



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, March 29, 2022

Day 17

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 30th Legislature**  
Third Session

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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)  
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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),  
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Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UC)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)

Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UC)  
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    Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
    Leader of the Official Opposition  
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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC)  
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Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, QC, Calgary-Elbow (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, QC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
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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Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
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Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
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Jacqueline Lovely	Parliamentary Secretary to the Associate Minister of Status of Women
Nathan Neudorf	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Parks for Water Stewardship
Jeremy Nixon	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Community and Social Services for Civil Society
Searle Turton	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy
Dan Williams	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Culture and for la Francophonie

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**Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Rowswell  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jones

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Gray  
Hunter  
Phillips  
Rehn  
Singh

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Neudorf  
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Bilous  
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Irwin  
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**Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply**

Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

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Frey  
Milliken  
Rosin  
Stephan  
Yao  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Carson  
Dang  
Frey  
Gotfried  
Hunter  
Loewen  
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**Select Special Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee**

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**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Goehring  
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Long  
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**Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

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Hanson  
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**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Motions

#### Federal Carbon Tax Increase

18. Mr. Kenney moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly call on the government of Canada to stop its planned April 1, 2022, increase of the carbon tax to \$50 per tonne and its further plan to increase the carbon tax to \$170 per tonne given that Canadian families are struggling with the highest inflation in 30 years.

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Getson]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before the Assembly this evening, Government Motion 18. Are there others wishing to speak? I'm not sure. Is the Member for Grande Prairie rising to speak or standing for other reasons?

**Mrs. Allard:** Wishing to speak.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure for what other reason I would rise, but I appreciate the opportunity to speak this evening. I'll keep my comments brief. I'm sure there are many that want to speak to this motion this evening.

I think it's pretty obvious, given the context that we're living in, the circumstance that we're living in, that this doesn't make any sense, this additional carbon tax at this time in history. I would say that if I spoke on the statistics and the data coming out of my constituency – and I'm pretty sure it would be similar if we polled all 87 representatives here in the Chamber – the emerging issue right now is cost of living. We hear it every day in our constituencies. We hear it every day in question period. It's not new information to anyone in politics, and it's certainly not new information to any of the constituents who are living with and facing those increased costs. So I find it mystifying why the federal government would choose this time in history to pile on more additional cost to Canadians and to Albertans.

I'm in my 50s, Mr. Speaker. This is the worst inflation that I recall seeing. Certainly, Statistics Canada tells us it's the worst inflation in over three decades. At the same time we hear the NDP, particularly in question period, talk to us about: "What are we doing to help Albertans? You know, what are we doing to assist them with the challenges of the inflationary pressures that we are experiencing in our province?" Yet it's my understanding that they're supporting the federal carbon tax initiative and their allies in Justin Trudeau and his government. It's mystifying. I don't understand it. My constituents don't understand it. It doesn't make any sense, and I don't think it serves to make life better or, actually, to achieve the climate goals.

You know, we talk about climate change – and I believe it's an important issue that we do need to talk about – but from my perspective I see that it's clearly a global problem, and it can't be fixed by a local solution. Even if all of Canada changed dramatically, we would make a dent, barely, in the overall impact of climate change. We're responsible in so many other ways.

Alberta, for example, has the most ethically sourced and responsibly produced oil in the world – in the world, Mr. Speaker – so what would serve better than to have more production here in Alberta? If we're not producing it here, they're going to be producing it somewhere.

As the world demand for fossil fuels increases – we know that that's happening right now, particularly coming out of the pandemic – we know that there are pressures from developing countries, that there are pressures from fiscal stimulus dollars looking to build more infrastructure than would typically be occurring, and as that happens, there's a rise in demand for fossil fuels. They go hand in hand. At this time in history we choose, then, to tax that further? It makes no sense. I believe that we have a responsibility in this House to stand up for the people of our province, to stand up for those men and women working in this industry, and, by extension, to stand up for our country, Mr. Speaker.

I pulled some statistics today. Canada only creates 1.6 per cent of the world's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions presently. I really believe it's a mistake to impose significant economic costs for a trivial impact. Even if we got rid of all the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the effect it would have on climate change is less than two-tenths of a degree in terms of the warming effect. I don't want to trivialize it, but, Mr. Speaker, there have got to be more effective mechanisms and levers to pull than this, particularly at this time.

I found it interesting as I was reading about the Paris accord today. Under the Paris accord Canada's current emissions target is to reduce our emissions to 30 per cent lower than 2005 emissions levels – 2005, Mr. Speaker; that's 17 years ago – and we're supposed to do this by 2030. According to climate action tracker progress reports it is projected that in 2030 we will be emitting approximately 250 megatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> when in 2005 there were approximately 240 megatonnes. Mr. Speaker, although I'm sure everyone can do the math, this would mean that we have less than eight years to reduce our emissions to lower than they were 17 years ago. It just does not make sense. It's not realistic, and I think we need common-sense vetting in our policies. I'm calling on the Prime Minister and his cabinet, and I'm calling on his partner, Mr. Singh, you know, the de facto Deputy Prime Minister. I'm calling on them to think this through and to do what's right by Canadians and certainly by Albertans.

I also just wanted to talk for a minute about this. You know, I live in the north of the province – I'm from Grande Prairie – and I think about the impact that has on families. We're taxing families to heat their homes. We hear every day the complaints about the cost of utilities – and that is an issue; there's no question – but now we're going to support increasing the cost to heat your home? It makes no sense. It will have a disproportionate impact on those at the margin. I realize that there may be a rebate for the lowest income, but somebody is at the margin of the policy. Somebody will be caught where they make just enough money that they bear the full impact of the carbon tax, thereby reducing their income, their living income. I just don't understand the thought process.

I think that it's crazy at this time in history to consider adding a carbon tax. You know, we're heading into a period of growth, but we have to be careful. We could head into a period of stagflation and create ourselves a whole other level of chaos than we've seen so far. And Albertans are tired, Mr. Speaker. They're tired of all the years of loss. They're tired of all the years of setbacks. Finally, we're in a period of growth thanks to policies of this government, thanks to a Finance minister who brought in a balanced budget against all odds, thanks to investment attraction practices, thanks to Alberta's robust recovery plan. We're seeing hope for the first time in over seven years. Hope. And then the federal government is

going to dash that hope with a carbon tax? I am happy to rise this evening to speak against this. I'm happy to support Motion 18, and I'm happy to call on Justin Trudeau and his NDP partners to think twice and to cancel their plans to jack up the carbon tax.

With that, I will cede my time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also my pleasure to be able to rise tonight in favour of Government Motion 18. I know full well, from filling my own gas tank and buying groceries this weekend, that prices are exceptionally high, and it's that way for all Albertans right now. Families are unfortunately having to make the decision whether to pay their utility bills or go to the store and get groceries, and in just a few days the federal Liberal-NDP coalition government will make it even harder for these very same Canadians and for all Albertans by increasing the carbon tax to \$50 per tonne. As a Legislature we cannot let this happen.

Albertans are already facing the highest inflation we've seen in over 30 years, and just two weeks ago the consumer price index reported the rise in costs between 2021 and 2022. Here in Alberta every single category has seen an increase. Energy: 31.3 per cent compared to last year. Food went up 6.2 per cent over the same time last year. Mr. Speaker, on a year-over-year basis Albertans were paying 5.5 per cent more in February '22 than they did in the same month in 2021 according to the consumer price index. The national average was up 5.7 per cent. If this federal government and their NDP allies want to make life easier for everyone, stopping this carbon tax increase is the most logical and common-sense solution this week.

Right now this federal government is out of touch and disconnected with everyday Canadians, and they need to hear their cries for help. Unfortunately, the reality is that this trust-fund Prime Minister just doesn't get what everyday Albertans are going through right now: choosing to pay one bill or the other, deciding where to fill up their tanks to get to work, or to buy food for their family. Gas prices are already extremely high with the cost of energy across the country, and now a rise in the carbon tax would simply mean less money in the pockets of Albertans.

The Premier told Albertans yesterday that this increase would mean that someone driving a small, little Honda Civic will end up paying around \$70 just to fill their tank, and that's only if our gas prices stay relatively level. This carbon tax increase is something many Albertans can't and should not have to bear. And it's not like it's only going to happen one time, Mr. Speaker. No. This is only the beginning of carbon tax increases. We know that every single year until 2030 Albertans will see increases in the cost of everything: on their food, their gas, utilities, clothing, furniture. You name it, and it will cost more.

7:40

With this first increase coming in just a few days, Albertans can expect to pay about \$600 more a year, either directly or indirectly, as a result. By 2030 that number jumps to \$2,000. Two thousand dollars. As we work to recover on every level from the COVID-19 pandemic, now is simply not the time to be putting even more stress on the hard-working people of this province. We need to be doing all we can to support them, like this government's commitment to cut the cost of utilities through a \$150 gas rebate or removing Alberta's tax on gasoline. They are small support measures, but they're needed to combat the rising costs that we are going to see through this unnecessary carbon tax increase.

Mr. Speaker, you do not raise taxes during inflationary times. To quote my good friend and ally the Minister of Finance: in times of

high inflation you spend less, borrow less, and tax less. That's good advice for Mr. Trudeau. Albertans need the support from this government and all members of the Legislature to make their lives more affordable as we see the highest inflation rates in recent years.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just families who will feel the impact of the carbon tax. Businesses will also be adversely affected as they see the cost of operations rise. In my riding of Livingstone-Macleod, where agriculture is one of the main businesses, our farmers and the ag sector as a whole will also bear exceptional burdens when dealing with the rising costs. With carbon tax increases, those industries will be forced to pay more to grow the crops that feed us. The expenses for fertilizer, for equipment, for seed, for maintenance will all increase. The cost of harvesting in the fall will also increase.

Unfortunately, the reality is that the imposition of this carbon tax is driving things like the production of fertilizer south of the border at a time when we should be looking to increase production right here at home in Alberta. The carbon tax increase introduced by the federal government is not one that should be supported as it makes life more expensive for all Albertans.

I encourage members of the opposition NDP to stand up to their friend and ally Justin Trudeau and, instead, to stand with Albertans, Albertans who are calling on the federal Liberals and the NDP to stop picking their pockets and leave more money for them to spend on the essentials of life. The message to Ottawa is simple, Mr. Speaker: stop the federal carbon tax.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others on Government Motion 18? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Motion 18, which reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly [of Alberta] call on the government of Canada to stop its planned April 1, 2022, increase of the carbon tax to \$50 per tonne and its further plan to increase the carbon tax to \$170 per tonne given that Canadian families are struggling with the highest inflation in 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, families here in Alberta are already struggling to make ends meet due to the rising cost of inflation, yet the Liberal-NDP alliance is set to increase the carbon tax yet again on April 1, 2022. Unfortunately, this is not a bad April Fool's Day prank. This is very real and will make life even more expensive for every single Albertan.

Over the past few years we have seen the economic impact that the policies of the Liberal-NDP alliance have had on Albertans. They have already made life exponentially more expensive on Alberta families. Gas costs more, groceries cost more, and homes cost more. Nearly everything we buy costs more than it did a short time ago. This has left many Alberta families grappling with how to pay the bills. I think we can all agree, Mr. Speaker, that this is not the time for the Liberal-NDP idealism. This is a time to look at ways to make life more affordable for Albertans, not more expensive.

We know that the recently announced Liberal-NDP alliance is bad news for Alberta. It will cost the country billions in new programs, will contribute to further inflation, and will make it even more difficult on our energy sector to get our products to market, all this at a time when the world needs more Canadian energy to displace dictator oil from countries like Russia. What's more, Mr. Speaker, is that the inflationary policies of the Liberal-NDP coalition will continue to drive up the cost of living. Policies of reckless spending, money printing, and driving up energy costs by tripling the carbon tax will hit Albertans hard.

Our government has continually fought against the federal government's intrusion into areas of provincial jurisdiction, and we will continue to do so. We have long maintained that the provinces have a better understanding of local circumstances and should maintain jurisdiction over climate change policy development. We challenged the federal government's carbon tax all the way to the Supreme Court to assert that the provinces should retain their jurisdictional authority to do what they are placed best to do, work with the taxpayers and industries to create a better future.

