoid mass deaths but also a catastrophic situation in their hospitals. That is what we have sought to do in Alberta while also seeking to minimize the damaging effect of restrictions on people's lives and the limitation of people's normal rights and freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a loud and dynamic and at times divisive debate in this Assembly, in this society, about how to strike the right balance. I don't believe any government got it right. I think all governments in all parts of the world were facing impossible choices often with only bad options. In all of that, many of our fellow citizens have become deeply frustrated with the impact of these impairments of rights and freedoms and their economic well-being, the disruption to their ordinary lives. I am one of those citizens who has been frustrated deeply by all of this, so I understand and sympathize. [interjections]

I'm being heckled by the opposition because they don't seek to listen. They don't seek any empathy for the people whose lives have often been turned upside down by the last two years here and across the world. The thought of them with their hands on the levers of power during this time is chilling, Mr. Speaker. The total disregard they would have had for the negative impact of restrictions would have meant that this province was under a hard and sustained, devastating lockdown for most of the past two years. Thankfully, they weren't.

I would argue that Alberta sought to approach restrictions as a last and limited measure, being criticized by the NDP, by many in the media for having been reluctant to bring in restrictions and eager to lift them, as we are now. But the context is this. We have a large number of our fellow citizens who are deeply frustrated and are saying to those in leadership that we must find a way out of the disruption that COVID has had on our lives. They have every right to do so, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in our democracy I think citizens have a responsibility to speak out when they feel so strongly,

particularly about the impairment, albeit justified I believe, of rights and freedoms.

That is what led to the trucker convoy movement recently, Mr. Speaker. But the more immediate cause was the bloody-minded decision by Prime Minister Trudeau and his government to impose a vaccine mandate on cross-border truckers. Now, let's put this in context. That decision was made at the end of January, after the policy of a vaccine mandate for cross-border workers had been announced in the fall as a bilateral policy between Canada and the United States.

But exemptions were granted – why? – because those two national governments recognized that it would have a negative impact on essential commercial traffic which is key to the integrity of our supply chains at a time of growing inflation. With so much stress on the economy they implicitly recognized that it would be counterproductive to introduce this vaccine mandate on cross-border truckers, so for four months they granted an extension after an extension. But suddenly, Mr. Speaker, that all ran out at the end of January, just when we in North America were beginning to move past the peak of omicron COVID-19 infections, just when governments around the world began to announce their plans to ease and eliminate public health restrictions.

So we had this bizarre situation – it's not just Ottawa – where the two national governments decided to apply this pointless and counterproductive policy at exactly the wrong time. If they thought this had any putative public health benefit, they would have introduced the measure at the beginning and not the end of the omicron COVID-19 spike, Mr. Speaker.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

You know, as somebody who has had to defend difficult and painful restrictions in order to slow viral spread and prevent a catastrophe in the hospitals, as somebody who's had to study closely the data and the international experiences of COVID measures, I can say with confidence that the trucker vaccine mandate has and will have zero measurable public health benefit. This is nothing but bad public health theatre. It is not public health science; it is political science, Madam Speaker.

Right now, as we speak, it is reasonable to infer from confirmed active COVID cases across North America that we currently have millions and potentially tens of millions of current active infections. That was certainly in the tens of millions between Canada and the United States when this policy came in at the end of January.

4:00

Now, according to the organizations representing truckers, over 90 per cent of cross-border truckers have received the safe and effective protection of vaccines, and I say to them: thank you for stepping up to protect yourselves and to help us protect our hospitals. Madam Speaker, it would appear that we have less than 10 per cent of the cross-border trucker workforce who are not vaccinated, and that would within Canada constitute a few thousand people. A few thousand people. And how do they work? They work in the isolation of their truck cabs. These are people who don't go out and party in casinos and attend superspreader events. These are by definition some of the most isolated workers that you can find, and they are also some of the most important workers that you can find. Regardless of vaccination status let us all come together to say a huge thank you to the truckers on whom we have depended more than ever over the past two years.

You know, Madam Speaker, I remember I was chairing the inaugural meeting of our Alberta economic recovery council in the second week of COVID, in March of 2020. It was some of the leading thinkers from the Alberta business community, organized

labour, and others. I'll never forget what Clive Beddoe, the founding CEO of WestJet, said to us on that call as we were trying to figure out: what is going on? What are the implications? What are the stress points? How do we have to respond to this unknown crisis? Mr. Beddoe said: keep an eye on the supply chains. He said: if this virus takes the truckers off the road, we'll be starving in Canada in two weeks. I'll never forget when he said that.

It raised the alarm for me and, I think, decision-makers that at all costs we had to keep those supply chains moving, that we had to keep those semis coming north, filled with groceries and food and essential goods, without which we could not survive in our modern, complex, cold northern Canadian economy here. You know what, Madam Speaker? While so many others were able to stay at home, the laptop class, and work in the safety of their homes, those truckers went out there every single day, day in, day out, the long-haulers, keeping our economy running, keeping our grocery store shelves full, and we should all be deeply grateful for them and what they did.

Madam Speaker, the point is this. When they bring in this vaccine mandate for the truckers, you've got tens of millions of active omicron infections across North America and a few thousand unvaccinated, isolated cross-border truckers. If this really was a public health emergency, if they actually constituted a serious threat of widespread viral transmission, then they could have been asked to take a negative rapid test, like other workers have been, like we've had in this Assembly for a period. There are practical workarounds that would have kept them rolling and working. But, no, the government of Canada had no consideration whatsoever. This was bloody-minded. It was in bad faith. As I say, it was political theatre.

It was done for one reason, I believe, because the Prime Minister won a plurality of seats, not a majority. He won a plurality of seats with less than a plurality of the popular vote in the last federal election by running on a campaign of COVID fear, by using COVID, like the NDP here, relentlessly as a divisive wedge, to promote fear and hysteria in our population. The Prime Minister has done this consistently. He's the one who said that people protesting, expressing a concern about public health policies were, quote, a small fringe element in this country that is lashing out with racist, misogynistic attacks, unquote. Misogyny means hating women, Madam Speaker. The Prime Minister claiming that tens and tens of thousands of Canadians expressing their concerns and their fears were just a bunch of mouth-breathing racists and misogynists and hateful people. How dare he.

Now, I have no doubt that some of the people who have shown up at some of these protests do harbour extreme views, as is the case with every social movement. The NDP doesn't mind hanging out there at rallies with Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion, Madam Speaker, that promote violence and blowing up pipelines. They never apologize for that extremism of the far left that they fraternize with. But nor do we say that everybody who shows up at – I believe the vast majority of people who participated in these protests in recent weeks and months are normally law-abiding Canadians who have deep frustrations, are hard-working people who simply want their voices heard. And you know what? Maybe they don't have a professional left-wing PR shop to refine their messages for media, for CBC consumption. Maybe sometimes they say things a little inelegantly, and it must be said that some did cross the line and break the law, but that does not justify what has happened in recent days.

That is the context. The Prime Minister lit the fuse of the crisis which he has now bungled. He lit the fuse with the vaccine mandate. By the way, just a little coda here, a little note: when the government of Canada announced that they were removing the

exemption from truckers for the vaccine mandate, actually that same day the Canada Border Services Agency announced that the exemption was going to be extended. A few hours later the government came out ham-fistedly and said: “No. We’re actually wrong. It’s a mistake, a misunderstanding.”

Now, as someone who has sat around the federal cabinet table and, by the way, was partially responsible for CBSA, Madam Speaker, I can tell you that I think I know what happened there. I think a decision had been made – I’m going to go out on a limb here; it’s a hypothesis – by a cabinet committee that this didn’t make any sense, that they should extend the exemption, and CBSA didn’t want to enforce it because it didn’t make any sense. They’ve got bigger fish to fry than harassing a bunch of unvaccinated truckers. What happened was that the PMO saw this. They put the hammer down. They said: “No. This is a great political wedge. Stop the exemption. To heck with the truckers. We’re going to make them pay. We’re going to make an example out of them, and we’re going to set a trap for the Conservatives to fall into defending these” – well, Hillary Clinton would call them deplorables, I guess, Madam Speaker. Justin Trudeau would call them racists and misogynists, a fringe group of racists and misogynists. Political theatre, not public health policy: that’s what brought us to the beginning of the freedom convoy.