When our government was first elected in 2019, we brought forth legislation that eliminated the provincial carbon tax imposed by the previous NDP government. In response to this, Justin Trudeau imposed his federal carbon tax on our province, a carbon tax that is set to make life more expensive for Albertans every year on April 1. This annual \$15-a-tonne increase will bring the carbon tax to \$50 a tonne in 2022 and \$170 a tonne in 2030. To combat the impact of rising energy costs on Albertans, our government has announced that it will remove the provincial excise tax of 13 cents per litre on transportation fuel starting April 1 as well.

Furthermore, in Budget 2022 we announced consumer protection support through an energy rebate program that will begin in October 2022 to help Albertans manage natural gas prices. Our government will provide a \$150 retroactive rebate to help Albertans cover the high cost that many families and businesses paid over the last three months. Alberta's government is working with utilities and regulators to determine the exact details, including rebate timing and distribution approach. Consumers who use less than 2,500 gigajoules annually will be eligible, which includes most households, small apartment buildings, farms, and small industrial commercial operations. The energy affordability program will run until March 31, 2023, and the rebate will be triggered if the company's regulated rate is above \$6.50 a gigajoule.

Mr. Speaker, we hope that the opposition support our motion and stand with Albertans, but as often is the case, they will likely support their friend and ally Justin Trudeau. We know that the NDP isn't interested in making life more affordable for working families. They are only interested in pursuing their far-left ideology, which neglects the needs of everyday people. Make no mistake; the opposition supports carbon taxes, and they support the NDP-Trudeau alliance. I am proud that our UCP government is working hard to support working families here in Alberta and that we will continue to do so.

I will be voting in favour of Government Motion 18 and would encourage all members of this House to join me in standing up for Albertans against yet another tax increase. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon is next.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege always to stand up and speak in the House and tonight to address Government Motion 18.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly call on the government of Canada to stop its planned April 1, 2022, increase of the carbon tax to \$50 per tonne and its further plan to increase the carbon tax to \$170 per tonne given that Canadian families are struggling with the highest inflation in 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard a lot about how this carbon tax is going to kill jobs and how the Trudeau government is doing something that is really counterproductive when it comes to addressing the whole issue of carbon. I guess I want to focus my remarks tonight on an issue that really just is rock – it's foundational. Either we can tax to try and get rid of carbon production and kill jobs and lower people's standards of living and increase inflation and make it harder on Albertans and Canadians in general, or we can create

wealth and still attain our carbon goals. If I have a choice between which path I would rather walk down, it would be to create jobs, to create wealth, to address the carbon issues, and, in the process, make Canadians and Albertans have the capacity to be able to take care of their families and to move forward and to create a prosperous nation and province.

You might ask: well, what can we do to do that? How do we create jobs? How do we deal with carbon while creating jobs? It's been my privilege as a Member of the Legislative Assembly to meet with a wide range of people and a wide range of businesses, and I'm going to present just four – four – of the suggestions that I would bring to the Liberal government for how we can create wealth while at the same time reducing carbon rather than having a carbon tax.

7:50

For instance, I believe that one of the areas that we should be looking at in this province and in this country is geothermal energy, and I believe that there's a company in Calgary by the name of Eavor that has cracked the nut. They have the capacity to drill down. You can take two abandoned wells. You can drill down 3.5 kilometres into the surface of the Earth in Alberta. You will hit temperatures of somewhere around 100 to 110 degrees Celsius. You then drill laterally two wells five kilometres apart. You're drilling laterally until those drills come together in the middle, and you create a latticework under the ground like a big radiator, and the water goes down, heats up. Warm water wants to rise, comes to the surface. You harvest the heat. You put the water back down. Because it's cold, it goes down, goes through a second set of laterals, goes back up, harvest the heat, goes back down, goes through the first set of laterals, back up, and you've created what we call a geothermal loop. This technology, created in Alberta, has the capacity to generate electricity, and there is literally no carbon being produced.

They are presently drilling the world's deepest well. It's going to go down 7.5 kilometres into the bedrock, and it is going to allow us to get the heat that we need to be able to produce electricity at a price point that's going to be competitive with natural gas. Ladies and gentlemen, we have the capacity to generate electricity with geothermal energy that is going to eliminate the carbon and, at the same time, produce jobs. In one of the proposals that they have brought to the federal and provincial governments, they would have created 22,000 jobs in the drilling industry over a period of five years – 22,000 jobs – drilling wells, dealing with abandoned and orphaned wells: creating jobs, creating wealth, creating electricity, and reducing carbon at the same time.

I would suggest that we could look at Tidewater Midstream in my constituency, that has received money from the Alberta government – I believe it was something like \$20 million or \$25 million – in order to create a hydrogen project at the Brazeau River plant, and as a part of that they will be using carbon capture to be able to deal with the carbon that they produce as they are making their hydrogen.

At the same time I've introduced them to another company in my constituency, and this company and Tidewater Midstream are starting to have conversations about matching a vertical greenhouse to Tidewater Midstream where they will take carbon. Rather than pumping it down into the ground through carbon capture, they will be able to use the carbon dioxide to help the growing of strawberries through a vertical farm operation, a neat little idea that is also used to create jobs. I believe that in this project there would be something like about 25 jobs that are created while at the same time taking carbon out of circulation or at least putting it into strawberries, not talking about the amount of carbon that's going to be pulled away

because we're no longer having to transport all the way from the southern United States to get those strawberries up into Alberta.

Industrial hemp. We've been working for a while trying to create an industrial hemp industry, and I will give the opposition its due. I can remember having a conversation with a former minister of the environment who gave me a suggestion that if we were going to create an industrial hemp industry, perhaps we needed to speak a little greater than just out of Drayton Valley. So we created the Alberta Hemp Alliance from her suggestions, and I can say that the Alberta Hemp Alliance has grown to be the provincial advocacy for the industrial hemp industry in Alberta and that they've been working hard at growing and enticing businesses to come into Alberta in order to be able to create an industrial hemp industry.

One of the things that I learned very early on was that when you grow a field of hemp, industrial hemp takes five times the amount of carbon out of the air in one year than a traditional North American forest does in 20 years. It's a huge carbon sink.

Presently we grow about 40,000 acres of industrial hemp in the province of Alberta, and I know that I have been working with a couple of companies over the last little while, trying to encourage them to come into Alberta. It looks like they're going to. It looks like they're going to be spending about \$150 million in the next two years building a seed-processing plant and providing more decortication facilities for the province of Alberta. Their plans: they want to see at least a half a million acres of industrial hemp in Alberta.

They are going to be taking the hurd from that industrial hemp, and they're going to be creating little pellets, and those pellets are going to be sent down to Indiana, where they're going to be used by one of the major international car companies to produce plastic. They want to have completely renewable industrial plastic for every one of their vehicles by 2030. They're going to be creating 50 jobs potentially in one of the constituencies in this province, that shall remain nameless for now, and will be taking huge amounts of carbon out of the air for every acre that we increase. They are now presently having conversations with some of the major farms, the larger farms, in the province.

By the way, this has the potential to be the highest paying crop in Alberta because they will be paid for the seed, they'll be paid for the long fibre, and they'll be paid for the hurd, the inner-side, woody part of the fibre of this plant. It's going to be creating jobs for Albertans, it's going to be diversifying the economy, it's going to be taking carbon out of the cycle, and it's going to be good. We have the capacity to deal with the carbon issue, not by taxing Albertans and by making people poor but by growing and creating wealth and addressing the carbon issue through the technology that we have.

Finally, another example would be Cream Energy in my constituency, that has produced a solar-powered process for addressing methane leakage in wells. They believe that they could reduce the methane leakage in Alberta by a third – a third – through this process. That will actually save the company's money and make them more productive.

So when I speak to Motion 18 tonight, I speak from a position that rather than creating misery and heartache for families in Alberta and across this country by taxing and taking away their wealth and trying to force them into a pathway that may reduce carbon but is not going to be productive to their financial wealth and their health and their family life, let us look for those kinds of situations where we can create wealth, where we can use technology, where we can reduce the carbon. We can produce a strong, powerful, healthy, diversified Alberta economy, create the

wealth, and deal with the carbon. That would be my plea to the federal government rather than looking at a tired, old carbon tax.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Government Motion 18.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak in support of Government Motion 18. It's no secret that Albertans have had several hard years. Just as things are starting to look better, we get hit with massive inflation. Despite what the federal government would have you believe, inflation is present in just about every aspect of Albertans' everyday lives, and it's the highest it has been in 30 years.

One part of the pocketbook hit hardest by inflation is the price of groceries. Let's use meat as an example based on Stats Canada information. Currently grocery prices are one of the highest drivers of inflation and the cost of living in Alberta. To put that into perspective, back in 2007 10 pounds of potatoes was about \$4. Now we pay \$10. If we adjust for inflation, the current cost should actually be about \$5.50.

**8:00**

Of course, we all know that gas prices right now have skyrocketed. Today the cost of regular gas in Alberta is about \$1.66. In 2007 gas was 97 cents a litre, which means that when we adjust for inflation, the current gas price should be \$1.33.

Why am I bringing this up now, Mr. Speaker? Well, because the federal Liberal government is introducing a carbon tax increase that is set to take effect on April 1, this Friday, coincidentally also known as April Fool's Day. They're planning to increase the tax to \$50 per tonne. They have plans for it to reach \$170 per tonne in the near future. Only a week into the Liberal-NDP alliance and already Albertans – no, all Canadians – are suffering. The government's role is to look out for the people's best interest, not insert itself and its misinformed and misplaced ideology where it doesn't belong. When people are struggling to make ends meet and pay their bills, the Liberals and the NDP have no business pushing Canadians further down to make their political agenda come true.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in some areas of the world I've heard that the most destructive animal is the hippo. In Canada it turns out that the most destructive thing to our economy and everyday life is a hypocrite. What really gets me is the hypocrisy of the current Prime Minister. Do you think that while the rest of us Canadians are working hard and paying the cost of this carbon tax, the Prime Minister is doing the same? I mean, I'm sure that he will personally be paying the carbon tax out of his pocket on his next trip to the west coast to surf.

The hypocrisy of the federal Liberals doesn't end there. Just yesterday the federal government announced that they'll be purchasing 88 F-35s from Lockheed Martin. This comes only seven years after the Liberals vowed never to replace Canada's fighter jet fleet with the F-35, essentially throwing out all the hard work the former Prime Minister had done. [interjection] That's right. Back in 2015 Mr. Trudeau got up in front of Canadians and criticized the Conservative federal government for not justifying or explaining why Canada needed new fighter jets, and now they're making the very same purchase they were losing their heads over seven years ago. Given their crusade on anything with any emissions, I can only imagine that these new fighter jets are the electric version, Mr. Speaker.

I'm only bringing this up to point out the deep-seated two-facedness that seems to be at the core of the NDP and the Liberals. Albertans have every right to be upset since this federal government has decided to betray them once again. Mr. Speaker, the good news



is that on this side of the aisle we care about Albertans, which is why we continue to stand against the federal carbon tax being imposed on everyday working Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, rising household expenses are a pressing concern for everyone. In fact, a recent survey shows that more than half of Canadians cannot keep up with their bills. This goes for all bills. Albertans are feeling the pinch, with higher grocery bills and gas prices. I fail to see in what world an increased carbon tax is beneficial to Canadians.

We need to get something straight: there's no proof the carbon tax works for what they say they're trying to accomplish. The reality is that this is a fee imposed on everyday people and companies that is supposed to work as a pollution tax. The tax increases gasoline and electricity costs, therefore giving consumers a reason to switch to clean energy, apparently. The reason the goal is to set the tax at \$170 is because they believe that this will change consumer behaviour.

Unfortunately, the rising fuel costs also drive up the cost of everything else. For example, the cost of freight has skyrocketed from higher fuel costs. According to the International Monetary Fund researchers shipping costs are an important driver of inflation around the world, with the average cost of shipping a container on the world's transoceanic routes increasing sevenfold since March 2020.