While I sympathize, while I agree with the participants of the freedom convoy that the vaccine mandate on truckers is unjustified and counterproductive, all it did was put further pressure on supply chains, further increasing food inflation in our country without any public health benefit. While I agree with their broader frustrations with public health measures and policies, it must be said, Madam Speaker, that many of the participants did cross the line from legal and peaceful protest to breaking the law. I am sworn, as are all members of this place, to uphold the laws, and we must, without favour or fear, all consistently support and defend the equal application of the rule of law. I think that what we have been facing here is, in part, a longer term failure of the rule of law.

What do I mean by this? Well, the people who parked trucks on streets in downtown Ottawa, at the Coutts and Windsor border crossings, you know what they have observed over recent years? They have observed radical left eco protesters blocking pipelines and railways, highways, roads here in Edmonton and other critical infrastructure without enforcement, without penalty, without charge. What they have seen, in some cases for 40 days or longer: the largest railway in the country at various points being blockaded without effective law enforcement. What they have seen is court injunctions, for example, against illegal protests around the oil refinery in Burnaby not being enforced by local law enforcement agencies. In other words, what they have seen is a growing trend to violate the rule of law, and I believe the chickens have come home to roost, Madam Speaker, because of this approach.

4:10

This should be a wake-up call for all of us, and I say to our police agencies that, yes, I understand that they have a job to do, and we respect that. They have intelligence. For example, we know about the sensitive issues at Coutts, and they need to have some tactical flexibility about how they deal with the situation. But at the end of the day citizens must depend on the equal application of the rule of law. Again, I think many frustrated people saw the lack of law enforcement against environmental protesters in recent years as a new standard of nonenforcement. That is a problem.

But, Madam Speaker, now we come to this. The protests occurred. We had initially a hundred and then 40 trucks intermittently blocking the border crossing at Coutts. Now, the good news is this. The government of Alberta – and I want to

commend Minister of Transportation, Municipal Affairs, the Solicitor General, and their officials who were working very closely with the CBSA, with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and with the RCMP. We all worked very closely together to ensure that five of the six Alberta-U.S. border crossings stayed open and unimpeded. We were able to move U.S. meat inspection facilities to different border crossings, to extend hours, to work with the truckers, to work with the livestock producers to minimize the damage and inconvenience.

To those who were involved in the Coutts blockade, really, Madam Speaker, I would just say to them that I think what they did was unnecessary, it was illegal, and all they did, really, was create inconvenience for other truckers, for livestock exporters, and for law-abiding motorists. I hope they’ve learned that lesson and won’t repeat that kind of illegal protest. We would urge them to engage in lawful and peaceful protest to make their point.

Madam Speaker, the point is this. Despite all of that, that matter was resolved. It was resolved with the use of ordinary law. There was no lack of law. There was no need for the extraordinary measures of the Emergencies Act. Alberta never sought its application. In fact, there’s been something made of the fact that the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in his capacity as the minister responsible for emergency preparedness for Alberta, wrote to his federal counterparts seeking some logistical assistance from the government of Canada, which is the conventional thing to do, because the RCMP had been unable to acquire heavy tow equipment and operators.

You know what the federal response was? “No.” The federal government would not step in to support Alberta in a request for some additional equipment. We did obtain about 40 additional RCMP officers but not thanks to the government of Canada, not as a result of that request but through going through the Canada-Alberta police services agreement and having officers transferred here from E Division in British Columbia on a bilateral basis, with no thanks to the federal Minister of Public Safety.

When we went to Ottawa to seek a little bit of assistance to safely apply the law, we were told: go away, Alberta; we’re not going to help out. We never asked for the power for the federal government arbitrarily to freeze people’s bank accounts, to seize their assets because of who they donate to. We never sought any of those powers. We didn’t need them, and neither did the government of Ontario in addressing the devastating border blockade at the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor and Detroit.

The Ambassador Bridge was cleared on February 12. The successful RCMP operation in Coutts began late on the night of February 13 and was completed early on the morning of the 14th. The Prime Minister invoked the Emergencies Act later on February 14, after those operations had been successfully prosecuted by provincial police authorities. Yes, the RCMP is a federal agency, but in this respect it acts on behalf of Alberta. We didn’t require these emergency powers.

Nor did they require these powers to clear the streets of Ottawa. Madam Speaker – guess what – it is illegal to park a truck in the middle of a road in Ottawa or in any other Canadian city. It is illegal to do that, particularly for two weeks. There are countless offences that the police can use for ordinary law enforcement here in Alberta. I made it plainly clear to the RCMP that they had not just the highways act but the rules of the road regulation, various provisions of the Criminal Code, and, helpfully, the defence of Alberta critical infrastructure act, under which they did lay one charge. But they had no shortage of law. What we had was a lack of enforcement in Ottawa using the ordinary legal tools that were available. They did not need extraordinary legal tools.

Now, having said all of that, on the 14th the Prime Minister invoked sections of the Emergencies Act. Let me read from section 3 of that act.

For the purposes of this Act, a national emergency is an urgent and critical situation of a temporary nature that

- (a) seriously endangers the lives, health or safety of Canadians and is of such proportions or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it, or
- (b) seriously threatens the ability of the Government of Canada to preserve the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Canada

and that cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada.

Let's walk through this, Madam Speaker, because with our forthcoming application for judicial review the courts will be walking through this. Was this a national emergency? I would argue no. Two intermittent border crossings that were periodically blocked and trucks on the streets of downtown Ottawa: I don't think that meets any standard definition of a national emergency.

Did it seriously endanger the lives, health, or safety of Canadians? No, Madam Speaker, with one possible exception. We did receive intelligence, of course, that there was a group, who is now under detention, at Coutts who allegedly had violent intent and stockpiled weapons to jeopardize the lives of police officers. That matter was dealt with through diligent police work, intelligence gathering, and tactical operations without resorting to the extraordinary powers of the Emergencies Act. Was it of such a proportion or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it? Well, no, as I just pointed out.

Did it seriously threaten the ability of the government of Canada to preserve the sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of Canada? No once more, Madam Speaker. Are we seriously going to say that a few dozen trucks parked on Ottawa's streets were a threat to Canadian sovereignty or territorial integrity? No. It was a law enforcement challenge. It was a logistical challenge. It was not, as some have argued, an insurrection.

Could it have been effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada? Yes, and it was at Coutts. It was at the Ambassador Bridge. It was at Emerson, Manitoba. It was at the Surrey border crossing. It was in Quebec City. It was in downtown Toronto, where police effectively prevented these kinds of blockades. It was in almost every instance but, ironically, downtown Ottawa, where I would argue there was just an enforcement failure, not in enforcement of the law but in the application of the law.

So I believe that on the face of it the invocation of the Emergencies Act did not meet any of the key statutory criteria outlined in the law.

4:20

But, Madam Speaker, what was the consequence of it? Well, we still don't fully know, but the federal government arrogated to itself the power to seize and freeze bank accounts on unclear criteria. I do know this, though. The federal Minister of Justice, Mr. Lametti, said on television last week that, quote, if you are a member of a pro-Trump movement who is donating hundreds of thousands of dollars and millions of dollars to this kind of thing, then you ought to be worried, unquote, about having your bank accounts frozen. So the top law enforcement officer of Canada actually said – like, this isn't a conspiracy theory. He actually said on the record that if he doesn't like your political views and you make a donation he disagrees with to some pro-Trump organization – what does that have to do with it? I mean, what about a pro-Clinton organization? This is the problem. The rule of law must be impartial. It can't be based on what U.S. politician you support or oppose. This is an

admission of not impartiality but partiality in the application of extraordinary police powers.

Some will say: well, it wasn't like the FLQ crisis, the October Crisis; we didn't have thousands of detentions. But our lives are now inextricably bound up in the digital world. You can't get a telephone, can't get heating for your home, can't function in modern society without a bank account, and if that bank account can be frozen and seized arbitrarily, without recourse, without judicial review, through the extrajudicial application of police power – and you don't even know who's doing it. Is the bank doing it because the government told them to? Is the government doing it themselves? Which government agency? To whom do you appeal? Madam Speaker, this is a widespread, invasive violation of fundamental rights that has occurred in our midst, in our time, setting a very dangerous precedent for the future.

Madam Speaker, another issue that counsel on behalf of the Alberta Crown will be raising in our judicial review application is that this is a gross and obvious violation of the Canadian Constitution with respect to provincial jurisdiction. Under the Canadian Constitution provinces are responsible for ordinary law enforcement. This essentially was a usurpation of our constitutional jurisdiction over law enforcement by the federal government.