When we took office in 2019, one of our first actions was to repeal the provincial carbon tax. At that time we gave gas stations and other fuel resellers 30 days to apply for a refund of the carbon tax paid when they purchased that fuel. Albertan fuel users had until the end of 2019 to apply for rebates regarding fuel use for an exempt purchase in 2017. We also removed the spending restrictions on existing carbon tax revenue, made sure the carbon tax was not charged on sales after it was repealed. We didn't do any of this because our government is working against the environment, like the NDP claims. We did so because there was no hard evidence that showed the carbon tax helped the environment in any way, shape, or form. You know what does help the environment? Clean energy. We've been working tirelessly to introduce clean and renewable energy in Alberta and make our energy processes greener.

Mr. Speaker, we are dedicated to protecting the environment, and we want to give Canadian companies a chance to spend the dollars that would go towards the carbon tax on technology that actually helps reduce their emissions. That's why many of those companies have set upstream emission targets and are working towards a net zero future.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the carbon taxing process, which, frankly, is backwards. The current plan places tax on domestic production. It makes no sense to tax Alberta oil exports while importing foreign oil without the same tax implications, Mr. Speaker. All we are doing is impeding the competitiveness and the progression of Canadian businesses.

Mr. Speaker, we need to continue to move forward in a way that Alberta is accustomed to, which is leading the globe in emissions reduction and environmental standards. That's what would serve Canada's interests, protect the environment, and pressure imports from dictatorial regimes with zero regard for climate change or the environment. There are ways to support people, strengthen the economy, and help the environment. If there's one thing we know for sure, it is that the carbon tax is not the way.

The federal carbon tax is not about helping the environment. It is about taking away jobs in our country and creating more avenues for foreign dictators who are friends with the Prime Minister and his allies. During times of high inflation I struggle to see why the federal government is adding insult to injury. Although we all know that historically the NDP has never been interested in making life

more affordable for working families, I hope they come to their senses and support our motion and stand with all Albertans against this federal imposition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On Government Motion 18 the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of Government Motion 18 and to talk about the harm the Liberal government continues to deal onto everyday families and individuals. We need to work together to get through to this newly formed federal NDP-Liberal alliance and to their supporters, who sit just across the aisle from us. From urban areas to rural areas everyone has felt the effect of the Trudeau carbon tax. This tax influences gas prices, grocery prices, increased utility prices, and the list goes on and on.

In the rural areas they have been forced to essentially stay home and not go out or drive over to a neighbour's. Every choice they make has a cost, especially now as these gas prices continue to rise. Just once I would like to see support from the members opposite to help fight the true cause of the rising cost of living, but they continue to support the Liberal agenda. Farmers have had to already deal with their profit margins shrinking from the first implementations of the carbon tax. Now, due to global events, they have been faced with skyrocketing fertilizer in recent weeks, just destroying their profit margins. Now the Liberal government continues to ignore them and has chosen to make their lives even more costly.

Even the parliamentary budget office seems to contradict the Prime Minister. In the report made by the PBO, it concluded that most households in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario will see a net loss from the carbon tax by 2030. By then they plan to have it increased to a staggering \$170 a tonne. Carbon taxes don't punish or deter the bigger companies from reducing their carbon footprints; they instead continue to show that they pass the costs on to consumers, which is not right.

The Liberal government has done nothing to stop these costs from being put onto everyday people. There is no reason why any family should have to choose to heat their home through minus 40 degree weather over the payment of other bills just because of the additional costs put on them. Farmers shouldn't have to deal with the uncontrollable cost to feed their livestock, fuel their equipment, and dry their grain. The carbon tax has done enough damage already. We need to find a more effective way to deal with emissions that doesn't pass the costs on to everyday consumers and producers. Even now we are seeing companies taking their own initiative to come up with cleaner ways to harvest resources and create renewable energy.

**8:10**

There are power plants reducing their carbon footprint by switching to natural gas. We see new, innovative systems that capture carbon more effectively. We are seeing all these exciting new things happen throughout our province, all in an effort to reduce carbon emissions. These efforts don't put those costs onto Albertans. No, these companies have made the changes and inventions with no government intervention.

The Liberal-NDP alliance must end for the sake of all Albertans. We hear the same thing every day from members opposite, day after day, that they are concerned about the rising costs to everyday Albertans. But instead of challenging the Liberal government when they are responsible for the aggressive rise in costs from their anti-Alberta policies, they instead misrepresent the facts in senseless

attacks on our government. If they truly care, they would fight right alongside with us.

I encourage all members here today to vote with me in sending a strong message to the Liberal government. No longer can they cater to their trust-fund and island-owning friends. The needs of Albertan and Canadian families must come first and the needs of the rich be put on the back burner. This reckless and damaging behaviour to every Canadian needs to stop, and it needs to stop today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise this evening and speak on Motion 18. I will tell you that I have heard the cries of many of my constituents regarding the increase in the carbon tax and just general intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, and those cries are not falling on deaf ears. I am very frustrated that I have heard very little, if anything, from members opposite. It sounds to me like they're deeply entrenched in the new alliance with the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. Mind you, I'd be upset, too, if my dad got remarried and didn't tell me either. What can I say? The reality is that the NDs across the way – I can certainly assume that they are not going to be voting in favour of this motion, predominantly because, well, they're going to do what their new daddy says.

Canadians are dreading, though, what is coming on April 1, Mr. Speaker, which is the day that Justin Trudeau, the new leader of the members opposite, and his coalition with the NDP will take it upon themselves to raise the carbon tax, punishing families for heating their homes and driving themselves to work. It's shocking – shocking – that they would think that this is the right time to do that. It's just utterly tone deaf. The Prime Minister has abandoned his integrity by ignoring the desperate calls of Canadians, and this is the reality we face.

The former NDP government in Alberta worked together with Justin Trudeau and his Liberals to instigate a tax on Albertans, attempting to convince them that it would be a good thing for the province. As usual, they couldn't have been more wrong. Mr. Speaker, the NDP's job-killing carbon tax in Alberta was responsible for record-high unemployment as well as billions of investment dollars leaving our province faster than the Member for Edmonton-South could delete his hard drive.

I hate to say it, but things could actually be worse. Everyday Albertans count their lucky stars that the NDP is not in government as we face the highest rate of inflation in 30 years. During the NDP's one-and-done government Albertans realized that taxing families on the use of natural gas and electricity will not decrease emissions. Let me restate that: taxing families for heating their homes will not make the weather outside warmer, okay? So why would they place a financial burden on the shoulders of Canadians and Albertans when they're already struggling with the cost of living?

We continue to see Justin Trudeau's leadership fail as he divides the country. The way that he spoke to Canadians regarding the COVID-19 pandemic was proof that he has no interest in healing our country following such tough years. With a clear political agenda Justin Trudeau is acting mercilessly and has committed to raising the carbon tax by the end of the week. Our government was elected by over a million Albertans with a mandate to fight against Ottawa for a fair deal. Albertans are not interested in funding Justin Trudeau's theatrical politics with a made-up carbon tax to fight climate change. This isn't a realistic approach, nor is it a fair approach for families who are struggling to pay their bills every month.

As of right now Canadians can expect to pay even more for heating their homes starting April 1. They can expect to pay more for filling their cars with fuel to take their kids to school and to drive themselves to work. Families can expect to pay more for groceries, even higher than what they already pay today. Mr. Speaker, this is no small issue.

The NDP seems happy to ignore it, and I can't blame them, considering they are just as responsible for welcoming this carbon tax into Alberta as the Prime Minister himself. I would like to think that members opposite have enough common sense within their caucus to put aside the theatrics and work with our government in standing up to Ottawa, but of course I won't hold my breath given their thriving relationship with Justin Trudeau. Now, I guess they realize that, just like with daddy, if you make daddy upset, he won't let you borrow the car, so why would they make daddy upset today by going after him and his new carbon tax? Our government will continue to stand against this tax burden on behalf of Alberta families with or without the help of the members opposite. I'm certainly not going to hold my breath to hear one of them stand up today and speak against this.

Justin Trudeau has committed to raising the cost of the carbon tax every year until it reaches an astounding \$170 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is more than four times what Canadians are paying right now. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the members in this Chamber: I want you to know that I will continue to stand in this Chamber until I am blue in the face and speak on this because that's what Albertans elected me to do. That's what Albertans elected every single member in this Chamber to do. I would hope that members would share the outrage that I have for the federal government. And to members in this Chamber, through you to them, that share that outrage: let me get a hear, hear. No hear, hear?

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Schow:** There we go. The outrage, Mr. Speaker, is there.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that for the past couple of months we have watched the cost of utilities and fuel skyrocket to record-high prices, costing the average Albertan significantly more each month, and I think Albertans would be interested to know that it was not any policy change of the UCP that caused this inflation. To put it simply, the rise in costs has been caused by the reckless spending of the previous NDP government – shocker – combined with the ridiculous carbon tax made by Justin Trudeau.

On that, for example, Mr. Speaker, I have many constituents who are concerned about utility costs, and they ask me what is going on. The answer is simple. The members opposite overbuilt the grid by \$7 billion, saddling them with debt for years to come. I find it interesting that in question period they lob insults across the aisle, suggesting that we're doing nothing to fix the problem that they created. Shame on the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, it's astounding to have the nerve to come into this Chamber and suggest that we're not doing anything to try to fix a problem that they created, when in reality we have taken a reasonable approach, offering a \$150 rebate for the vast majority of Albertans to help balance out the cost of utilities. Now, the members opposite love to suggest that it's only \$50. It's \$50 a month for three months, which, for those whom math is hard, is \$150 over three months. That's the total. Get out your calculators. In addition to that, though, the Premier has committed to removing 13 cents per litre from the provincial fuel tax at the pumps. That is a real, measurable difference for Albertans who need to fill up their vehicles, who can't walk or take the bus.

And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that constituents in Cardston-Siksika don't have that luxury. Oftentimes many of them have to

go into town – and by town I mean Lethbridge – to get groceries, to go to work, to take kids to hockey practice or swimming or whatever they need to do. There’s no bus for that. The members opposite should be ashamed that they didn’t speak up when their leader said that, insinuated that Albertans could walk or take the bus. How ridiculous is that?

**8:20**

Nearly 2 million homes will benefit from the electricity rebate. Here’s the best news of all: Albertans don’t even need to apply. Albertans don’t need to apply, Mr. Speaker. The rebate credit will be automatically added to nearly 2 million utility bills across Alberta. I’m proud of the approach our government has taken in responding to this crisis. I can’t say I’m surprised, but I am quite disappointed in the Prime Minister and his refusal to offer Canadians the relief they need, putting a halt to his ridiculous plan to increase the carbon tax at the end of the week.

With that said, I would encourage members of this Assembly, all members, to think about the message they are sending should they vote against this motion. I don’t anticipate or try to predict the outcome of a vote, but I don’t expect any members on the government side to be voting against this. My optimism is not quite so high for members opposite. They stand up in question period with no limits on their frustration for the high costs we are facing now, and I hope that they will think with some reasonableness about how this carbon tax hike is going to further hurt the same Albertans they claim to represent.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I will simply say and encourage all members of this Chamber to vote in favour of Motion 18, to stand up to Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government as Albertans are facing an increase in the carbon tax on April 1, something that could not be – well, I guess it could be worse. But something I wish the Prime Minister would take into consideration, the realities that everyday Albertans and Canadians, for that matter, are facing, and that is increased costs of living, cost of food, cost to drive your vehicle. How does this make life better? How does this make life better for Canadians and for Albertans? The reality is that it doesn’t, so we call upon the Prime Minister to forgo his increase in the carbon tax, and I call on the members opposite to support Motion 18.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 6

#### Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2022

[Debate adjourned: Mr. Shepherd speaking]

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West on second reading of Bill 6.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in regard to Bill 6, Alberta’s emblems. I was very pleased to see that there was going to be a change in regard to the official mineral of Alberta, and I think that the choice of ammolite is very appropriate considering its value, its great beauty, and its important cultural significance for First Nations people in southern Alberta in particular. It’s interesting to see that this mineral is in fact quite widely dispersed around the world, but the particular iridescent form of it that we can find in southern Alberta is quite rare, and certainly either polished or made into different

sorts of jewellery, it has a very fine sort of opal-like iridescence, which I think is very, very popular.