Now, the act requires that provinces be consulted, and, yes, the Prime Minister convened a teleconference with the 13 provincial and territorial Premiers on Monday last week, which lasted for about an hour. I spoke strongly against the invocation of this power, and while I can't reveal what others said in that private call, I can say – it's a matter of public record – that six other provincial Premiers have joined me in stating their opposition to the use of this act. It requires consultation with the provinces; 70 per cent of the provinces said: no; this is unnecessary; it's unjustified; it violates our jurisdiction; it's counterproductive.

Madam Speaker, I refer the Assembly to the letter that I wrote, in formal response to the Prime Minister, laying out our arguments in this respect, arguments that will form the basis of our application for judicial appeal in addition to potential intervention in support of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian Constitution Foundation and their pending judicial applications.

Madam Speaker, let me wrap up by saying that this is a fiasco. The Prime Minister lit the fuse. He then inflamed the situation not by seeking to deconflict it, but when tempers were rising and the protests were growing, what did the Prime Minister do? Did he act as a responsible national leader and appeal for calm? Did he show a shred of humility? No.

What he did was to pour gas on the flames of this conflict with his irresponsible comments. He said, well, just last week – I mean, he said on January 28: this is a troubling, small, but vocal minority who are lashing out at science, at government, at society. He said that the people of Ottawa don't deserve to be harassed by the inherent violence of a swastika flying on a street corner. He said on February 16 – last week a dear friend of mine, the Member of Parliament for Thornhill, Melissa Lantsman, who is the descendant of Holocaust survivors, asked the Prime Minister why he was dividing Canadians, and here was his answer: "Conservative Party members can stand with people who wave swastikas. They can stand with people who wave the Confederate flag," et cetera.

Instead of seeking to calm the country, the Prime Minister sought to inflame the conflict. He created the conflict unnecessarily with his vax mandate on truckers. He inflamed the conflict with these comments, and then – and then – as a diversion, a cynical diversion from the disaster that he created, he goes and invokes the son of the War Measures Act.

Madam Speaker, this, I believe, will go down as perhaps his legacy. Perhaps he'll be remembered for it, because I don't know

what else he's done of merit. This will go down in history as a central mark on his premiership. This will go down – look at how Canada and his government have been the subject of international ridicule. The same Prime Minister who used to be the toast of the liberal international media is now the laughingstock of the same global media because of this gross and unjustified overreach, this violation of civil rights to deal with a few dozen trucks parked illegally. If this is how he acts in that kind of a situation, imagine how he would react to something like an FLQ crisis.

Oh, how about this? I think maybe we have a test case, Madam Speaker, because last week armed, machete-wielding eco terrorists attacked a group of blue-collar workers and security guards at a Coastal GasLink construction camp, threatened their lives, set the equipment on fire, and literally terrorized those workers, many of whom are Indigenous Canadians. If you go up to those camps, Madam Speaker, you'll see that most of the security guards, many of the construction workers are hard-working members of the First Nations, and they were terrorized largely by left-wing, urban, southern, Caucasian eco terrorists. Actual violence, potentially lethal violence, that happened a week ago. The Emergencies Act was in effect. I didn't see the government of Canada springing to freeze the bank accounts of those associated with that act of eco terrorism.

Again, this is a dangerous precedent. This is the partial application of law, not the impartial application. This is a precedent that apparently he's willing to use against a few dozen truckers illegally parked but not against people wielding machetes, threatening lives, and setting equipment on fire dangerously. So how can he and how will his government ever be able to deal responsibly and credibly with real threats to national security? Madam Speaker, I don't think that that government can do so.

In closing, let me say that this is a shameful moment in our history. It is an echo of the 1970 use of the War Measures Act, and it is an echo of the kinds of injustices that that same law was used to apply in the First and Second World Wars. It must never happen again. That is why this government will go to the wall using every legal means at our disposal. Yes, the application of it may now have been suspended, but the legal issues raised, the rights that have been violated, the provincial jurisdiction that has been interfered with are still very much live issues.

4:30

Finally, Madam Speaker, what a shame that in all of this the once-great New Democrat Party has gone from being a champion of civil liberties to a lapdog for Justin Trudeau and his abuse of power. You know, they and their NDP friends in Ottawa have enabled and facilitated this gross power grab. Maybe the NDP in Alberta have been distracted because they've been more focused with their friends in the Alberta Federation of Labour and the teachers' union on forcing five-year-olds to wear masks indefinitely. That's their priority right now, not defending civil liberties like the NDP did so courageously in 1970. But this government will defend those liberties, will defend the Constitution, and will go to the Supreme Court using every resource at our disposal to defend law and order as the basis of our democratic society.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to this motion regarding the federal government's invocation of the Emergencies Act. Let me say this first. I respect and support everyone's right – every Canadian's right, every Albertan's right –

to protest and disagree with their government and their right to peaceful assembly. I note that the Emergencies Act has been lifted by the federal government, but here we are debating that because this government and this Premier needs something to deflect from their failure to act in the matter of the Coumts blockade. That's why we're debating this.

I'm deeply disappointed that this is the situation that we face as a province and as a country. We never should have gotten to this point, and I'm frustrated that once again the UCP government is choosing to play politics rather than show leadership. Earlier the Premier was talking about political theatre. That's exactly what this government is engaged in.

What Albertans have seen over this past month has been the failure of multiple levels of government. When these blockades first started, Albertans looked to the government and the Premier for leadership. Hundreds of millions of dollars lost due to the border blockade. People stranded for days with no food, washrooms, or access to medicine. Communities in southern Alberta were isolated. Many of those who were stranded on the border also live in the northeast part of Calgary. There are many who are in the trucking industry. None of them were part of this illegal blockade. They were impacted by these blockades.

Security experts have reported that the Premier's weak response was emboldening the protesters, and I couldn't agree more. People expected that their government, that claimed to champion law and order, would do whatever it took to end these unlawful blockades. But, instead, what did they see? They saw UCP MLAs taking part in the illegal blockade and celebrating and endorsing illegal activities at Coumts. The Member for Taber-Warner attended the blockade, and if the Premier wants Albertans to follow the rule of law, he must say something about his own caucus member participating in an unlawful, illegal blockade. When that member went back to participate in this protest multiple times, the Premier did nothing. Not one UCP member said anything about their colleague participating in unlawful, illegal activities. When the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland publicly encouraged law enforcement to break the law, to essentially create their own laws, the Premier did nothing.

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Point of Order Allegations against Members

Mr. McIver: Under 23(h), (i), and (j). The hon. member just accused another member of the House of saying what his intentions were, making false allegations against another member. You just heard it. It's as plain as day. Would you please instruct the member, respectfully, Madam Speaker, to not do that anymore?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was listening to my colleague speak, and my colleague was speaking factually about the attendance of a member at an event that has been deemed illegal. I did not hear an accusation or a point of order, but I look forward to your ruling.

Mr. Sabir: Further to my colleague, I was referring to a statement that was made by the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

I'll also ask those in position of law enforcement, as well as military personal to remember your oaths that you have taken, the country that you represent, and the citizens that you are to protect.

I want you to consider that, when the orders are delivered to you in the coming days.

That's the statement I am referring to, and I don't think it's a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I think this is probably a good time to start by expressing caution throughout the course of this debate about illegal activities and members' involvement or noninvolvement and what may invoke anger in this Chamber. Certainly, there is a fine line between accusing a member of something that they may or may not have done and reading a quote, for example, that a member may or may not have posted on social media. I can appreciate that we might be in this form of points of order throughout the course of this debate, and I think that knowing that, I'm going to lay out a general caution for all the members in this House to be aware of the words that they say that can inflame anger in this Chamber.

This is your opportunity. For every single member in this House right now, this is our opportunity to – sorry. Hon. Member for St. Albert, do you have something you'd like to say?

Ms Renaud: No. Over to you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. I can appreciate, you can certainly appreciate that when the Speaker is standing, the Speaker has the floor and not the individual members of this Assembly. That would be most helpful.

I'm giving caution to all members in this Chamber that we are to respect one another as elected representatives for the people that sent us here, and that will be the tone of this debate as we proceed throughout the course of the day. I think that's what Albertans expect of us, and we all know that. That is how we're going to move forward.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has the floor.

Debate Continued

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the caution. I will try to be respectful, but at the same time I think that facts are facts. Whenever I'm describing those facts, I will try to describe them with the utmost respect.

Let me start with what the acting Justice minister said about this blockade. She said that it's illegal. She said that it's intolerable. That was the description coming from this government of this blockade, that it is illegal, that it is offside, although she also did nothing about it at all.

4:40

Our caucus encouraged the government, encouraged the Justice minister to go to the court, seek an injunction, and look at other tools that you have at your disposal such as suspending commercial drivers' licences and more. These were concrete steps to show that the government supported the rule of law and would stand with law-abiding Albertans against the lawlessness at Coumts. Instead, the government did nothing and even continued to stand with their colleagues who proudly defended the blockaders, saying that they inspired nations or called them good folks. Then the seriousness of the situation became clear: 13 long guns, handguns, a machete, multiple sets of body armour, 21 rifle magazines for semiautomatic rifles, and other stockpiles of ammunition. All of that was seized at Coumts, and four of them have now been charged with conspiring to murder RCMP officers.

The acting Justice minister stood up with the RCMP, who were the target of this vile plot to murder law enforcement personnel, and has still refused to condemn her colleagues' reckless and selfish

actions. The fact that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland would suggest that the police side with the protesters and stop enforcing the laws that a democratically . . .

Mr. Getson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Getson: Yeah. A point of order, Madam Speaker, under 23(h), (i), and (j), soliciting false motives, causing disorder. We just went through this. I take exception to the member opposite continuing to reference me with causing disorder, eliciting any illegal behaviours or activities.

Again, given that the Liberals and the NDP voted in an Emergencies Act, which is going to be proven in a court of law to be unequivocally – unequivocally – out of line for what that context was, the simple statement that I made for people to remember their oaths of who they swore to protect in this country: that is sedition? That is sedition according to the socialist opposition. It is not a seditious act to make people remember. I might add, Madam Speaker, that I would also say the same thing to that member opposite now. Remember your oath and who you swore to protect. Remember those flags and those colours and who you should be patriotic to. If that's sedition, I'll say that all day long.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I may caution the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. While I will deal with the point of order, it is certainly not appropriate to speak directly to another member in this Chamber. Words like "you" and pointing are definitely not helpful, and maybe I should have broadened my earlier caution to include such things.

Having said that, the opposition to respond and then the Government House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I understand the point of order was under 23(h), (i), and (j). While I continue to listen to my colleague's remarks and he has made an effort to enter into the record the facts of the matter, I do not believe this to be a point of order and look forward to your ruling.

Mr. McIver: Well, Madam Speaker, you get to caution us. We don't get to caution you, so I won't do that, but I will point out the historical fact that when I asked you to rule that what the hon. member said a few minutes ago was out of order, you chose not to, which is your right. But now you have a second chance because the hon. member has continued to do exactly what you cautioned him not to do, under (h), (i), and (j), create disorder in the House. This is the disorder: to accuse, to impute false and unavowed motives to another member, which he did to the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and to make allegations at another member. Madam Speaker, it's your wisdom that we depend upon. Might I respectfully say that the sooner you rule this out of order, the less time we'll probably spend having these conversations, because I promise to stand up every time that they do this.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. minister, I certainly don't think you were challenging the Speaker on a ruling.

Mr. McIver: No. Not at all.

The Deputy Speaker: I would expect that the way that was worded will not happen again, because that would be most inappropriate, as you would know.

While these matters are sensitive and while I believe there are different perspectives on what has been said or posted or whatever outside of this Chamber, that doesn't make it not true. That, therefore, makes what is being said a matter of debate and not a point of order. However, we know that this type of language is not helpful. We've all known that before this debate even started. Now we're here for the second time in a very short period of time.

I would ask the hon. member to tailor his remarks to the motion at hand, which is about – you can certainly read it for yourself. I think that if we stick to the matter at hand as opposed to other things, we can have a good, fulsome debate in this House. The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has heard my words and will proceed in such a manner.

Debate Continued

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am trying to keep my remarks to the motion at hand, which is about the invocation of the Emergencies Act in the context of these blockades, in the context of what this government did or did not do, in the context of what the member of this government caucus did or did not do. Certainly, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland would have the opportunity to explain what he wrote, but I was exactly trying to comment on the public statement that he made, and that included that he wants law enforcement to consider their oath when the orders are delivered to them in coming days. That's, in my opinion – the member can, again, get up and disagree when it's his turn . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, and I can appreciate that you're trying to defend the things that you've said. That time has passed. I have made a ruling, and I would ask that maybe we move to your next point. While I certainly don't want to tell you what to say or what not to say, I am making a very strong suggestion that we move past this and really stick to the matter at hand, which is the motion.

Mr. Sabir: I am not trying to defend what I said. I am trying to make the point that the presence of a member who makes a statement in government caucus worries me because at the end of the day that's the government for all Albertans. It worries me because of the fear of the influence that that member may have on the Premier, with the cabinet, and whether the Premier didn't do anything because of that influence about all of this situation. We know that the UCP did nothing to condemn these statements from government caucus members.

4:50

Like, we heard from the government, we heard from our acting Justice minister that these are illegal blockades, that these are illegal activities, but we didn't hear from the government why their caucus members participated in those illegal activities. Earlier in question period today the Premier was defending those members, and the UCP has defended their colleagues who made multiple visits to that illegal blockade, where there were people plotting to murder police officers. So it's absolutely disgusting hypocrisy from this government. Clearly . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. McIver: Under 23(h), (i), and (j), imputing false motives. The hon. member just suggested that members of this caucus supported the idea of shooting police officers. It's what he inferred. Clearly, that is intended to create disorder. I once again implore you to rule it out of order. I know how much you enjoy me standing here talking to you, but maybe you don't enjoy it enough to want me to do it all the time, particularly when this is so obviously out of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This is not a point of order. I listened incredibly closely to what my colleague was saying. He did not imply motive. He did not say anything that should create disorder in this House, because these are factual things. We know that at the Coutts blockade there were those planning the murder of officers. This is on the public record. We know that UCP MLAs attended these blockades. My colleague has simply put on the record here in this Assembly, where we should be able to have a factually based discussion of these things, the occurrence in this situation, and it is incredibly important and relevant to Government Motion 10.

I suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is being incredibly sensitive and is trying to curtail the debate in this House, is trying to influence it, and I do not think that there is a point of order. My colleague continues to address this respectfully and, I believe, should be able to continue his remarks, because he has not said anything incorrect, unfactual, or accusatory towards another MLA.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, I thank you for your remarks. I have two thoughts to say on your argument in particular, hon. Official Opposition House Leader. This is not a point of order. However, this is getting to be very off topic. The motion – and perhaps we could provide a copy to all members of this House who don't have one – is fairly clear in a direction, and while I can appreciate that there are certain arguments to be made to make your point as a whole, this debate is becoming about something that this motion is not. This is not a point of order, but it is becoming off topic and will become a point of order in a different matter and which the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is arguing at this point.

Hon. member, please proceed with the debate on Government Motion 10.

Debate Continued

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In our view, in my view, this motion is entirely about politics and not about serving Albertans. Also, the Emergencies Act has been revoked, but still this Premier, who is facing a review of his leadership in a matter of weeks, insists on using people's concern and fear to play politics.

[The Speaker in the chair]

All I am suggesting to the government here is this. If the government wants to be taken seriously, if the Premier wants to be taken seriously, I'm asking this government to take some action about those colleagues within their caucus who put a spirit in this or who cheered on or supported this illegal blockade. That's all I'm saying.

Mr. Hunter: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order has been called.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I make a point of order under 23(h). Specifically, it says:

23 A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member . . .

(h) makes allegations against another Member.

Specifically in this case, the member just made an allegation that I attended and was participating in a blockade. Mr. Speaker, it is on record – and I have also put out a press release stating it to Albertans and to the world – that I was never there when there was an illegal blockade going on. That is public knowledge, and that is the truth. This member knows full well that that's the case, yet he continues to make these allegations that are false. This is a point of order, in my opinion, because the member continues to do these unavowed motives and also makes the allegations against this Member for Taber-Warner.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under 23(h), making allegations against another member, the member of my caucus has been responding to Government Motion 10 and has entered into the fact what is on the public record about members of the government caucus, including the member who has just spoken, attending and visiting blockades and participants there. This is on the public record. I don't believe that he is intending to make allegations but, rather, connecting these events to Government Motion 10, specifically because the invocation of the Emergencies Act is related to how this government and its MLAs handled the situation here in Alberta. I do not believe that it is a point of order, and I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You have wisely said in this House many times that you can't do indirectly what the rules don't allow you to do directly. The speaker from the other side has said that the blockades were illegal, and he's right about that. I agree with him on that. He also said that our member was participating in the blockade. Now, he has accused our member of committing a crime. He's done it indirectly. Your wisdom, which I agree with, is that you can't do indirectly what you can't do directly. I think we just saw a textbook example of that, and I would implore you to rule it out of order.