I know that even quite a few years ago, when I was in Thailand, I saw ammolite in the shops and in jewellery stores in the capital, and there was, with an acquaintance of mine, a discussion about exporting this gemstone to Southeast Asia because people just found it so distinctive and unique.

Based on its value, both financial and cultural value, I believe this is an appropriate choice for the official gemstone for Alberta, and certainly I think that it is a tribute to the Blackfoot people of southern Alberta as well.

With that, I again reaffirm our support of this bill and of this choice, and I welcome further discussion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the minister. The hon. Minister of Culture to close debate.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise to conclude debate on second reading of Bill 6, the Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2022. As you know, ammolite is an important part of our heritage, our economy, our geology, in fact, our culture as well. Recognizing ammolite as Alberta’s official gemstone reflects the unique nature of the stone and, quite frankly, of our province as well.

It helps fulfill recommendation 25 of the Fair Deal Panel, because, Mr. Speaker, Alberta’s identity is unique and precious, as is the stone. It’s made special by our land, our mountains, our plains, our badlands, our natural resources, and also our human history, our culture, our economy, our spirit of resilience, and our people and their diversity. It’s all these things and more combined that create an amazing whole that is a particular Alberta identity, unique in Canada.

One of these unique parts is the organic gemstone ammolite. I’m actually wearing a pin made of it right now, Mr. Speaker. This gem is very special and unique, just like our province. Each cut of the gemstone is different. On the pin I’m wearing, it has a beautiful hue of yellow at the bottom, that, to me, represents the southern Alberta drylands. Then farther up it has a sparkling green, that symbolizes our province’s parklands. Then a bit further up, the green becomes more deeply luminescent and reminds me of our boreal forests. Then it turns to an incredible blue colour, that represents Alberta’s many lakes and rivers. Each stone has a story to tell, just like each Albertan has a story to tell, a unique story.

Mr. Speaker, gem-quality ammolite can be found almost exclusively in southern Alberta. It comes from the fossilized shells of molluscs known as ammonites, that lived in the inland Bearpaw Sea in what is now southern Alberta, which is why it’s found almost exclusively there. The tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy have collected ammonite shells for millennia and continue to collect them today. They consider some ammonite shell segments sacred, and they symbolize the good fortune needed to provide for the tribe’s prosperity and survival.

Ammolite is also part of Alberta’s economy, mined and used in jewellery for more than a century.

Mr. Speaker, currently there is no official gemstone of Alberta recognized in the Emblems of Alberta Act. If Bill 6 is passed, that will change. It will officially make ammolite an emblem of Alberta. Ammolite will join the ranks of our province’s other 11 emblems, including the coat of arms, the flag, the tartan, and others. This is one more way that our government is affirming Alberta’s cultural uniqueness, the specialness of our province. Even though this is a symbolic gesture, it has great importance.

Before I wrap up, I just want to recognize Blaine Hyggen, the mayor of Lethbridge, and the city of Lethbridge. The city has proudly called ammolite its official gemstone since 2007. We are excited to also embrace the history, the beauty of this rare and unique gemstone. It is a gem as stunning as our province, and I encourage all members of the House to support Bill 6, Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2022.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

8:30

## Government Motions

(continued)

### Federal Carbon Tax Increase

18. Mr. Kenney moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly call on the government of Canada to stop its planned April 1, 2022, increase of the carbon tax to \$50 per tonne and its further plan to increase the carbon tax to \$170 per tonne given that Canadian families are struggling with the highest inflation in 30 years.

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Schow]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has six minutes remaining should he choose to use it.

Are there others? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Motion 18 tonight. Maybe it's no surprise that this would come on April Fool's Day because, obviously, I think this is something that is very foolish, especially at this time but I think, really, at any time.

When I look back to the Alberta carbon tax and when it was brought in – I was elected in the 2015 election – I know the NDP didn't campaign on the carbon tax that they brought forward shortly after being elected. I believe I was the only opposition MLA that was at the announcement. It happened at the space sciences centre building in November, I believe. I was there for that, and it was interesting to see the people that were there. Of course, there were some oil executives that were there, there were some other people there, but what I didn't see were regular Albertans, people from rural Alberta. This would really affect their livelihoods and their lives.

When I look at my life and my representation of rural Alberta, I think about the cost of travel for rural Albertans. You know, it seems like everything in rural Alberta we have to drive to. A lot of us live out on farms. We have to travel to town for groceries, we have to travel to our jobs, and everything seems to involve putting miles on our vehicles. Even with the COVID situation and not travelling as much as normal, my truck has over 250,000 kilometres on it in a matter of about three years. So there are lots of miles driven, and there's just no way to avoid this in rural Alberta because of the distances we have to travel.

I often think about farmers drying their grain. Drying your grain is not an option; you have to dry your grain, or the grain spoils and you lose your entire crop. Of course, the carbon tax is on the natural gas that's used to dry grain. Agriculture products and grain itself have to be transported. Of course, then the cost of the trucking is increased because of the cost of fuel increase. So we look at all of these different things.

You know, we've been talking lately a lot about the rural hospital situation and the doctor situation. People in rural Alberta are always

travelling for doctor appointments. Say, in my community of Valleyview sometimes we're travelling to Grande Prairie for specialists; sometimes we travel to Edmonton for specialists. Of course, this adds to the cost of just necessities like medical appointments.

When we look at heating our homes, that's not an option either. We live in a climate that's very cold. I know that everybody I know is trying their best to make sure that their homes are as efficient as possible, but that still doesn't keep minus 40 out. When it hits minus 20, minus 30, minus 40, our furnaces are on. They have to be on because there's no other way to counteract that other than by burning natural gas to heat our homes.

Now, another thing is travel. I guess you could look at the cost of air travel but even just vehicular travel to travel to other parts of Alberta, maybe visiting friends and relatives or even a holiday. That negatively affects tourism and, actually, tourism across Canada, because this carbon tax is, of course, Canada-wide. I think that hurts the opportunity to build unity within our province and within our country as we learn and meet other people from across Canada and across Alberta.

We look at the cost of inflation right now, and we see the price of everything going up. A lot of it has to do with other factors, but this adds to the increase in inflation because everything that we have uses carbon to be moved, heated, or cooled. We look at our groceries. Our groceries are transported. Many of them, the vegetables and fruits and stuff like that, are brought in from eastern Canada, southern B.C., or from the United States and even farther. That transportation cost is increased with the increased carbon tax. Then you look at a grocery store, for instance: that building has to be heated. Those coolers have to be operated to keep things cool. So these things just add up over and over again. You put a tax on one small part, and that tax affects prices all the way across the whole economy.

Of course, we don't have options on things like this. There are no options when it comes to heating your home, there are no options when it comes to buying groceries, and there are no options when it comes to going to work. I know there's been talk about, you know, that there were some comments made by the NDP leader about taking the bus. Well, in rural Alberta we don't have those bus systems. Some of these towns are too small to have buses travelling around the town and everything. Of course, that still doesn't help people from rural Alberta being able to get from their farm or their acreage to the local town where they buy groceries and have their kids in school and those things.

Now, I remember that back when the NDP brought in the carbon tax, they thought that maybe if they just promoted it more, it would help. So we saw the advertisements going on in movie theatres, but I think what we saw happen, too, is that people were so upset seeing it in their face when they went to the theatre, they were actually booing, at the theatres, these advertisements. In fact, one of the MLAs that just was elected in the last election – I was talking to him and talking about that very same thing – said that, yeah, before he was elected, he remembered going to a movie theatre and seeing the carbon tax advertisement come on and actually booing it. You know, these things were happening.

These things are real. I think this negatively affects everybody across Canada but in particular rural Alberta and rural Albertans that have to travel such great distances to gain the services that they need. This is a way of tax. When it was brought in, it was supposed to bring in \$3 billion a year in taxes for the government, and that was the largest tax increase in Alberta history at that time. We can't stand by and watch this Prime Minister do this to our economy and to our people. Again, inflation is incredibly high right now. People are hurting. People are having a hard time paying their electricity

bills, their gas bills, their fuel bills. Talking to farmers, when we're talking about how much this will increase the cost on their farms, for some of these larger farmers, it's going to cost tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of dollars more just by adding on these extra carbon taxes.

We have to be able to be competitive in a world market. We know that our energy is produced at the highest standards, so we should be encouraging our energy use across the world, and we shouldn't be discouraging our energy use within our own country. That makes us less competitive in the world market. We need to be conscious of this because we do live in a world where our economies are all intertwined.

I just want to again say that I want to support Motion 18. I think we need to put the pressure on the federal government as strong as we can here in Alberta and let them know how we feel about this, that we want this carbon tax scrapped. We need to get our economy going. We need to take care of the people of Alberta and make sure that they can live their lives the best they can, and this does nothing but hurt them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** On Government Motion 18, are there others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer some thoughts on Government Motion 18.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly call on the government of Canada to stop its planned April 1, 2022, increase of the carbon tax to \$50 per tonne and its further plan to increase the carbon tax to \$170 per tonne given that Canadian families are struggling with the highest inflation in 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the government simply refuse to acknowledge or take responsibility for decisions that they've made to make life more expensive and more difficult for Albertans. Of course, they'll say that they didn't cause the supply chain issues or inflation, but in challenging times they've proven themselves capable of, well, nothing; for example, not keeping Albertans safe during the worst of the pandemic and not making a plan to catch up on surgical backlogs. Instead, the UCP government makes bad decisions or are conveniently absent from work when Albertans need a government to be steady, capable, and reliable, when they need a government that listens and has their best interests at heart.

8:40

This is what we're seeing again tonight, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are asking the provincial government to provide capable leadership and put the interests of Albertans ahead of their own narrow, partisan interests. They need help. They're asking for it. But instead of listening to Albertans, this government is trying to get us to look the other way, to be distracted. This is an old, sad trick, one that bullies sometimes play in the schoolyard, you know, point up at the sky and then punch the unsuspecting kid in the face.

We're tired of the UCP government's incompetence and its inability to hear Albertans and support them. Instead, the Premier is pointing up or sideways and then punching us with sneaky tax increases, tuition increases, school fee hikes, fees to hike in the parks, and, perhaps worse, a brutal policy to freeze fixed incomes of people with disabilities and also seniors when that freeze is costing groceries, heat, and basic living security. The cost of everything, Mr. Speaker, is going up. And let me be quite clear. This UCP government has all the tools it needs to help Albertans and their families to make ends meet. Instead – instead – they're making everything more expensive and then pointing around the room to find someone else to blame.

I want to be more specific. Under the UCP government they've increased income taxes, property taxes, tuition, student debt, camping and park fees, car insurance, and utilities. In their first budget the UCP deindexed tax brackets from inflation. This is something that the Premier complained about endlessly when he was an MP and when he was head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. He called this a pernicious and insidious tax grab that disproportionately hurt low- and middle-income earners. Over the course of this government's fiscal plan this will be a \$1 billion pernicious and insidious tax grab. That's \$1 billion directly out of the pockets of Albertans.

To make matters worse, the UCP also deindexed AISH and seniors' benefits. So now, as inflation rises, those Albertans on those benefits actually lose money. It's estimated to be a \$3,000 hit for AISH recipients and a \$750 hit for senior couples over the course of the UCP's fiscal plan. We urge the government to fix this immediately. We will work quickly to amend the budget bill and reindex these benefits so that Albertans on fixed incomes are not bleeding the income that they don't have.

As I mentioned, the UCP also increased property taxes on Albertans. Their first two budgets almost doubled the 2020 tax hike for Calgary homeowners, and they went back to that, well, again this year. This year they're taking an extra \$13 million from Calgary homeowners while cutting funding from municipalities. Mr. Speaker, the government needs to reverse these tax hikes.

The UCP has also made drastic increases to tuition and student debt. Just this year they approved tuition increases ranging from 20 to 100 per cent. That means that students will be paying thousands of dollars more each year. Meanwhile the UCP has cut student aid and increased interest rates on student loans. The UCP often talks about burdening future generations with debt. Well, they're doing exactly that with these increases to tuition and student loan interest rates. Not only is this short sighted, given that we need to strengthen postsecondary achievement and that we need to support the sector as an engine of future economic growth, but it's also hurting people right now.