The Speaker: Well, I am prepared to rule. I've also said many times that we may have to accept two versions of the facts because both hon. members will be stating what they believe to be the facts. What I will say is this. I have listened to the debate intently. I also know that the Deputy Speaker has had much to say about this particular issue. The debate on Government Motion 10 is going to be a debate which invokes a significant amount of passion as both sides of this particular issue view the world very differently.

If members of the government would like to see the Speaker intervening at every opportunity when a member of the opposition makes a claim or a statement that isn't specifically related to Government Motion 10, then in return, when members of the government make statements that aren't specifically related to Government Motion 10, in the future of the debate the Speaker will have no option but to be interventionist, and my sense is that members of the government or otherwise would find that displeasurable. When members of the opposition make claims about the government that are displeasurable, while I may or may

not agree with those statements, they are entitled to make them. Now, I don't believe that the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall was claiming that the Member for Taber-Warner committed a crime. He merely stated his presence at an event, which the member has also acknowledged. The member has specifically and on the record stated the times at which he was there, which indicate he did not attend an illegal event. We will accept that as fact.

5:00

The member of the opposition is equally entitled to make a statement based upon his version of the events that have taken place. It doesn't necessarily mean he's making an accusation that the member committed a crime, because that would be against the rules. I intend for the rest of the evening, whenever possible, to apply the rules fairly and equally, but because the member – I will provide caution. I know that the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has been cautioned now on three separate occasions about making these accusations. He knows it's unhelpful. He knows it's created disorder, yet he continues to do so. There is a significant amount of opportunity to debate many issues to do with Government Motion 10, and he ought to be doing just that.

The hon. member.

Debate Continued

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I will try to wrap up fairly quickly here. I think that the Premier is moving this motion because he is more interested in politics than serving Albertans. This is all a big sham. The Premier likes to claim he knows best, but the Ontario Premier, also their Conservative bro, Doug Ford, has supported the use of the Emergencies Act because he knows the situation in Ottawa was very serious. Also, we know and Albertans know that the people organizing these blockades are all interconnected. That's why I think Albertans don't trust this Premier when they say that this motion is somehow about invoking the Emergencies Act. That's not true. The Premier claims to be defending Albertans and defending the rule of law, but really this is a hollow political stunt. The Premier always puts his political fortunes first. He'll put saving his job over his duty to the people of this province. That is what has driven the disaster at Coultts over the past several weeks.

Again, if the UCP was serious about defending the rule of law by taking action against these illegal and criminal blockades, I think they will start looking at their own actions. They will start looking at what they have been doing to disperse this blockade, how their members have behaved. Until they take this basic step to support the rule of law, Albertans see this motion and this government for what it is: playing political games rather than serving the people they were elected to serve. Shame on this Premier, shame on this government for putting our economy, the safety of our residents, the rule of law at risk to ensure the Premier keeps his job. I've never been more disgusted in this government, and that's saying something with this group.

Alberta's NDP supports the right to protest, respects the right to protest and to peaceful assembly. We support the rule of law. The UCP supports neither. The only people standing for the Premier are those who would stand for the Premier. Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, that is fewer and fewer Albertans. I suspect that, come 2023, Albertans will get a government that has a real leader, a Premier that relies on her values and on what she hears from Albertans, and I can't wait.

Thank you.

The Speaker: My, so much interest in debate today. The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis, and then we will assess the situation.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk on Government Motion 10. I want to start by just quickly reading the first part of it.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) condemn the unnecessary invocation of the Emergencies Act by the government of Canada as the Assembly is of the view that this is a measure which infringes upon the constitutionally guaranteed rights of Albertans and all Canadians, including the right to due process and natural justice.

I'll stop there, reading part of Motion 10.

It is necessary for this Legislative Assembly to speak with one voice in denouncing Justin Trudeau and the government of Canada's authoritarian imposition of this Emergencies Act. Absolutely. Even though it's been revoked, considerable damage, the unintended consequences, will reverberate through our country, our province, and our economy for a long time, maybe forever.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a time for politics as usual. This is a time to put Albertans first. This is a time for taking real action to defend Albertans. Even though it's been revoked, it is still the time to do that. I agree; Justin Trudeau clearly acted in bad faith. I agree with a previous speaker that, clearly, the federal government did not need these powers to clear blockades or break up occupations.

The predecessor to the Emergencies Act, the War Measures Act, used in World War I and World War II and the FLQ crisis, with bombs in the Montreal stock exchange and mailboxes and murders and kidnappings – my goodness, the overreach from this government. Mr. Speaker, do you know what's ironic? By invoking the far-reaching emergency powers and then attempting to make these powers permanent, Trudeau has proven himself to be everything that the freedom convoy participants travelled thousands of kilometres to protest against. He proved them right.

Mr. Speaker, also, though, from the beginning Alberta's Premier and this government failed to grasp the urgency of the situation. The fact that the Premier put his throne speech ahead of passing this motion when the Emergencies Act was still in effect is clear evidence of this. When will they put Albertans first? You know, look at how the world has noticed the draconian overreach, the imposition, the seizure of bank accounts. Think of what that's going to do for our investment confidence, our tourism, our immigration, all those things that have made Alberta and Canada so great. Just think of what this overreach is going to do to all those things.

5:10

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, I want to give a shout-out to how Albertans and Canadians spoke up. My constituency office and, I bet, everyone's in here was inundated with people that wanted to peacefully speak up, peacefully demonstrate, people that were worried about the seizure of their money in the bank account even though they had just wanted to support a peaceful, legal demonstration. I saw on BNN Bloomberg this morning that \$7.8 million were seized by Canadian banks. It sort of sounds like a lot, but can you imagine if it was your money? Can you imagine the stress and fear that goes with that at the same time of the two years that we've been through? Many, many Albertans, many, many Cypress-Medicine Hatters reached out to my constituency, worried about their civil rights, their Charter rights, their legal right to peacefully and legally support, and our Prime Minister blew it.

Do you know what it was also nice to see? An independent MLA in Ontario. I don't know if it was his petition or if he was just promoting it. Almost 90,000 Canadians signed the petition asking

the Senate to vote against the Emergencies Act, and he peacefully and properly put it out there and, my goodness, got the attention of Canadian Senators, although I think we never got to that point, in just 48 hours. That's an incredible accomplishment for Canadians, for Albertans to peacefully and legally get involved in our system and have effect.

I want to give a shout-out to the Premier of Saskatchewan, who was the very first one, initially, that started to remove the mandates as omicron moves to the endemic stage. I've stood up in this House and I've talked so much about the mental health crisis, the economic crisis, and the physical health crisis that Cypress-Medicine Hatters have gone through. The inconsistency from this government, the flip-flops have been a big factor in the stress level and a big factor in what happened, so hopefully this government can use that as a learning experience in the time that they have left.

I know it's been revoked, Mr. Speaker, but there are still things that we can do as an Alberta Legislature to have one voice and to put Albertans first, to prioritize Albertan families. Why don't we have a motion or a law – ATB. It's a Crown corporation, wholly owned by the province. Steps must be taken to prevent seizure of account holders' assets under future, similar situations. Let's do something to prevent the overreach from Ottawa.

Secondly, the province regulates vehicle insurance and registration. Why didn't this government take steps to prevent the cancellation of registration of insurance of Albertan vehicles? Hard-working truckers, and so many have said it: we owe so much to them for the last two years, you know, supplying our goods, stocking our shelves, bringing us our fuel, doing all those things that make our last-in-time inventory system work and allow us to feed our families and live our lives. We didn't defend them. We didn't stick up for them when we could. That was a huge mistake.

Thirdly, the province has a duty to defend Albertans' property rights. Any attempt by the federal government to seize or conscript Albertans' property must be stood up against and prevented. I had constituents, I had Albertans e-mail me asking if it was possible that the Alberta government temporarily cover any money seized by Ottawa, temporarily protect Albertans' civil liberties, Albertans' right to live in a full and a free democracy. We heard crickets from this government. We did a throne speech instead of this motion. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker – I've said it before – Albertans are tired of hearing this Premier's excuses for failing to take real action on this, on many other issues with Ottawa's overreach, and it forces Albertans to wonder where this Premier's allegiances truly lie.

Mr. Speaker, I started by saying that it was a shameful time, a shameful time that the government of Canada overreached, you know, into our civil liberties, into our right to live in a full, fair democracy, and hurt our quality of life and hurt our reputation going forward. But it's also a historic time. Hundreds of Albertans stood outside of my constituency office on the two or three Saturdays in a very legal, peaceful protest, waving Canadian flags, waving Alberta flags, sticking up for their neighbours, for Alberta to be free and strong. Unfortunately, they heard crickets from this government, but that's what it was about. I absolutely support and applaud all of those who exercised their legal right, their civic rights for peaceful and legal demonstration, and I applaud their effectiveness. Let's use this opportunity to continue to make Alberta the freest and most prosperous place.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is such an honour to rise today in this House and speak to this motion declaring Alberta's

opposition to the imposition of the Emergencies Act. I want to thank government leadership for putting this motion forward on behalf of every single Albertan in this province today. There is a lot of important work that we as legislators undertake within the walls of this House, but there are truly very few moments in our history that hold such significance as this one right here and now. To be able to use the voice that God gave me to speak to this motion and address the events of the past week in our country is an honour.

Now, I understand that Justin Trudeau recently rescinded the Emergencies Act, conveniently right before our debate started in this House today, but that does not negate the need to have this debate today and to discuss the matters of the past week and ensure that they never happen again in our country. As I said, Justin Trudeau's unilateral invocation of this Emergencies Act is not something to take lightly. It needs to be talked about today, it needs to be debated by all members of this House, and we need to do everything in our power to ensure that the events of the past week do not happen again in our Canada.

This was not an elected official merely making use of a piece of legislation to take care of ordinary business. Mr. Speaker, this was an attack on our values, this was an attack on our Canadian identity, and it was an attack on our way of life. This was the declaration of a culture war that has been brewing beneath the surface of our nation for years. Will Canada continue to be a free country, where our citizens are able to speak freely and express their support or opposition towards government policies without fear of reprimand and imprisonment and where citizens can work, save, spend, and donate their life savings wherever and however they choose? Or will Canada become a police state, governed not by the rule of law but by the will of a functioning tyrant whose only ability to govern is propped up by the votes of socialists who, by their very ideological nature, are too reliant on that government to think critically and make decisions for themselves appropriately? Anyone who believes that the latter could not become permanent in Canada best revisit the events of Venezuela short years ago.

5:20

Mr. Speaker, these are moments in our history that we must not allow to pass us by as though life will just carry on tomorrow as usual once the police raids and arrests of innocent people are over. We must not allow that to happen, because even if we wish to stick our heads in the sand and pretend as though it were possible and it never happened, that's not possible. The events of the days ahead will set precedents in defining our nation for a generation. These are the defining moments for us as Canadians, who were once known for our peaceful and friendly nature, and one which the entire world is watching. Will our maple leaf stand for freedom, or will it fall to oppression?

The Emergencies Act gave the federal government the power to bar Canadian citizens from travelling to or from specific areas, to deport others, to confiscate private property, to spy on our every private communication in whichever form they deemed necessary and appropriate, and even to freeze the private bank accounts of our citizens, and the power to do all of these things not just for the reasons related directly to matters at hand, which in this instance was the freedom protests against the government lockdowns and health mandates, but for suspicion of any other dissatisfactory behaviour that the leader of the government may not like in the moment.

The Justice minister of our nation went so far as to declare, on national television, as was noted by our Premier earlier today, that if you are, quote, part of a pro-Trump movement, you should be worried about having your bank account frozen by the government. End quote. You heard that right. The Justice minister of Canada just

declared on national TV that anyone who supports the former leader of a political party politically maligned to his own should know that their assets are at risk of seizure by his government.

Mr. Speaker, let's all put our political opinions about Donald Trump aside in this moment, because I know that many people listening will have big opinions about that man. Let's really think about the implications that such a position taken by our Justice minister against a political opponent of his could have on the future of our supposed free and democratic society in Canada. Further, when asked which powers within the act the government planned to use, the Prime Minister himself declared: everything is on the table. This should terrify all of us.

Mr. Speaker, this act was first introduced over a hundred years ago, in 1914, for the sole purpose of declaring a war or investigation under the name of the War Measures Act. The act was then later amended, in 1960, to legislate that anything done under that War Measures Act could not be an infringement or abrogation on any right or freedom outlined in our Canadian Bill of Rights. The irony.

Today the current version of that act, the Emergencies Act, is legislated so as only to be used for the purposes of combatting espionage or sabotage; foreign-influenced activities; threats or use of serious violence for political, religious, or ideological objectives; or covert acts intended to undermine the constitutionally established government. To put that last point into simpler terms, these would be acts to topple the very existence of Canada's constitutional monarchy and democratic institutions, not acts of the day to undermine electoral outcomes. So very serious offences that this act is intended to be used for in 2022. None of the events at the freedom protests constitute a breach of any of these four criteria or even anything close to a breach of these four criteria. To be frank, the single only threat undermining the constitutionally established Canadian government is Justin Trudeau and his Liberal caucus.

I should remind everyone watching and in this House that this is not the Emergencies Act. I want to be very clear that this is the rebranded War Measures Act from 1914. The fact that Justin Trudeau tried to use the powers of this 100-year-old War Measures Act under the guise of the Emergencies Act without any justifiable reason to do so, other than to make his actions more palatable and relatable to Canadians and to set a precedent that such actions and power could become commonplace for the use of any ordinary, present-day event that the Prime Minister may consider to be a threat to his sovereignty, is repulsive, it's disgusting, and it is flagrantly dishonourable to the people, the values, and the historical events that built our nation. Make no mistake; this was the former War Measures Act, and when it was first written, it was meant for war times only.

Mr. Speaker, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines democracy in two profound ways, which, when put into context of this year, 2022, are very profound. The first definition is common people constituting the source of political authority, and the second is an organization or system in which everyone is treated equally and has equal rights. Those definitions in today's context should give anyone the shivers. The events of the past two years, especially the decisions of our Prime Minister in Ottawa this past week, are an absolute affront to our way of life. The thousands of Canadians who rallied in their towns and communities in the name of freedom from government overreach and tyranny understood these definitions, and they understood that they were no longer being upheld in our nation.

Throughout the demonstrations there was not one statue toppled down, not one flag defaced, one piece of private property set ablaze, nor one business window smashed. Instead, the people stayed up all night to man the National War Memorial and ensure the monument was respected. They cooked and distributed meals for the homeless. They shovelled sidewalks for small-business owners and jubilantly

flew our country's maple leaf with pride as they demanded better for their children and our future.

The majority of these individuals participating in the protests were not anarchists or radicals. Rather, they were our friends, our neighbours, our dentists, and our hairstylists, ordinary good people pushed to the brink by pandemic restrictions and left bewildered, wondering what became of the free and compassionate country they once called home but feeling as though they had a moral obligation to do something about it rather than sit at home complaining and wishing for someone else to take charge for them. These were patriotic people who cared about their country and embodied the most Canadian principles of all: compassion and equal treatment for their fellow citizens and self-determination over reliance and dependency on the government. Our Prime Minister may divisively refer to these individuals as racists and misogynists. But, Mr. Speaker, do you know what I refer to these people as? People; human beings with a voice who deserve to be heard, deserve to be listened to, and deserve to be represented by their government. Perhaps Mr. Trudeau should remember that.

The past two weeks I went and actually hung a huge Canadian flag on my front balcony, something that I've never done before. It's duct-taped in place in true redneck fashion, so it doesn't quite look as pretty. It doesn't have quite as much curb appeal as perhaps it could, but it's the thought behind the flag that matters and the message that it sends. The freedom fighters across our nation have reminded me why I'm so proud to be Canadian. I've never in my life been more proud to support the maple leaf than I am right now and to see it turned into an emblem of freedom and democracy all across the world. We cannot let Justin Trudeau take that away from us, and we will not. Our elders gave their lives and sacrificed so that we as present-day Canadians could live peaceful lives, free from tyranny and free to think, believe, speak, and vote with our own consciences.

To every Albertan: this government stands opposed to Justin Trudeau's imposition of the Emergencies Act, and this government will continue to defend you against this attack on our very way of life. To every Canadian living outside of our province, especially those in provinces with Premiers supporting the imposition of this legislation: this Alberta government will continue to defend you as well from halfway across the nation. There is no more important time than right now for Canadians to rise up and use the power of their voices to alter the trajectory that our country is on for the better. Our Canada can be saved, but we as citizens need to save it.

Mr. Speaker, I will close this speech with the ever-fitting quote by Ronald Reagan, which I know that I've cited in this House before but becomes more relevant by the day.

Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like . . . [when] men were free.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South has the call.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank my friend the Member for Banff-Kananaskis for her wise words. I appreciate listening to her. Even though I'm a much older man, she is wise beyond her years, and I really appreciate her words.