Next up, Mr. Speaker, are camping and park fees. This is another example of the UCP government nickel and diming Albertans. The UCP has repeatedly increased camping fees over the course of their term, and they've also charged people \$90 to take a walk in Kananaskis Country. They took an area that belongs to all Albertans and started charging them \$90 a year just to set foot in it. They said that the fees would be used to improve access and services. Instead, what Albertans see in this budget is an almost \$4 million cut from the operating budget of Alberta parks. For the reference of all members, that can be found on page 91 of the government estimates. Albertans don't trust the UCP, so when they try to distract us and tell us to look away, Albertans aren't falling for it.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, Albertans might not even be able to afford the insurance on their vehicle to get to Kananaskis. Auto insurance is skyrocketing, and that's because the UCP removed the cap on insurance premium increases. Not only that; all we see is a Finance minister patting himself on the back for making insurance companies more profitable every day, and that is a result of that government being lobbied by the insurance industry. I just want everybody to understand that we on this side of the House watch out for Albertans while the people on that side of the House watch out for the interests of lobbyists. Car insurance companies, after they successfully lobbied the government to make the changes that they needed, immediately increased premiums. A lot of them were double-digit increases, and some went as high as 30 per cent. Worst of all, these increases came during the pandemic, when Albertans were already struggling to make ends meet. We called on the UCP to provide relief for drivers, but they refused.

Finally, Albertans have been faced with rising utility bills, as everyone well knows. Again, our government introduced a cap on electricity prices, but the UCP removed it. Since then, power prices have doubled, and Albertans are feeling the pinch. At the same time, the natural gas prices have increased in the middle of the winter. The UCP promised relief in their last budget, but that turned out to be a fake program. It doesn't even take effect until next winter and only if prices increase dramatically. While the UCP has promised \$50 for electricity bills, that pales in comparison to the hundreds of dollars extra per month that Albertans are paying on their utility bills. By the government members' own admission the program is paltry.

Due to these high prices Albertans are falling behind on their bills. Our caucus is hearing from Albertans who are worried about being disconnected on April 15, when the ban is lifted. I want to remind members that we even brought draft legislation to the government to extend the disconnection ban, but once again they refused to help Albertans. They wouldn't even debate that in this House.

To sum up my initial points, there are several ways that this UCP government has increased costs for Albertans. Income taxes, property taxes, tuition, student debt, camping and park fees, car insurance, and utilities have all increased under this government's watch. They are a direct result of the policy choices made by the UCP, which means that they have the power to provide real relief for Albertans to address the rising cost of living, but they refuse, and instead they continue to point the finger and do nothing while Albertans struggle to make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, in the time that I have left, I just want to address some of the comments from some of the government members that we've heard weigh in on the debate. First of all, let me thank my colleagues from West Yellowhead and from Cardston-Siksika for some reasonably solid jokes, at least on the UCP spectrum, talking about damaging hippos and hypocrites and worrying about our dad remarrying to somebody else and not telling us. In the UCP humour spectrum those were solid jokes, so a metaphorical tip of the hat to those members for bringing some levity to the debate.

I do want to address some of the issues, though, that members raised. First of all, I want to correct the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, who made an egregious error. I almost called a point of order because it was so disruptive, this error that he made, claiming that this borehole that's going to be drilled in his constituency is the deepest in the world. It's not. It's not. Just for the information of all of the members of the Legislature, the deepest borehole in the world is the Kola superborehole, which is in far northern Russia, close to the border of Norway.

**Mr. Yao:** Your closest allies.

**Mr. Schmidt:** You know, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo knows full well that every member of this House supports wholeheartedly the people of Ukraine, and we have long spoken against Russia's invasion of that country. So for him to make these kinds of statements: it's not surprising from the member, but unfortunately it continues his pattern of disappointing remarks.

8:50

Anyway, I wanted to correct the record so that when the member talks about the deepest borehole in the world, he knows that it's the Kola superborehole in Russia.

I also wanted to express some concerns, something that the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon can take back to his friends at the Hemp Alliance. I can't remember the name of the exact organization that he talked about, but he expressed his desire to

expand the industrial hemp crop acreage here in the province of Alberta. Let me say that I support that only insofar as it doesn't displace the crop acreage of recreational hemp, which is also a tremendous product, one that does a great service to humanity. I wouldn't want to see that crop pushed out to the benefit of industrial hemp. I hope that the member remembers that there is room for all types of hemp in our great province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks. I look forward to the rest of the debate on this motion. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Yao:** Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oh, was that a load of something we just heard. My goodness. I wish to thank the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for his fantastic comments and, well, a little bit of hypocrisy here, especially considering that he was part of the government that did impose a carbon tax on all Albertans, also chased away so many international companies from the north from our hydrocarbon industries, resulting in the layoffs of a lot of geologists, his fellow co-workers, in APEGA. You know, I hope they didn't get you all the feedback that you wanted on that decision. Nevertheless, I digress.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to speak about Motion 18, which is about the carbon tax and our disgruntlement with that, such a tax that is going up by 25 per cent here on April 1. No, it is not a joke.

You know what? I think we need to take a look at this from another side here. Perhaps we can try to understand where the Prime Minister is coming from in all this. To that, myself I have to look back to my roots. I go way back. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, you can look at me and go: yes, he's from the east; he's from the far east. Yes, sir. I am from New Brunswick, sir, and it's very interesting to see that.

I can only assume that when, say, the Prime Minister goes to where my cousin lives in Acadie-Bathurst – you know, a great Liberal stronghold, unfortunately. But you know what? He probably goes into my cousin's basement and sees that big vat of oil that they use to burn in the oil-generating furnace that burns oil. He probably looks at that, that oil that is imported from Irving Oil from places like Venezuela or Saudi Arabia, and he knows that those are unethical places that produce this product. He's probably thinking: "You know what? We have to put a tax on this. We've got to stop these imports, this oil from these regimes that really trample human rights, that show no respect for the environment. It's absolute atrocities that happen over in these nations." He sees that big vat of oil being burned in my cousin's house, and he recognizes that so many houses, in the thousands, in the Maritimes burn oil, and he probably wishes they could burn natural gas like they do here in Alberta, which is much cleaner and much more friendly. I think maybe that's what the Prime Minister is thinking when he puts in these rules.

Or perhaps – perhaps, Mr. Speaker – he looks at all the people commuting from right across Canada all the way up to Fort McMurray, 10,000 strong, people flying in jets every day, every week, every year, flying in jets. He sees that community and goes: my goodness; we have to do something to discourage that. Maybe they will live in Fort McMurray if he could make it more difficult for them to commute. I cross my fingers because maybe we're in alignment there. Maybe this Prime Minister isn't so bad. It's just interesting to try to understand why the Prime Minister would impose a 25 per cent tax.

I've heard that the Prime Minister is very spiritual and that he believes in the power of the mind, as does the rest of the Liberal caucus, from my understanding. Perhaps they think that if they

concentrate enough, they will cause the Earth to tilt so that come the winter months, when we usually have great cold, minus 30 to 40, you know, very cold, maybe we will not get that cold with his efforts to tilt this planet as well as, hopefully, prevent the Earth from going so far away from the sun during those winter months that perhaps – perhaps – we won't need these fossil fuels. That is what the Prime Minister is thinking.

**Mr. Smith:** Are you suggesting they tilt to the left?

**Mr. Yao:** Tilt to the left, absolutely. You know what? I'll take it if we can get some more warm months in Canada, which is one of the coldest nations in the world.

But those are the things I think our Prime Minister is thinking, perhaps, when he's imposing such a tax. It's very interesting.

You know, in a nutshell, it's frustrating to see such a tax get imposed on not just Albertans but all Canadians. My goodness. Again, back to New Brunswick, as an example, with an average wage of \$13 an hour. How does that impact those people? How are they going to be able to afford groceries? How are they going to afford that lobster that comes off that boat for \$7? It's going to make it more expensive for them to ship that all the way to Alberta and everything else, where they make a lot of the revenues from their main industry, which is fishing and seafood. I can't understand why he would put these rules in.

It is difficult. It does hurt lower income. It hurts middle-class families. It is chasing away jobs. A lot of my friends have gone to the United States. A friend of mine just left to Saudi Arabia, of all places, to go work. I have other friends who are in Iraq right now working. All of these international companies: boy, they took the best and the brightest, and that is unfortunate. All good Canadians. Transporting all these jobs away.

Perhaps he looks at – yeah, you know, I honestly can't understand it, why he's putting these taxes. Again, I really think that the Prime Minister has the best of intentions. He really just wants to discourage us from using oil from Saudi and Nigeria and all these other OPEC nations. Maybe he foresaw what was happening in Russia. Who can say for certain? But it has been destructive for our communities.

I can certainly tell you how his taxes have hurt Fort McMurray and have affected my friends and my community. I can only hope that – I can only pray that he doesn't clue in that we are all carbon-based life forms. When he clues into that, I can't imagine the taxes he's going to impose on all of us. Let's make sure he never watches an episode of *Star Trek* or something. You know, it's just very frustrating.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that it is very disappointing that we see such a tax going on when people are trying to just live and prosper. We see these things that are being imposed on us by someone who has known nothing but a golden lifestyle, a lifestyle with the Aga Khan, a lifestyle where he gets to travel all over the world and dress in all sorts of great things and paint his face in whatever way he wants, with no fear of discrimination. We can only hope that he's got a plan that we're just not aware of and that he will perhaps re-evaluate these things.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I just have to say that Motion 18 is an excellent motion. I'd like to thank the Member for Rimby-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre for putting this motion forward as we attempt to convince our federal government to stop this 25 per cent carbon tax, which Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition so wholeheartedly supports, and that is very, very disappointing.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the honour and pleasure to speak before this Assembly as we move forward through the evening. Thank you so much.

**The Speaker:** What a shame.

Are there others? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a hard act to follow, but I will certainly attempt to do so. Thank you to my colleague.

I actually just wanted to speak for a few minutes about this. We talked about this a bit earlier today, but one of the things that stood out to me very strongly, I suppose, when our Prime Minister was first elected was how he spoke about feminism and the feminists. It was on his tongue quite significantly. He spoke about it all the time.

9:00

I wanted to talk about energy poverty for just a moment, not just here in Alberta but globally, and what our responsibility is to make sure that our resource stewardship of the incredible things that we have in our province not only makes it to Canadians for our prosperity but to other countries. There are many, many countries where energy poverty is the difference between education for a young girl, the ability to be able to have a small business, microloans, burgeoning middle classes in other countries, that we have a responsibility to get energy to.

We take for granted that we can flick on a light, turn on the heat. My colleague from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was just speaking about that, about this incredibly cold winter that we had. I have – I've mentioned this so many times in this House, but I'll say it again – 40 solar panels on my house, and believe me when I tell you that it didn't work this winter. If you saw my electricity bills as well, you would be shocked, because there were so many times when we could not tap into the grid that way. Believe me, I love solar. I love all of the options that we have for energy. But I just wanted to say quickly that this isn't just about us. This is about our global responsibility of being able to get that energy to other countries that don't have it, to help see the growth of those countries.

We're wanting to attract people to our province, and in order to make sure that we are able to bring people to this province, we have to be able to support them here with roads, schools, medical equipment. Every single time we talk about COVID, I want you to consider a syringe or a tube or anything that kept a person alive at that time that is made from petrochemicals. Everything we wear half the time, what we're sitting on, your cellphones, everything: petrochemicals. Imagine just for a moment living one day without one of those devices, how you would function. I don't know what I would do if I couldn't just contact my kids with a text and find out where they are at any moment. That's just a privilege of living here and having all of these devices. But just for a moment consider not only what our lives would be like but also the incredible work that has been done in the sector. What the motion is speaking to very distinctly is also not just the oil and gas sector but the various diversifications that come from that sector but also about Canadians themselves.

This is an attack on the people of Canada. It's an attack on our livelihoods, who we are, the identity, especially, of our province, which is why you hear so much pride coming from here. My dad is a petrochemical engineer, and in the 1970s in this province the particulates here were considerably worse than they are now. The amount that the sector has been able to clean their products, to be able to change the way that they deliver resources to us has changed – well, it is measurable. But it is unbelievable to know the difference, especially if you were – my dad would have been in his 30s at that time working in the petrochemical sector. He tells me all the time about what the sky looked like at that time here when you flew into Alberta, when you flew into Calgary, and about the distinct difference that there is now. That is because of, not in any

small part, the sector, that worked so hard to produce the best products that it possibly could. So I just hope that, like, beyond all of the rhetoric, we can all agree on that.

I would also, finally, like to say that we keep talking about our resources and who we are, but understand, Mr. Speaker – and the Minister of Energy had mentioned this earlier – that the demand for oil and gas right now is as high as it's ever been. That's not going to change for a little bit, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't be looking at other ways to produce energy. In fact, these are things that have to happen in concert with each other.

But having said that, for every single barrel of oil that is not created here in Canada, it is created somewhere else that does not have the laws and the restrictions or the production standards that we have in this country. Every single barrel. Every single barrel that comes up the St. Lawrence from another country that does not have the rules and regulations or the human rights that we have in this country, every single barrel that we don't send out that is going from somewhere else: it's called carbon leakage, and that leakage has to be discussed at every single level of this discussion.

When you put a carbon tax on the people of Alberta and across Canada – I'd like to understand if anybody in here has slowed down their driving. Even with what we're paying at the pump right now, how many people have changed their habits? How many people? I know I have to drive to get here. I'm pretty sure that my colleague who just spoke has a two-hour, maybe three-hour longer drive than I do to get here. Our jobs are here. We're supposed to come to work.

So suggesting somehow that a carbon tax is going to alter the behaviour of people who are doing these jobs – what about our agriculture sector? What about that? What about fertilizer? These are all things that are produced, and every time you put a tax on those things, it doesn't help any of that. Quite frankly, people are going to find a way. We're a resilient bunch of people. Would you rather have us burning wood and other things to keep ourselves warm?

Here's the question that we have to ask. We have carbon leakage, but we also have an opportunity to do better in this province. If the federal government was willing to work with us and understand what Alberta is trying to accomplish, imagine where Canada could be. Imagine, for just a minute, being the world leader. We actually already are, but don't you think it's time that our federal government worked with us, Mr. Speaker, together to understand not only how amazing Canada is, how fantastic we are in our resource stewardship but to be so proud – so proud – to walk into a room when you're overseas knowing you come from a country that does it the best and that you're willing to work with people to do even better and that your product lives side by side with all of the environmental pieces that are necessary in order for us to do our part.

But the Prime Minister has to understand that by penalizing the everyday person, especially when you come from a province – we're 4.3 million people in this massive province. It's a huge, huge province. It's the size of some small countries. It is not an easy drive just even going across Calgary or going across Edmonton or anything. We all take for granted, you know, that if you're going for coffee with somebody, you can drive 45 minutes to go have coffee with them, because that is a privilege that we hold.

The question we have to ask ourselves is: when we're imposing these things on people, is it actually changing behaviour? It's not. In fact, if anything, it's just making money for the government, and it's not being translated into federal dollars back into the provinces to help them do better and do better policies and contribute to the ESG. All it is is a talking point to be able to say that you've imposed this on the people, with absolutely no outcomes to show anything different. The companies themselves, Mr. Speaker, by being more

efficient, make more profits, do better, do better by the environment, are able to hire more people, and are able to help us supply our roads, our hospitals, our schools. The largest contributors to arts in this province have come from the oil and gas sector.

For anybody who's listening and especially as a heartfelt plea to our federal counterparts, I just wanted them to understand the incredible things that we're seeing now and the ability for us to bounce back and to be able to bring our economies back, to bring our people back, to unify our country, not only through the language with which we speak to each other and the kindness that is required in order to heal post COVID but also to consider those transportation corridors that also unite us across our country through trains, through electricity, through pipelines, water, all of these important things. Let's not take for granted, Mr. Speaker, for one moment how blessed and privileged we are in this country, but having that means we need to share it, get it to other countries. Also, we're not only exporting our incredible products; we're exporting our technology as well, because in typical Canadian and Alberta style, it's not something that we consider proprietary or that we want to hold on to. It's something we want to share with the rest of the world.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others on Government Motion 18? The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Member for Calgary-Bow.

**9:10**

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak to Motion 18. I've really enjoyed the debate and discussion in the Assembly thus far, and I'm going to try to be brief here. But if I can, you know, the way I look at this and the way I summarize what this motion is calling for, of course, is: an end to the Trudeau carbon tax. There are many reasons behind that, as you've heard here today, but if I can summarize all of those reasons, it's because they don't work, and they make life more expensive for everyday Albertans and everyday Canadians. That's the only real, tangible thing that we know of when it comes to the carbon tax. That's the only tangible and real effect we know is created by carbon taxes: they make life more expensive.

Now, as some of my colleagues have said here, of course, I agree that we need to take action to reduce emissions, but a carbon tax is the wrong way of doing it. We need to do it through investments in technology and innovation and by supporting our industries to come up with more innovative and technologically oriented solutions to deliver their goods and services and do what they do in a more carbon-neutral manner. That, Mr. Speaker, I believe, is the key to reducing emissions in Alberta and in Canada.

But, of course, the carbon tax increase that's coming on Friday, that's coming on April 1, as we all know, is coming at the worst possible time for all Canadians. Costs are on the rise everywhere, Mr. Speaker. The cost of groceries is increasing; the cost of gasoline is increasing; our utility bills are increasing. I really wonder why, then, is now the right time? Why are we increasing the carbon tax when we are facing these challenges?

Just to put that into perspective, what are we actually facing when it comes to the rising cost of living? We're facing inflationary levels that are at 30-year highs, Mr. Speaker. That's where we're at today, a 30-year-high inflationary level. Now, the reason for that is very clear. The reason for the 30-year high in inflation is due to Liberal fiscal mismanagement and other inflationary policies. No matter how you want to spin it, that is the core of the matter.

I should note as well the hypocrisy that's associated with the increase on April 1. I haven't heard any members in the Assembly



discussing it, but from what I understand as well, on April 1 Mr. Trudeau is giving himself a raise – how lovely – a \$20,000 raise, not just for himself but for all Members of Parliament. Of course, he's not trying to stop that. He's happy to collect more income when Canadians are challenged, when Canadians are struggling to pay their bills. He's happy to give himself a raise and make life more expensive. I think there's a term for that, and I think the Member for West Yellowhead talked about that. I think the word is "hypocrisy," Mr. Speaker. But we're all used to Liberal hypocrisy and NDP hypocrisy.

But let me give you a quick overview of what some of these increases mean for the average family, for the average person watching at home. Just one thing I did want to note on the topic of inflation, Mr. Speaker. The Bank of Canada – let's take partisan politics out of it – has said that the April 1 increase will increase inflation by half a per cent. So it's not bad enough that we're already at a 30-year high when it comes to inflation, but we're going to pursue policies that are going to add to that. That's what's happening here.

Let me again give you an overview. As it stands today, the average price of gas in Alberta is \$1.66. Now, up till 2030 – the Liberals are set to continue to increase their carbon tax all the way up to 2030 – by the time they get there, just factoring in the carbon tax increase, which is factored to result in a 38-cent increase by 2030, it will push that price to \$2.04 for Albertans. That's not factoring in inflation, the high inflation that we're seeing. That's not factoring in inflation over the course of eight years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the average family, the average household in Alberta, according to a 2009 vehicle survey by the government of Canada, has stipulated that households in Alberta have 1.87 vehicles on average. So let's look at the average family: 1.87 vehicles. Let's use that as a basis. Presently, with the price of gasoline today, an average family with 1.87 vehicles will spend approximately \$340 a month, assuming they fill up their vehicle every two weeks – \$340, which for some is even a stretch – \$340 a month, or \$4,000 a year. Add in the 38 cents that we will get to, facilitated through carbon tax increases, by 2030, and that same family will be paying 25 per cent more. They'll be paying \$420 per month, or \$5,000 per year. That's a difference of \$1,000 per year for the average family – for the average family – for, Mr. Speaker, living their lives, for taking their kids to hockey, for going to the grocery store, for visiting a friend and having coffee.

The Liberals and their NDP allies, which, in consequence, includes the members opposite, who are legally part of the federal NDP, have decided it's time to make life more expensive for Albertans and all Canadians, and I hope the members opposite – because I think we can all agree that we must bring these costs down. I encourage the members opposite to stand up and support this motion, but I'm not sure that we're going to see that, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, of course, that increase will occur not just in gasoline, as I mentioned, but the increase will also be felt on groceries, on utility bills, on all facets of Albertans' lives. Now, we know, of course, that the NDP loves carbon taxes. That's why they won't be voting for this motion. They love carbon taxes. Even though they never told Albertans about it and they never campaigned on it, the first thing, or one of the first things, I should say, that they did when they got elected in 2015 was introduce a carbon tax. You know what they did with those proceeds, Mr. Speaker? They hired people from Ontario to install light bulbs in your homes and install low-flow shower heads. That's where that money went. A real effective use of charging Albertans more money.

Now, the other point, Mr. Speaker – and I don't want to go on for too long here – is that we know very clearly that carbon taxes don't

work. Now, I'm going to back that up. I believe it's important to provide details. I want us to take a look at B.C. I want us to take a look at British Columbia. In 2007 they introduced a carbon tax, and of course they told the people of British Columbia that that will reduce emissions and help get them to their respective climate goals. Well, let's see where we're at today. Let's evaluate those many years of carbon tax, and I should say, of course, that the carbon tax in B.C. has not been stable at a single price. It's been increasing since 2007 and getting progressively more expensive. So where are we today? According to the government of B.C.'s own data, in 2019 GHG emissions were up from their 2007 baseline. In fact, emissions increased by 17 per cent over the 10-year period following the implementation of the carbon tax. Where's the rationale? It's not working. It's clearly not working in British Columbia.

Now, furthermore, just to just wrap up, Mr. Speaker, what our side of the House here is saying this evening is that Trudeau must stop this tax hike. It's that simple. Of course, Alberta's government is taking measures to bring the cost of living down. We've introduced an electricity rebate, \$150 to all eligible households, and as one of my colleagues mentioned, you won't need to apply for this. It'll appear directly on your bill. We're also removing the gas tax on April 1, and Albertans will see 13 cents knocked off the price. Now, of course, with the federal Liberals if they move forward with their increase, unfortunately they won't realize all of those savings. As well, we've also taken action by repealing the NDP's carbon tax, and when I was running in 2019 and knocking on doors in my neighbourhood, one of the top issues if not the top issue that I heard from people in my community, and I think members here found similar sentiment, was that they wanted the carbon tax gone. We delivered on those promises and are continuing to take steps to make life more affordable for Albertans, and I invite the members opposite to support it.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## 9:20 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. members. I would like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 4

#### Municipal Government (Face Mask and Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination Bylaws) Amendment Act, 2022

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered at this time? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to get up and speak in this House. Of course, when we're faced with the current proposed piece of legislation by this government, we see yet again the disdain and disrespect that Conservatives, and in this case the United Conservatives, have for different orders of government. Here they are completely disregarding a different order of government and the authority and the power that that order of government has to actually make decisions for its own citizens. Now, of course, I understand that we have those citizens in common, most definitely, but it's important that we respect other orders of government, that we work together when it comes to governing on behalf of all those citizens together

as different orders of government, in this case municipalities and us as a province.

I know that it's been said by members opposite that, well, they're just listening to Albertans. Well, then, why not bring a co-operative approach to working with a different order of government instead of simply just dictating to them what must be done? That's what we have here within this bill. Now, it's a slippery slope that we're on, Mr. Chair, because in this case it might be related to masks and masking that this here government is just simply taking a dictatorial approach to other orders of government, and it's going to open the door. If we allow this kind of legislation to pass, then what's to say that next year this United Conservative government isn't going to just simply go and make another move to actually dictate to municipalities yet something else? We don't know that, but that's what this piece of legislation is doing.