The members opposite said that the government did not show leadership. Mr. Speaker, what is the best way to show leadership to Albertans? I would suggest that the highest and best way to do it is to get rid of destructive restrictions, to listen to Albertans. I know that there's still a little ways to go, but I appreciate that we are

moving in the right direction. That is the best way to bless the lives of Albertans.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, about a month ago I had the opportunity to attend the trucker convoy rally near my home, in Gasoline Alley. It was packed with friends. It wasn't an angry gathering. It wasn't a lawless gathering. It had a positive atmosphere filled with hope. Why is that the case? Why was this a positive atmosphere? I'll tell you why. Men and women and families had felt voiceless. They had felt disenfranchised by federal and provincial governments, but now they had a voice in the trucker convoy. That was cause for celebration. They had not felt listened to. They had felt ignored.

I think all of us to some extent can understand that feeling. I've felt it myself. Too often we have seen a top-down, command-and-control approach that treated adults as children, not respecting and trusting them to govern themselves and their families in respectful ways. What I have witnessed, what many of us witnessed offends my core values as a public servant. I never want to see this again. Many Albertans feel the same. In the end the truth will prevail, and I'm so grateful for that. History will show that across-the-board vaccine passports and mandates were gross errors and in many cases caused more harm than good, especially for young adults and children.

Mr. Speaker, I have sorrow. Public health authorities undermined their own authority with biased reporting and using fear and coercion as a tool. I've spoken on this before, and I will be bringing forth a motion in this Legislature for there to be a comprehensive public inquiry into COVID, including a full cost analysis of COVID restrictions, mandates, and passports, especially on children and young adults. The truth must prevail. The truth produces hope, and it produces healing.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of the trucker convoy we know what the Prime Minister did. He went into hiding, and then he sought to cancel and delegitimize the protesters, calling them a fringe minority, labelling them as racists and misogynists. That is not leadership. That weakens the public authority of important institutions.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition here sits in a thoughtless stupor. If they do not vote in favour of this, they are shameful. I don't use that adjective very often, but it is shameful, actually. Perhaps they agree a great deal with Canada's first NDP Prime Minister. That is what he is. While perhaps he belongs to a different party, his actions speak for themselves. He is Canada's NDP Prime Minister. Their false ideas are lies.

Over the past two years Albertans have seen for themselves the results of too much government in our lives. We should resist government taking away our freedom and prosperity and get them away, get them out of our lives.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there were a few protesters who did blockade public roads, and I do not condone that. I have spoken against this with Extinction Rebellion. It is always wrong to break the law. I do not believe, like some, that the ends justify the means. Even in a cause that is just, it is not right to blockade. It undermines the moral high ground of a just cause. I sorrow that that would ever occur.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister enacted the Emergencies Act. While he has just revoked it out of political expediency, why did he do it in the first place? This was not an emergency, but this is a very serious matter. The Emergencies Act is a nuclear option – it is a nuclear option – and should never be used as a political tool, attacking an entire movement of Canadians, including Albertans who felt disenfranchised, whose crime was disagreeing with government. It labels an entire movement which disagrees with government as a public danger, an emergency, a voice that must be

stomped out and silenced. This is very dangerous. This is not leadership. This is certainly a very bad precedent. What will the government do when there is a real emergency? Will citizens need to look over their shoulders if they support causes that an insecure, unprincipled government feels threaten maintaining their power and position?

Mr. Speaker, I visited with the protesters yesterday outside the Legislature. Many of them are principled men and women who just want government to leave them alone, to get out of their lives, to stop dividing them from their families and friends. They are rightly concerned that government has been so destructive to the national fabric, posing a threat to their freedom and prosperity and of all Albertans. Government is supposed to protect freedoms that support prosperity for its people. In many cases they have done the opposite. There is cause for concern. Turbulence is on the horizon; in some respects it is already upon us. There is an urgency to prepare. These men and women are not breaking laws – and I appreciate their leadership – who are raising voices of warning and, with the truth, inspiring hope in so many where government failed to do so.

This political use of the Emergencies Act demonstrates that our federal government is rudderless. It is a morally and fiscally bankrupt government that acts as an enemy to Albertans' freedom and prosperity, and I condemn it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Government Motion 10. I'll read a condensed version into the record so that people following along can understand what we're discussing this afternoon.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) condemn the unnecessary invocation of the Emergencies Act by the government of Canada . . .
- (b) [that the Legislative Assembly] is of the view that the government of Canada has failed to demonstrate that the present circumstances meet the threshold that the law requires . . . and
- (c) [that the Legislative Assembly] is further of the view that this invocation of the Emergencies Act constitutes an unnecessary intrusion into provincial jurisdiction under the Constitution of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that we work to try and understand how we got to this point. Over the last two years we have seen that, time and time again, governments throughout Canada, throughout the western, developed world, most of the world have asked their citizens to trust them as the governments attempted to address the uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic.

5:40

Over these two years we've learned a lot, a lot about the threat of COVID-19 and a lot about the effectiveness of various responses trying to minimize the consequences from the disease. Mr. Speaker, early in the pandemic there was little known about the threat, but two years in we have gathered a lot of information, made vaccinations and various treatments available for individuals, and are now able to move on, away from government dictates. With that, governments from around the world have moved in a direction away from mandates and restrictions.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, the federal government of Canada chose to move in a direction of requiring truckers travelling to the

U.S. to be vaccinated at a time when it was obvious that vaccination status has little bearing on whether an individual could be considered free from infection of COVID-19. We have over the last, well, pretty much two months now, with the omicron variant circulating within North America, recognized that the vaccination status of an individual did not necessarily show that the individual was healthy and free from spreading the virus. But the federal government, in putting forward a restriction, a guideline, a mandate, a vaccine mandate, on the truckers, moved in a direction where I believe they needed to use some common sense, recognize that the pandemic was swiftly coming to an end, and also realize that the free world was moving on. They were beginning to remove COVID restrictions, and the federal government needed to refrain from implementing a completely unnecessary public health policy at the time, the trucker vaccine mandate.

Introducing a vaccine mandate currently, at this point in time in the pandemic, really makes no sense. We've learned over the last two months, with the prevalence of the omicron variant, that we now have viral spread occurring throughout our population. I know many people within my community, vaccinated, unvaccinated, that have been exposed and infected with the omicron variant. We also see that currently in our hospitals about 70 per cent of the people in hospital with COVID-19 have been vaccinated. So we are at a point in time where I believe we can move in a direction where we allow the individuals to take responsibility for their decision-making, and then we move away from government dictates.

But I believe the Prime Minister, Prime Minister Trudeau, ignited this emergency. He added fuel to the fire by name-calling those that opposed his choice to implement the trucker vaccine mandate and now expects Canadians to just trust him with their future. Sure, they've now revoked the Emergencies Act, that they just put in a couple of days ago, but I believe that they invoked it irresponsibly. I do not believe that, as is stated in the motion, they had met the threshold that the law required. To invoke the Emergencies Act to essentially deal with a parking problem in Ottawa: it's a serious stretch to say that that met the conditions for invoking the Emergencies Act. I would argue that it did not.

I think the Prime Minister and the federal government introduced a completely unnecessary vaccine mandate on truckers, who largely are, at their workplace, isolated from everyone around them. They're largely by themselves in their truck going up and down the highway delivering goods. The Prime Minister added fuel to the fire. Those that opposed the policy: he called them names, called them a fringe minority, racist, misogynist. That leads us to no good. To resort to name-calling because people did not agree with the health policy that was being introduced was irresponsible, unnecessary. I think that that did not help.

Now the Prime Minister pretends over the weekend that there's a national emergency, a national threat to our democracy, and has used the Emergencies Act to address the parking problem in Ottawa, essentially the equivalent, I would suggest, of using a firehose to put out a candle.

Mr. Speaker, we know that in this country the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is in place to protect individuals, their rights from government tyranny. We also understand that it is up to government to demonstrably prove or provide evidence when it is necessary to interfere with those freedoms that Canadians hold so dear. I believe that after two years of individuals being willing to restrict their freedoms for the good of all, citizens of this country – I believe that they were at the point that they felt that now it was their turn to actually be responsible for their decisions, for their future, for their families' future. I truly respect the ability of Canadians, of Albertans to be able to make those decisions based off the information that they now have.

The trucker vaccine mandate is bad policy. I think the Prime Minister felt that it was a health policy that was necessary. I don't understand his logic based off the experience that we've had over the last couple of months. I think that when we take a look at how the western world was moving away from restrictions and then to introduce this specific policy, I believe that it was an unnecessary restriction and simply an egregious expression of abuse of power by the federal government.

At this time I think it's imperative that governments move in a direction to help our society heal, that governments move in a direction to understand what was done, what could be considered done well, the things that were maybe not so good, and the things that should never happen again. I do believe that we need to have a full evaluation of whether or not the cure was necessary in regard to government mandates and restrictions and lockdowns or if we have opportunity to see that we maybe could have handled the emergency in a better way.

Currently I think in our society we have largely a social issue. Division within our society has grown, and we need to be able to address the need to heal within our communities, within our families, within Alberta, within Canada. A lot of healing takes place in society when individuals feel like they are free, living within their responsibilities, and able to collaborate together with others around them. For future prospects, for the ability to have hope for the future, it largely hinges on their ability to feel free within their society.

5:50

Instead of liberty I believe the federal government chose even more restrictions, and instead of freedom our federal government chose to grab even more power and control through the Emergencies Act to essentially address a problem of their own making. I believe that, like in Motion 10, item (c), the "invocation of the Emergencies Act constitutes an unnecessary intrusion into provincial jurisdiction under the Constitution of Canada." I condemn the use of the Emergencies Act at this time. Prime Minister Trudeau ignited this emergency, added fuel to the fire, and now expects Canadians to trust him with their futures.

I think it's time to move on. I am very glad that the federal government has decided to revoke the Emergencies Act. I think that as we move forward, history will show that it was an abuse of what the intention of the Emergencies Act was and that we should take this as a precedent of when not to use it, not as a precedent of when to use it.

With that, I conclude my remarks, Speaker, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important item.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for recognizing me here today. I will most certainly be speaking in favour of Motion 10 today. I don't know if I've ever seen a more tumultuous time in my lifetime. For two years I have watched as communities, church congregations, and families have fought and argued about what they individually think is the right path with this COVID pandemic. Should there be restrictions? Shouldn't there be restrictions? What restrictions should there be? Should only the cities be restricted and the rural communities not be restricted?

Then what about the moving goalposts? First, it was just two weeks. Then we were debating what businesses were essential. Then we shifted from saying that all health care workers and truckers were heroes to saying that only the vaccinated health care workers and truckers were heroes. Now we have a Prime Minister

that invoked the War Measures Act, now called the emergencies measures act, which allows him to freeze bank accounts of anyone who donated to the freedom convoy. And some wonder why the people are upset.

Mr. Speaker, the difference between democracy and dictatorship is that in a democracy individuals have the right to peacefully protest actions that they do not agree with and that they are allowed to do so without the fear of persecution from the government. Weeks ago many courageous truckers and everyday Canadians decided to take a stand against government overreach that violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is completely irrelevant whether the Prime Minister agrees with the protesters or not. They have the right to peacefully protest decisions that they feel make them second-class citizens. These protesters are not the fringe minority that the Prime Minister repugnantly stated they were. Instead, they represent the silent majority of Canadians that are fed up with the changing goalposts.

For two years Canadians have jumped through every hoop they were asked to jump through: weddings missed, funerals of loved ones viewed only on Zoom, parents not able to attend their kids' hockey games, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. One grandfather called me up a year and a half ago and told me that he didn't want to live if he couldn't see his grandchildren. He lives in a seniors' home and wanted to go out and visit his grandchildren. When he tried to leave, the staff told him that they couldn't stop him from leaving but they could stop him from coming back. He had nowhere else to go, so, in his own words, he said: I went back into my room, sat down in my overstuffed chair, and turned on the news, just to be more depressed by watching who was being bombed and murdered.

People wanted their lives back and got tired of waiting for politicians to get their ducks in a row, so they did what any frustrated individual would do. They peacefully protested. This movement represents the majority of Albertans that want their lives back. They want normal back. They are sick and tired of being unable to go about their lives without having to constantly show a QR code.

Now, to be clear, Mr. Speaker, I have always stated that I don't support the illegal protests. The rule of law protects our entire society. I am a lawmaker, not a lawbreaker, as some in this House have stated in the past.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has constantly shown that he will meet with pretty much any controversial figure. He has met with the likes of Joshua Boyle and Greta Thunberg. Yet when a bunch of hard-working Canadians come calling, the Prime Minister not only refuses to meet with them but abdicated his responsibility of leadership and went into hiding for weeks. When the Prime Minister finally did emerge, he decided to go from zero to a hundred by invoking the emergencies measures act for the first time in Canadian history.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for the vast majority these protesters were peaceful: bouncy castles for the kids and singalongs for the adults. I never saw them looting stores or burning cars like we saw a few summers ago from another group of protesters who were not being peaceful. How do these peaceful protesters represent a threat to our country? Instead, it would appear that the Prime Minister's use of the emergencies measures act is just a heavy-handed approach aimed at punishing the protesters and their supporters by seizing their bank accounts and assets.

Mr. Speaker, I have received calls from single mothers who gave \$20 to the freedom convoy GoFundMe account that they have their bank accounts frozen and are unable to buy groceries for their children. Jagmeet Singh's brother-in-law gave \$13,000 to the freedom convoy. I wonder if the NDP in this Chamber have asked their federal cousin if he thinks his brother-in-law's bank account

should be frozen as well, or are they working a double standard? Is it that everyone but the Liberals and NDP should be held to this law?

I have other questions that the NDP and every Albertan should be asking themselves. Seeing as only \$1 million of the GoFundMe money was actually disbursed to the freedom convoy organizers and the rest was returned or kept by governments, whose bank account should be frozen? Should only those who were part of the \$1 million that was disbursed have their bank accounts frozen, or should everyone who had the intent of donating to the freedom convoy be frozen as well? And how do we even know which people's money actually got through?

Mr. Speaker, you can see the incongruity with the NDP's and their best friend Justin Trudeau's approach. No, this is just complete bollocks, and the NDP-Liberal overlords know it. Perhaps that's why just this afternoon the Prime Minister revoked the implementation of the emergencies measures act, which I'm sure Canadians are elated to hear, but it brings up a few very interesting questions. ATB is a provincial Crown corporation owned by the Alberta government and the hard-working taxpayers of Alberta. What steps would have been taken to protect Alberta's bank and their assets from Trudeau's overreach?

Also, recently Chrystia Freeland spoke about cancelling the insurance of those in the freedom convoy. Insurance and vehicle registration, as you know, Mr. Speaker, are provincial jurisdictions, yet I'm hearing from people losing their insurance and registration.

How are we going to protect our provincial jurisdiction in this matter and make sure that those Albertans get back their insurance and registration?

The emergencies measures act retroactively determined that these protesters were illegal and that anyone who had donated to the cause was committing an illegal act. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. The law was implemented before it was passed. What happened to due process? It allows for the punishment of individuals who decided to donate small amounts to a cause that was not initially illegal. The peaceful protesters have left on their own accord, and those who are left have been cleared from Ottawa, the Ambassador Bridge, and Coutts.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour of Motion 10, and I think that it is the duty of all elected representatives in this House to stand up to protect the rights of peaceful protest and to send a strong message to the Prime Minister and to everyone that we will not allow Albertans' freedoms and liberties to be eroded ever again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner has timed his remarks very appropriately because the time is now 6 o'clock, and that means that the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	5
Murray John “Jack” Campbell, May 14, 1931, to December 21, 2021	5
Introduction of Visitors	5
Statement by the Speaker	
Rotation of Questions and Members’ Statements, Chamber Practices during the Spring 2022 Sitting	5
Members’ Statements	
Speech from the Throne	5
Postsecondary Education	5
COVID-19 Related Restrictions Removal and Postpandemic Reflections	6
Government Record	6
Federal Single-use Plastics Regulations	6
Health Care Workers	7
Viking Cup	7
Prime Minister of Canada	15
University of Calgary	15
Oral Question Period	
Private Health Care Services	7
Government Policies and Cost of Living	8, 10
Coumts Border Crossing Blockade	8
Premier’s Leadership	9
Road Construction and Maintenance in Fort McMurray	9
Red Deer Regional Hospital Expansion	10
Hydrogen Industry	11
Calgary Downtown Revitalization	12
Government Policies and Women	12
Hospital Emergency and Obstetric Services in Northeast Alberta	13
Teacher Retention	14
AISH and Income Support Indexation	14
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees	15
Notices of Motions	15
Tabling Returns and Reports	16
Motions under Standing Order 42	
Coumts Border Crossing Blockade	16
Orders of the Day	17
Government Motions	
Committee Membership Appointments	17
Child and Youth Advocate	17
Evening Sittings	17
Amendments to Standing Orders	17
Physical Distancing in Legislature Chamber	18
Emergencies Act	22
Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor’s Speech	19

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