You know, Mr. Chair, we put in an incredible amount of work and effort when we were in government to establish big-city charters. There were a lot of people sitting at the table. It was a co-operative approach to thinking up a new way of working in a co-operative manner, again, I stress, when it came to municipalities. This is what we would like – I know for a fact that the municipal orders of government would like to see more of this. Rather than it simply being dictated what they have to do, they would like to see people coming together, sitting down at a table, working together co-operatively to determine how we all move forward, different orders of government, so that we can actually serve the people of Alberta the best way.

It's puzzling, Mr. Chair, because this government was elected as offering and being, like, the champions of rural Alberta and other municipalities outside of the big cities, you know, Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and then here they are just saying: "Okay. Well, we're just going to dictate everything that has to be done. We're actually going to take this power away from you." That's essentially what's happening here. Again we have an example of this government taking power away from others within the province of Alberta, taking power out of the hands of people, taking it out of the hands of other orders of government.

Now, it's important that we consider that – well, let me take a step back, Mr. Chair. You know, a lot of us remember when this Premier decided that he was going to sign his grassroots guarantee. It's important to know that here we have a reversal of this Premier and this government when it comes to this approach and that here we have the UCP interfering with local decision-making and imposing top-down governance. Now, on this side of the House we respect local democracy. We respect municipalities. As I stated, we put a lot of work into working with municipalities and coming up with alternative ways of funding, which was all just completely reversed and taken back and destroyed by this UCP government.

I think it's important that we respect local leaders, and this bill is going completely against that. It's a shame, because I believe this to be an important part of our democracy. You know, members on the other side of the House like to get up and talk about freedom, and it's hypocritical that here we see, in this bill, them actually taking freedom away from other local leaders and municipalities. You can't have it both ways, Mr. Chair. You either believe in democracy, you believe in freedom, you believe in co-operation, in sharing power, or you don't. That's why, for me, it's important to get up in this House and speak against this bill, because here it may just be – you know, the members opposite will say, "Well, it's only pertaining to masks and masking," but if we allow this to move forward, then what's to say in the future that it won't be regarding any other issues?

What's most disheartening about this bill, also, is the way that some of the members on the other side have actually spoken about

this bill. I believe during second reading, you know, I highlighted the whole issue of spanking. I can't believe that a member on the other side of this House, in reference to this bill, brought up the whole idea of just that they need to spank another order of government. Like, how paternalistic can you get?

9:30

I think that's what we see with this government, with members on the other side of the House. You know, it's expected from Conservatives, I would say, Mr. Chair, because that's the way they see the world, in a very paternalistic fashion, that others need to be spanked, which I find completely ridiculous. You're essentially saying that this grown-up person, this leader of their community, needs to be treated like a child. I'd like members of this House to think about that. Think about what you're saying when you – you may be anecdotally bringing it up, but you reference spanking. You're essentially saying that others need to be treated as children.

We're talking about leaders. We're talking about leaders of their communities, so I'd like them to check their language on that. If they're going to be dictatorial, then let them say that they're going to be dictatorial when it comes to certain issues and don't hide from the fact that you're actually being hypocritical when it comes to these specific freedoms and the responsibility that these local leaders have over the communities that they represent.

I think that a much better approach, Mr. Chair, would actually be to work in co-operation with these other orders of government. That would be more successful, working in partnership with other orders of government, with local leaders coming to the table, yes, adults coming to the table and actually talking with one another rationally, working out issues, concerns. This is what Albertans expect of the different orders of government, the leaders, the political leaders, that they expect.

It doesn't matter which side of the House. They expect rational. They expect dialogue, right? This is what Albertans expect of us, and I know that members on the other side of the House can agree with that. Then why this bill? Why this approach? Why are you supporting essentially taking powers away from others and moving towards this dictatorial approach? It's not befitting of this Legislature.

Again, Mr. Chair, I would ask the members on the other side of the House to check their language, because it's not becoming of this House either to talk about spanking and treating other orders of government as children. I think that kind of language and, well, this legislation at its fundamental base is essentially just picking a fight. It's picking a fight with other orders of government. I would even go so far as saying that it's crushing local democracy.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I am going to take my seat, but I'd, please, ask the members on the other side of the House to really consider what it is that they're presenting in the form of this bill before us.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 4, one that I brought to the House. I would just say that we heard some words here a few minutes ago, and very few of them actually are applicable to the bill before us, so I will correct the record here.

Mr. Chair, Bill 4, I guess if you were to shorten the name of it, because it's got a long name – it says Municipal Government (Face Mask and Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination Bylaws) Amendment Act, 2022. Wow. That's a long name for a bill. But if I had to

shorten the name of the bill, I would call it the Stay in Your Lane bill simply because that's all this is doing.

The advice to stay in your own lane is actually good advice for us on this side of the floor to take, it's good advice for the federal government to take, and it's a good idea for municipalities to take because all orders of government, I'm sure, generally speaking – I certainly believe in most cases it's with the best of intentions – tend to drift into each other's lanes of responsibility. It's a natural thing because we all care about the whole world. Even if it's not the part of the world that we were elected to look after, we just care. I think that's why people get elected, because they just care, and sometimes when people just care, they do or say that they're going to do or try to do things that really kind of go out of the scope of what they were elected to do.

All this bill does is – really, we were kind of forced to do this, Chair, and I'll explain that as I talk here. To be clear, municipalities under provincial legislation have a wide, wide, wide scope of authority to protect the health and safety of their citizens. That was true before Bill 4, and that is true after Bill 4. Municipalities still have a wide, wide, wide scope of authority to look after the health and safety of their citizens – that's how it ought to be because it matters – and because they have those responsibilities, we need to let them do that.

But in this particular case – it's a little bit unfortunate – some members, really, of the council of the city that we're in kind of made a public statement that they were going to override the provincial health rules, which, frankly, the province is responsible for. And that's not to say that the municipality doesn't have a lot of authority in that area, and they should. Here's what doesn't change. Before Bill 4 the municipalities had the authority to determine things like masking and vaccination requirements on things that the municipality owns like the transit system, like the municipal buildings, like a rec centre that the municipality owns and operates, like an arena that the municipality owns and operates, and they still have that authority today. Bill 4 does not change that.

Now, I think the obvious response to what I've said so far is: what does Bill 4 actually change? Well, let's ask the bill. That shouldn't be hard to do because it's a really short bill. It's two pages. I could actually read the whole thing out, I think, in about five minutes. But I think, to stay on topic, section 2 . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** Do you have to ask for help to do it, or are you able to do it on your own?

**Mr. McIver:** You see, Mr. Chair, the folks on the other side: they just can't stand hearing what's going on. The member there in the back row who's been chastised – I think he's set a record for having to withdraw remarks in this House, and I guess he's going to beat his own record. So that's okay. I'll just carry on here because some of the folks on the other side asked for an explanation, and I'm trying to provide it. Hopefully, I don't have to shout over the member opposite to do that.

What the bill says in section 2 is:

Section 7 is amended by striking out “A council” and substituting “Subject to section 7.1, a council”.

So the question is: what is it in section 7 that has changed because of Bill 4? And then section 3 of Bill 4 answers that question. It says:

Face mask and proof of COVID-19 vaccination bylaws

7.1(1) Subject to subsections (5) and (6), on the coming into force of this section, a council may not, unless approved by the Minister, bring into force a bylaw or an amendment to a bylaw that requires one or both of the following:

Okay. Here it comes. Now we're going to learn what municipalities can't do. That's the next section. The next section, that actually says what they can't do, says that they cannot cause

an individual to wear a face mask or other face covering for the primary purpose of preventing or limiting the spread of COVID-19 or any other communicable disease, as defined in the Public Health Act.

Or they cannot cause

an individual to provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19 or proof of a negative COVID-19 test on entering a premises.

That's it. That's all, folks. That's all they can't do. Frankly, all it says is that they can't override the health order that the Health department made for Alberta, which is a provincial area of jurisdiction. All it says is: stay in your lane.

**9:40**

Now, I will say – because somebody will raise it, and rightly so – that for a period of time during the state of emergency the municipalities had a broader range of authority, because of the COVID pandemic, where they could make these rules, and rightly so, but the states of emergency have elapsed because of the reduced case counts, mostly the reduced people in hospital and the people in ICU, so now the provincial health authority decided that those rules don't need to be in place anymore.

I suppose that if you wanted to read this technically – and I'd be happy if a lawyer disagreed with what I'm going to say next because I'm not a lawyer and I don't give legal advice, but it's my legislation; I think I can talk about it – I think what it doesn't stop municipalities from doing is providing people wear a mask if they go into some building or something that the municipality owns and operates, again, like transit or a municipally owned recreation centre. They have that authority. They can make that bylaw. What they can't do is require people to wear masks in private businesses, which is beyond their scope of authority.

But here's the thing. Even as simple as that is, there's still a check for safety that we put in here, because the next section says, “The Minister shall consider the public interest and consult with the Chief Medical Officer of Health . . . under the Public Health Act in determining whether to approve a bylaw” for something that is not allowed in (a) and (b). In other words, a municipality could still come forward, even with this legislation, with a bylaw to require masks in private businesses and such for COVID-19, but they would have to get permission from the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

In many cases the Minister of Municipal Affairs – and I certainly fall under this category – may not be a medical professional. I am not. So the bill wisely says that the Minister of Municipal Affairs, before he makes a decision on a municipality that wanted to bring forward a mask bylaw that's in the provincial area of responsibility, is required in this legislation – not in regulation; right in the legislation – to consult with the chief medical officer of health to get advice before deciding whether to let the municipality pass a bylaw where the citizens would have to wear masks, for example, in private businesses.

There it is. That's it. And why? The only thing that, really, a municipality can't do is have a mask or vaccine bylaw for COVID-19. Why would they want to if COVID-19 is not there? Now, COVID-19 is still here. I get that, but the provincial health authority, who has the jurisdiction in this area, has said that that's not required anymore. That's it. That's all. No other municipal authorities are hampered. I think that while we disagree on a lot of things with folks on the other side of the House, I hope – I don't know this, but I hope – we can all agree that we're looking forward to the day that COVID-19 goes away. Maybe it never will, but I surely believe that we all hope it does, so that's an authority that in other circumstances municipalities wouldn't need anyways. So there it is.

Unlike the characterization that we heard earlier that municipalities were losing a bunch of authority that they needed, no, they are losing the ability to override the provincial health authority in an area of provincial health responsibility, full stop. Nothing more. That's it. So I kind of feel good about this. The legislation may not ever actually affect a municipality. Edmonton, even after they knew we had this bill coming forward, actually brought forward a bylaw or brought discussion about a bylaw to actually do this and ask. It was defeated, if I understood it right, eight to five, so there were five members that voted to overcome the provincial health rules in the provincial area of responsibility.

Let me say this. I am making the assumption that those members of council did so because they thought, in their minds, that it was in the best interests of the citizens of their city, and good for them. I don't mean that in any way but sincerely. Good for them for doing what they thought was best. That's what we all should do when we're elected. We don't all agree. We're not always right. That's all of us. I mean, I'd like to think I'm always right, but the world has taught me that I am not always right.

The fact is that that's it. It's a stay-in-your-lane bill, very, very, very narrowly focused. I think that there's at least a reasonable chance – I can't guarantee it because municipalities have their own free will to do what they think is best for their citizens, and we'd never want to change that – a municipality still could come forward and say: I want to override the provincial health rules and expand the masking and required vaccination bylaws beyond what's in the, you know, municipal area of jurisdiction. If anything, it could be argued that this legislation actually gives more authority to try that now, to try the Minister of Municipal Affairs on for size to see if he or she might approve that. Of course, whatever he – it happens to be now, but it could be some other he or she, and that he or she would have to, under this legislation, check with the chief medical officer of health.

So there you go. It's kind of a stay-in-your-lane reminder. It may not ever have any effect on any municipality. I hope not, mostly because my deepest hope is that COVID-19 will go away and not be missed. So there it is, Mr. Chair. I felt like we were kind of forced to do this by some municipal members that made public statements about trying to override provincial health rules. This is a requirement to stay in your lane. Let me just say that it's a good reminder for all of us, including our government. People that are elected care about things beyond the legally prescribed scope of authority because they care. If there's anything you want, it's elected people that care. This is just a reminder that while we're caring – and I'll take that as a reminder for me, too – we should try to stay in our lane.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any members? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to provide a few brief comments to this Municipal Government (Face Mask and Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination Bylaws) Amendment Act, 2022, Bill 4, at the committee stage. This amendment act has a bit of a bracketed text, and I would say that perhaps an alternative title might be Well, We Were Going to Fund Raise off This, But It Didn't Work Out Because Edmonton Decided Not to, So We Didn't Have That Opportunity to Fund Raise from the Convoy Wing of the Party Amendment Act, 2022. It's a bit longer, but I think it kind of captures why we're all standing here tonight.

Why are we standing here tonight? Through the fourth wave of the pandemic, the one last fall, the province essentially blew through any credibility or political capital it had left in pandemic

management. I hear this on the doorstep all the time. I ask people, you know: "Is it one thing? If you're unhappy with this government, is there one thing?" Unless it's the lack of family doctors, which comes like a blast off the doorstep from pretty well everybody, they just kind of say: "No. It's the chaos. It's the fact that we can't really trust what people are saying." This was in September and October, too, when I was spending a lot of time on the doorstep as well. In kind of late September and through to the end of October, when it was nice out, I also spent quite a bit of time out there.

People have a great deal of patience. Albertans are very generous of spirit, and people usually start, whether on what I call the left or the right or the exhausted middle, with something like: well, it wouldn't have been easy for anyone to manage through a pandemic. I agree. I've even expressed that sentiment in this House. But then they go on to say that that patience and goodwill have worn out over so many months of absolute chaos, and they use terms like clown car, you know, and the fact that they have completely lost trust in the Premier. Any words that he says just mean nothing to them anymore, whether it's on jobs or the economy or health care or affordability, anything, really. They simply do not trust him.

**9:50**

You know, what happened with this particular little fracas was that some folks in the city of Edmonton, and I'm not sure if rightly or wrongly – I'm not a medical officer, so I don't quite frankly know – expressed doubt at the government's trajectory in lifting restrictions very, very soon, according to a timeline that was prior to other jurisdictions in the main, and because they simply had lost trust with this government's decision-making and did not trust that they necessarily had either the public health best interests or even business continuity best interests in mind, simply because people had been just whipped around so many times by really lamentable decision-making. Some folks mused publicly about what they might do, either in Calgary or then later in Edmonton. Then, of course, this amendment act came in, which is a bit of bringing the hammer down in response.

Now we're here a couple of weeks later. Events have overtaken us. It seems to me that there is likely no real reason for this bill other than it essentially amounts to a lot of sound and fury signifying nothing. I'll be interested to see what the Q1 fundraising results look like and if they were able to fund raise off this particular piece of legislation and tap into all that fervour and fever dreams that were coming off the convoy wing of the conservative movement in and around late February, early March, when all of this was going down.

In the meantime what has it done? It has essentially poisoned the well with municipalities. When you have, like, the Alberta Municipalities president saying that we're concerned that the government is setting a troubling precedent without any prior consultation, then when we heard a great deal of disappointment at Alberta Municipalities not just over this but over a number of other decisions, you know, really what it does is – it's unnecessary, and it essentially puts us in a cul-de-sac in which we cannot move forward together. You have one order of government that is just simply going to go at it on their own and municipalities sort of left guessing about what is going to happen in terms of developing their communities.

I think the other thing, you know, this attempt to drive this wedge in this way, Mr. Chair, is also just emblematic of how the pandemic response just went so horribly off the rails in the end and really attempted – and this bill is emblematic of that – just trying to rip at the seams of social cohesion when it was completely unnecessary to do so and drive this politicization of either masks or vaccination or proof of vaccination like either on a card or a QR code. Just completely unnecessary to engage in this sort of divisive polarization

of basic public health measures. At this point we just have to hope. We just have to hope that we don't have to go backwards at all. I certainly hope that for my kids and for the immunocompromised people in my life and even just the relatively otherwise healthy people. This is a group of people, across the way, the UCP, that has even politicized the concept of pre-existing conditions. I mean, we all have them. That is to say that we have lungs and respiratory systems and circulatory systems.

You know, I gave it a long bracketed text for this amendment act, but really, Mr. Chair, at the end of the day this is the Vaporization of Good Faith bill. That is what this is. This is the UCP government just throwing a grenade behind them as they walk out the door of their just absolutely shockingly poor pandemic management and response and all of the economic and social and community costs that came with that, a lowlight reel of two years of poor decision-making. When you vaporize good faith like that, you also vaporize trust. That has been broken with municipalities – there's no question – and it's been broken with the electorate, too. I heard earlier the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow talking about door-knocking during the last election. Well, I door-knock between elections. I did it when we were in government, and I do it now. Just go out there and talk to people now: that is what I would say. That word "trust" comes up every single time.

With that, I will conclude my remarks on this bill, on this unnecessary piece of legislation. You know, hopefully, going into the future, we can begin to repair some of those broken relationships of trust both with the electorate and with the municipalities more broadly.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen again.

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. I might have been wrong in something I said. I gave credit to the other side that they wanted COVID to go away. I think I just heard from the remarks we just heard that they want COVID to stay, on the other side. They see that as their last desperate grasp at maybe getting a slight chance to get back into government.

You know what? COVID has been hard on everybody. No one has raised more money than the folks on the other side based on COVID. No other opposition in Canada has fought their government every step of the way. No matter what the government did over the last couple of years, they have folks on the other side who always say: don't do it. Then they'd stand up here the next day and say: why aren't people getting vaccinated? Well, maybe it's because a third of the elected people in the province are saying: don't do what the government recommends. Then they won't take any responsibility for that.

All they saw COVID as was a way for political gain, to raise money. And you know what? For a little while it worked. Their poll numbers were better. I'm sure they were pretty happy with themselves. You know who's really sad that COVID is going away now and we don't know what the virus will do next because nobody does? It's the folks on the other side. Now they're where they've always been.

You know what? Even when people were mad at us, you know what I heard when I talked to people? "I don't want the folks that were here last. We need you to get us past COVID so that we can vote for you again, because those folks that were here the four years before: we never ever want to get them near the reins of power again, near the ability to have influence and trash our lives like they did for four straight years." Maybe I was wrong in giving them credit for not wanting COVID to be here. It's hard to say after the

last speech I just heard. But on this side we really want it to go away. The other good news is that people are a lot happier now, and even the ones that aren't happy tell me that they don't want the folks on the other side. They had a lifetime of that during the last four years.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 4?

[The clauses of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried and so ordered.

### Bill 5

#### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2022

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments to be made at this time? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate a chance to just say a few more words in regard to Bill 5. As I had said before, I think that certainly I support the idea behind trying to make our roads more safe.

**10:00**

I put on a lot of kilometres in the last few days, and it popped into my head, this bill, as I passed various kinds of things on the side of the road. What occurred to me once again, Mr. Chair, is the importance of standardizing the behaviours around when there is a snowplow or an ambulance or police or whatever on the side of road so that people don't have to think about, "Well, what am I meant to do in this circumstance?" and somehow change or alter that according to the size of the car or the colour of the light or whatever, right? The degree to which we can standardize that so it's almost like internalized in your head – you see the thing, you know what to do. You don't have to have an internal conversation about that. You just do it.

In that sense, this bill, I think, helps with that idea, and for that I do support it. Of course, you have people driving very fast – right? – on the roads that I was on these last few days, and you need to make sure everybody is on the same page in regard to slowing down for emergencies on the side of the road. We need to have a good element of education around this bill as well. I think I heard the minister talking about that before, and certainly that's the key to the highway, literally. It's to have people fully informed on a constant basis of what they're meant to do when they encounter something on the side of the road.

Just a quick comment as well around opening this act. You know, I did notice, when we were talking about other traffic issues that have been occurring here in the province of Alberta and then having an opportunity by opening up this act with Bill 5, we could have – would have, could have, should have – looked at other elements of traffic safety that could have served us very well in the last few months and prepare us for any contingency in the future. I think that during the blockade of the border, for example, at Coutts a lot of people were calling on the minister to exercise her authority to revoke operating licences for folks that were acting illegally, trafficwise and otherwise, at the border crossing. We did hear the minister say that they did do a legal analysis, and they needed to

open up the Traffic Safety Act in order to strengthen that so that they could have that tool at their disposal in the future.

Well, by golly, you know, Mr. Chair, here we are with the Traffic Safety Act open right now, and that would have been a good thing to do, quite frankly, because having those sorts of blockades is not safe. It causes a lot of social disorder, and it costs millions and millions of dollars. If we have that kind of tool available to us, using the Traffic Safety Act, that's the way that you can really get a message through to people who choose to block or disrupt traffic: their licences, right? Of course, they probably have a big truck because they also have a commercial operation that involves that licence. I mean, that's the only point that I failed to make previously in regard to opening this act.

I'm fully in favour of opening the act in order to increase safety on the side of a road, and I would encourage people to vote in favour of this. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen again.

**Ms Phillips:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I also want to add a few comments at this committee stage to the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2022. I spoke to this at second reading, and I raised a few questions that I don't know if the minister would like to update the House on. I mean, I'll be voting in favour of this legislation regardless, but we did raise just a few questions around some of the public education campaign and some of those details. If the minister would like to share any of that. Of course, enforcement: the idea is that it would start in the spring of '23, and there's a public education campaign before that, which is very standard for these kinds of things as they're kind of phased in.

Another thing that we had asked about or, I believe, I raised at second reading was if there was any analysis or assessment around serious collisions prevention and any interjurisdictional comparison. For example, Ontario and British Columbia have brought in similar legislation, so if there were other pieces or other information that she wanted to provide there. Of course, we did ask and many of us wondered out loud why additional changes were not included in this act, in particular around commercial licensing or other penalties for engaging in the blocking of highways and the use of heavy equipment to do so, which is already an offence under the Traffic Safety Act, but this was certainly an ability to ensure appropriate penalties for these kinds of activities. It would have been an opportunity in this legislation.

You know, on the way up here there were emergency vehicles stopped at the side of the road again, and some people just blow by still. That's why this legislation is needed, because even with the emergency vehicles – that is to say, police or whatever – in response to the legislation that came in in 2005, still some people, I guess, are blissfully unaware. Certainly, broadening this, I think, would be really helpful because then maybe at some point some of those drivers will finally get the message, and that will make us all safer. Certainly, a lot of the people in this Chamber and probably the hon. minister as well spend a lot of time on the highway. I know that I do, and I would really appreciate more safety measures.

That public education piece is really important. You can't necessarily, you know, respond in a law enforcement way, but you certainly have to within an education way but then having that stick at the end of the day, which this legislation provides for. Some of these fines are quite considerable, Mr. Chair. For the dozens and dozens of people that are listening tonight, fines ranging from \$136

to \$826 are pretty considerable. That's going to sting, and that's a good thing, too, and I commend the minister for making sure that those fines were, like, appropriate and appropriately calibrated to the offence.

I will conclude my comments there, Mr. Chair, except to just add one thing, which is that there was an ambulance going the other way when I was driving home to my condo at about 5 o'clock. I signalled and pulled over to the side of the road. I was just on a city street. The guy behind me darn near rear-ended me. That has been the rule for a long time, yet some people still don't have the memo, so I wish the minister well in her public education campaign. I am pleased to report that nobody rear-ended me although it was close. You know, sometimes this traffic safety stuff really is a long arc of getting compliance in order, but at the same time it is worth doing because public safety is worth it when it is reasonable, when it is common sense, and when it protects people at work. This legislation does all three.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate as well at this stage?

Okay. Are you ready for the question on Bill 5, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2022?

[The clauses of Bill 5 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader has risen.

10:10

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise and report bills 4 and 5.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Camrose is rising.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 4 and Bill 5.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is carried and so ordered.

I see the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Indeed, you do, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate you acknowledging me. Lots of great work done this evening. Albertans are well served by the members of the Chamber, but I move that we adjourn the Chamber until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:11 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Editor

*Alberta Hansard*

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: [AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca)