



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 25, 2022

Day 23

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Third Session

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New Democrat: 23

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 25, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Ariana Whitlow. I would invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, this morning I had the absolutely privilege of meeting a very special guest who's now joining us in the Speaker's gallery. It's my great pleasure to welcome His Excellency Toomas Lukk, the ambassador of Estonia, accompanied by Anne-Ly Ader, first secretary at the embassy of Estonia in Ottawa, and Mrs. Külliva Kangur, honorary consul of Estonia in Alberta. Hon. members, there are approximately 2,700 Estonians in Alberta, comprising 10 per cent of all Estonians in Canada. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. [An electronic device sounded] Oh, my. That sounded a lot like a cellphone ringing in the Chamber. I look forward to the member, being honourable, noting that it was theirs and making a donation to the charity of their choice on behalf of the Speaker

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Members, as you are aware, recently I put out a call to all Albertans to contact my office if they would be willing to lead our Assembly in the singing of our national anthem. We've been overwhelmed with responses by Albertans, and this afternoon I was pleased to welcome our first anthem singer following that call. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to members of the Assembly Ms Ariana Whitlow. Along with being a highly accomplished and passionate singer, actor, dancer, Ms Whitlow holds a place near and dear to my heart because she is also the daughter of the late Speaker Gene Zwozdesky, the former Speaker and minister and long-standing, beloved Member of the Legislative Assembly. Ms Whitlow, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. I know that your dad would have been so very proud of you, not just today but every day.

Hon. members, this afternoon we have one School at the Leg. joining us. They are a group from the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora, the St. Pius X elementary school.

Also joining us in the galleries today: guests I had the pleasure of meeting earlier. Guest of the Member for Camrose: Aiden MacKey. Also joining us in the gallery is Josh Traptow, the CEO of Heritage Calgary and a guest of the Member for Calgary-Klein. And finally, please welcome Al Nagel, the CEO of Alberta federation of rural electricity. He is a guest of the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. I invite you all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, for more than 20 months I had the honour of serving on the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to provide recommendations to the Alberta government to address the calls for justice in the final report of the national inquiry. I'm grateful to the Minister of Indigenous Relations for entrusting me with the role and will forever be changed by the impact of my conversations with the incredible working group members with whom I served.

Mr. Speaker, according to data from the report Indigenous women in Canada are three times more likely to be victims of violence than non-Indigenous women. In Alberta 206 Indigenous women were murdered between 1980 and 2012. One morning in our working group we discussed the potential to improve our police service and justice system. During that conversation I heard from fellow working group members about the distrust towards police. When I asked for more details as to why, one of the members was willing to share a heartbreaking yet straightforward perspective. She said: when I was a little girl, my grandmother taught me, when I saw a police officer, to run and hide in the bushes because whenever police came, either an adult went away and never came home or a child went away and never came home. As her words sunk in, I reflected on what my mother taught me when I was a little child: if you're ever in trouble, run and find a police officer.

Mr. Speaker, I share this story to highlight how different the journey and perspectives are for our Indigenous women, our brothers and sisters. It is vital to consider this is as we begin this journey of reconciliation. We may not know where to start with the journey of reconciliation or if we will ever truly end, but the road must be travelled with patience, understanding, and a desire to honestly try to see the perspective from the eyes of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. With the 113 Pathways to Justice recommendations now delivered to the Alberta government, I look forward to seeing them implemented through various ministries and through legislation. Our province prioritizes healing from the past and a more robust outlook, a hope for the future for Indigenous people and their communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Family Doctor Shortage in Lethbridge

Ms Phillips: In the past three months Lethbridge has lost 13 more doctors. Since 2019, when the UCP took over, southern Alberta has 62 fewer doctors. That's the net; 43,000 residents of Lethbridge don't have access to a family doctor, and no clinics are accepting new patients. This crisis is getting worse. The urgent care centre in Coaldale has been closed for two years, and the UCP MLA for Taber-Warner recently revealed that there is no plan to reopen it. Those are the facts.

Last week the MLA for Lethbridge-East and the Health minister predictably told people that a couple of new doctors and a handful of maybes is good news. Well, Lethbridge, don't let them tell you things that are not true. We have lost five times that many doctors in two years. We lost them because the UCP went to war with doctors. They tore up their agreement. They have attacked them in the media, on social media, and here in this Chamber all through the pandemic. They're not fixing the problem because they are more focused on infighting than on health care.

Now, the Member for Lethbridge-East is the Premier's man in caucus, rallying the troops, sticking up for the Premier, carrying his water. He spends his time defending his indefensible Premier rather than defending the right of parents to get care for their sick kids. Albertans rightly do not trust the UCP with their public health care. The fate and future of public health care relies on removing the UCP from office. Almost half the city of Lethbridge does not have a family doctor now, but once there is a change in government, we will make fixing that our priority. Call the election. Lethbridge is ready.

1:40 **Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness**

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, April 24 to 30 is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. This week is a time to raise awareness about the critical need for tissue and organ donation across the country. The key to success starts with raising awareness. Currently 90 per cent of Canadians say that they support organ donation, yet only 32 per cent have registered their intent to donate. The disconnect between those willing to donate and those registered is concerning. There are currently 4,400 Canadians waiting for a life-saving organ transplant, almost 700 of which are here in Alberta alone. As a reference it can be up to a seven-year wait for a kidney, with many more awaiting tissue transplants. Sadly, on average 250 Canadians die each year on a wait-list. Each year less than 2 per cent of opportunities for organ and tissue donation exist.

As a member of the Legislature I feel that it is crucial that we work together to create the best system possible. That is why, with the help of transplant organizations across Alberta, I've introduced my private member's bill, Bill 205, that, if passed, will strengthen our referral process and expand education and awareness. Since engaging in this process, the families that have reached out to me have truly moved my heart, Mr. Speaker, like Cindy Krieger, who shared how the decision of her daughter Morghan to donate saved countless lives, or the story of Jennifer Woolfsmith, who lost her 22-month-old Mackenzy, and the solace it provides her to know that the decision to donate was a gift of life to four other children.

It takes only two minutes to register to donate, and one donor can help save up to eight lives and make life better for up to 75 people. Don't forget that it is never too late to become a donor, so please take two minutes today and become a tissue and organ donor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Southern Alberta Concerns

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I've had the pleasure of touring southern Alberta on so many occasions and talking to Albertans about their priorities. I met with local residents, businesses, health care workers, educators, and more. I did this so I could hear first-hand what those communities need to be able to grow and thrive. The people I met with were worried about their local health care and education. They are concerned about job losses and want a government that will invest in them. They told me loudly and

clearly that they want to have a partner and an ally, something they're not getting from this UCP government.

While I was visiting rural communities, this government was doing what they do best, ignoring the people they were elected to represent. They continue to engage in their infighting and the internal drama that Conservatives are known for. The Premier's staff compared his caucus to clowns. The Premier's office called his caucus sad and sour. You can feel the desperation from over there, Mr. Speaker. To tell you the truth, not a single person that I met with told me that that's what they really need, petty name-calling from the supposed leadership of this province. Even the UCP MLAs know this. One of the candidates for their leadership race warned them that their rural seats were at risk because of the bad policy calls and because of the work being done by this Official Opposition.

But I want to offer my colleagues in the UCP a hand of friendship and offer to help out. I commit to them that since they are more focused on their internal policies rather than the concerns of their constituents, too busy focused on protecting the Premier's job rather than creating and protecting jobs in rural Alberta, I'll take it off their hands. Let me assure them that on this side of the House I will continue to represent their constituents, because they continue to abandon them. Albertans deserve a government focused on them, and while they won't get it from the UCP, it won't be long before they have the opportunity to elect a new government that will.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East has risen.

Alberta at Work Initiative

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of our continued efforts to strengthen Alberta's labour market, our government introduced the Alberta at work initiative. Alberta at work aims to get more Albertans working in jobs that support their families and improve their lives. To accomplish this, five collaborating ministries will invest \$600 million over the next three years in a variety of programs to support training and remove potential employment barriers for Albertans.

The Alberta at work initiative focuses on building strong foundations by allocating \$87 million to support STEM and trades training. In addition, \$295 million is being invested in the creation of training opportunities in high-demand fields to develop the skills of our workforce. Every Albertan should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from our province's economic recovery. Our government is dedicating \$23 million to help low-income students advance their careers by joining high-demand programs. Another \$41 million over three years is available to service providers working with Albertans who are unemployed, marginally employed, receiving income supports, or from underrepresented groups. Over the next three years \$23 million will be invested into the Canada-Alberta job grant, which helps employers hire Alberta workers and helps businesses develop the skills they need to grow and diversify.

Mr. Speaker, we are ensuring the success of our students by investing \$235 million into programs to support enrolment growth, microcredentials, expanded apprentice education, and additional work-integrated learning opportunities. To continue to break down potential barriers, \$20 million is being allocated to Albertans experiencing long-term unemployment to facilitate their return to work. Thanks to investments like these, more than 32,000 people were able to leave income support programs and get back on their feet last year alone.

The Alberta at work initiative is a great example of collaboration across government for the betterment of Albertans, and I am pleased to support it.

Iftar Event at Rahma Mosque in Edmonton

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, this Saturday I was honoured to be able to join the Rahma mosque community in breaking fast as the month of Ramadan comes close to an end. Hundreds of Albertans gathered with food and water to celebrate iftar, the breaking of the fast. I would like to thank my many colleagues, particularly from Edmonton-Mill Woods, Edmonton-Whitemud, and Edmonton-West Henday, and the countless community leaders and members who joined with me for this important celebration. As the MLA for Edmonton-McClung I am honoured to be able to represent such a diverse and welcoming constituent group in this Legislature, and it's a special privilege to be able to represent the Rahma mosque.

As one of the five pillars of Islam, fasting calls on Muslims to reflect on and show compassion towards the less fortunate. It is also coupled with acts of charity, where individuals are encouraged to increase their generosity and donate for causes like hunger and poverty alleviation. But, most importantly, Mr. Speaker, Ramadan is also a time of community. By opening their doors for community iftar, the Rahma mosque provides an excellent opportunity for people of different cultural backgrounds to form new friendships and share in the feeling of generosity. Muslims do Ramadan as an opportunity to recognize their connection to faith and human communities. As the month draws to a close, we wish them blessings for their good deeds within their communities.

At a time when we are seeing increasing instances of Islamophobia in Edmonton and Alberta, events like this that bring the community together are more important than ever. Alberta has always been a welcoming home for Muslims, with the first mosque in Canada being built in Edmonton, with the Al Rashid mosque, that was built in 1938. This iftar event is one that celebrates the Muslim community and the best of Alberta. I was honoured to play a role in organizing this event and look forward to many more in the future. I encourage all Albertans to join with others in the community to celebrate an iftar meal at their local mosque.

Thank you.

Health Care Funding

Mr. Turton: Mr. Speaker, as many in this House know, health care is one of the most important items on the minds of Albertans, especially over the last two years. Spending the time, energy, and money on health care is something that this government has and will continue to do, and this is proven in what is outlined in Budget 2022. I've heard and seen members opposite say that this government is leaving empty promises for Albertans. They claim this government is not putting money where their mouth is, but that is simply not the case. This budget is the largest health care budget Albertans have ever seen.

In 2018 the NDP government spent just over \$20 billion to support AHS initiatives, but this UCP government is expected to spend over \$22 billion in this year's budget, a 7.9 per cent increase. Let me say that again. Our budget outlines an almost 8 per cent increase in spending for health care compared to the previous government. That includes \$2.2 billion to build, expand, and maintain health facilities, and \$64 million for response capacity in EMS. We're also committing \$20 million in new funding for mental health, addiction supports, and \$90 million per year to bring new family physicians to rural and remote communities. As a result, this province will see the highest number of doctors, the highest number of nurses, and the largest capital investment for health care in our province's history. Our seniors will also see record-setting funding levels, with nearly \$3.7 billion going towards the supports they

need and require when it comes to programs like continuing care. Those are big dollars and commitments, Mr. Speaker.

As MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain I want my constituents and all Albertans to know that they can sleep comfortably knowing that this government cares about their well-being and the health of their families. This massive and unprecedented commitment shows that we will continue to support and increase the publicly funded health care system that our residents need for many years to come.

Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition has question 1.

Utility Rebate Timeline

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are struggling with the rising cost of living, and they need help now, not later. It's been months since the Premier announced, reluctantly, that the government would provide rebates on power bills, paltry rebates but rebates nonetheless. Sadly, because this government is so mired in scandal and drama, it's way behind. Our party is proposing a timeline that would ensure Albertans see these rebates, already promised, arrive in their pockets no later than May 31. Will the Premier provide this guarantee for Albertans who are so tired of waiting on his empty promises?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, let's be clear that Alberta is taking more action than any government in Canada to help people cope with the rising cost of living, particularly energy, not only with the \$150 electricity rebate but with a cap on natural gas prices and the 13-cent-a-litre abatement of the Alberta fuel tax. We'd like to get the electricity rebate in people's hands as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the NDP is standing in the way. Why did they deny consent? Why did they block this bill last week? Will they co-operate with us? We can pass it this week if they co-operate.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've outlined what they have to do for us to pass it this week, but instead what we're getting from this Premier are excuses. If I was over there, they would have gotten the cheque already. The urgency is real. We're hearing from Albertans who are so behind on their bills that they face shut-off, and all they get from the minister is a 1.800 number. It is not good enough. We propose a ban on utility shut-offs until at least October to allow time for rebates to arrive. This would protect Albertans who can't wait for the Premier to get his act together. Will the Premier agree with that? Then we could pass it really fast.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this bill could be done and dusted by this evening if the NDP got out of the way and actually accepted to pass it quickly. She said that Albertans would have got the cheque if she was Premier. I'll tell you that what they got was the NDP's hand in their pockets, taking thousands of dollars out of the pockets of individual Albertans with their carbon tax. If they're actually concerned about power prices, why did they build 7 and a half billion dollars of transmission infrastructure, why did they shut down the coal plants in a hurry, and why did they bring in their carbon tax?

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier should really read the report from U of C into power costs, because the leading cause isn't any of the things he's identified; it's profit. It's power companies jacking up their markups just to turn a bigger buck. The falsehoods, the blame, the excuses: they all arrive very quickly. You

know what doesn't? The rebates. Our party is proposing that any future rebates delivered to Albertans must arrive within 30 days of Treasury Board authorization. Does the Premier support putting that level of accountability into the act, or is he going to run from that, too?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, last week we released the independent audit of the NDP's power-purchasing electricity fiasco: \$1.34 billion that they wasted. Why? Because of their ideological zeal to shut down the cheapest and most dependable form of baseload power. But the biggest driver now in electricity costs is their carbon tax, and they voted in this place two weeks ago to support Justin Trudeau's 25 per cent increase of the carbon tax. They want to quadruple it. Shame on them.

The Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for a second set of questions.

Ms Notley: None of that's true, Mr. Speaker, but nonetheless.

Physician Supply

Ms Notley: Since this UCP government was elected, the number of doctors leaving Alberta each year has increased 60 per cent. What does that trend mean? In Lethbridge 40,000 people have no family doctor, not a single doctor accepting new patients in the Bow Valley, scheduled ER closures across rural Alberta, and now eight rural communities that have lost obstetric services. Will the Premier today stand and apologize to the families who are losing medical care in their communities across the province of Alberta?

Mr. Kenney: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, she said that none of that was true. Is she now saying that she opposes the carbon tax? Should we bring back that motion where they can vote against the planned increases in the carbon tax? They brought in the carbon tax. They shut down the coal plants. They overbuilt the transmission infrastructure. They had to pay \$1.34 billion in penalties. If Albertans are paying more in electricity, they have one person to blame, and it's the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: We're talking about doctors, Mr. Speaker, since 188 have left Alberta since December alone. Why? Because the Premier ignores their issues, clearly, because he tore up their contract, he disrespected their profession, and he refuses to listen to their advice on public health, and now the expectant mothers who live in eight rural communities – north, south, central Alberta – cannot have their babies where they live. This is a fundamentally important health care service, and this Premier is letting them down. He won't even talk about it. Why won't he take responsibility for his failures on this issue?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'm pleased to report that Alberta has seen, according to the CPSA, a net gain of 99 physicians versus the same quarter of last year. That's to March 31. So we have more physicians. We have more physicians per capita than the rest of Canada. We have more nurses working in Alberta than ever before. We've added \$2 billion to the baseline Health budget. But when she says that we didn't listen to doctors' advice on COVID restrictions, she really means the Twitter donor doctors, and they would still have us in a hard lockdown if they had their way.

Ms Notley: Just keep insulting the doctors, Mr. Speaker.

You know what? Albertans can't get a family doctor. They can't give birth in their community. They can't schedule their emergencies. So if the Premier thinks that there are more doctors in

Alberta, I suggest that he get out the old Ford photo op, he get on that little puppy and he goes south, where he will find 31 fewer doctors compared to just a year ago and 13 that have left in just three months in Lethbridge alone. Why won't the Premier take responsibility for the mess he is making in health care and the hurt that he is imposing on Alberta families?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, again, we have 99 more doctors working in Alberta in the first quarter of this year versus the first quarter of last year. We are attracting more physicians, and indeed we're investing \$90 million into the retention and recruitment of rural physicians. That's \$90 million more than the NDP. And to put that in context, that's for about 800 rural physicians. We have the strongest incentives for rural physicians of any province in Canada, and I'm pleased to report that there are 1,800 more nurses working in Alberta Health Services than under the NDP.

Calgary Storm Damage Recovery Funding

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, I was proud to join our leader last week to commit to Calgarians whose homes were destroyed in the record 2020 hailstorm that an NDP government would be there for them. We committed to backfilling the city of Calgary program to install hail-resistant roofs. This program will cost less than \$5 million. The Premier ridiculed our commitment and then made up figures about how much it will cost. Can the Premier tell this House why he doesn't care about tens of thousands of Calgarians, including my constituents, whose homes were destroyed by hail?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. What the NDP is engaged in is the most cynical act of failed vote-buying that I've ever seen. You know, it costs about \$17,000 to put in a metal roof on an average home. There are about 150,000 homes in northeast Calgary. They're talking about a bill for taxpayers of at least 2 and a half billion dollars, and I've got news for that member of the NDP. People in northeast Calgary: they work hard, and they pay a lot of taxes, and they don't expect... [interjection]

The Speaker: The Premier has the call.

Mr. Kenney: They work hard. They pay a lot of taxes, Mr. Speaker, and they don't support the kind of cynical vote-buying scheme of the NDP. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, the only person trying to buy votes was the Premier at the Genesis Centre in northeast Calgary this weekend.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Sabir: The hailstorm happened two years ago, and still today there are claims that are pending, and this government hasn't lifted a finger. Some people are considering moving altogether. The stress of the damage caused to their homes, the delays in settlement, and the lack of support from government is too much. Is this government really going to sit there and do nothing as Calgarians pack up their lives and leave their communities? [interjections]

2:00

The Speaker: It's important for the Speaker to be able to hear the question as well as the answer.

Mr. Kenney: You know, why is it that the NDP is proposing that only a small number of Albertans would get this new free roof

program? You know what? Hail happens all across the province, Mr. Speaker. Hail happens all across the province. There are about 1.5 million dwellings in the province. To install new roofs for 1.5 million dwellings would be in excess of \$20 billion. Welcome to the NDP's new fiscal reality.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 2 o'clock as well as again at 2:01.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. The Premier has insulted northeast Calgary residents over and over. First, he brushed off their concerns about skyrocketing insurance claims after the hailstorm. Then he blamed northeast Calgary for spreading the COVID-19 virus. For the record we have the highest vaccination rate in the province. But then the Premier had the audacity to go to northeast Calgary Friday night and beg people to vote for him in his leadership review. Will the Premier admit once and for all that he doesn't care about the people of northeast Calgary?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the fact that the majority of northeast Calgarians voted for this government to get Alberta back on track. I'm proud of the hard work being done by northeast Calgary MLAs. And do you know what northeast Calgarians tell me? They tell me they want to keep their taxes low. They want a strong economy. They are great entrepreneurs and hard-working people, and what they don't want is a multibillion-dollar tax bill being passed on to them by the NDP because of reckless and cynical left-wing vote-buying politics.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Anti-Racism Act

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the UCP members on the Private Bills Committee voted to block debate on my private member's bill, the Anti-Racism Act. The bill, aimed at addressing systemic racism, came out of extensive consultation with racialized communities, academic experts, and a recommendation from the government's Anti-Racism Advisory Council. BIPOC Albertans were there at the committee to watch the proceedings and were shocked to see government members declare that this bill, which has long been called for by racialized Albertans, was not worthy of being debated. Does the Premier agree with his committee that tackling systemic racism in Alberta isn't worth debate in this Chamber? Will he join us next week in voting that it should be?

Mr. Kenney: Well, of course, racism is a critically important issue, which is why we have debated it many times, including through government motions, in this place. There was not a vote to block the bill at committee but a recommendation against it. There's an invitation in the deliberative legislative process for the NDP to work with government members. The question is: if that bill was so important, why didn't the member bring it forward when he had a majority of members in this Assembly? Why wasn't it important to the NDP government? Why did the NDP government do nothing about carding, nothing about street checks, and nothing about the barriers to economic inclusion through foreign credential recognition? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Opposition had lots of chances to ask questions. If she'd like another one, she's more than welcome to do so.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: What a shameful response from this Premier.

Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that, unlike this Premier, when I learn more, I do better. That's why I brought forward this bill, which would address a long-standing call of racialized Albertans by establishing the frameworks and standards to enable the collection of race-based data, supported by communities, academics, health care experts, even this government's Anti-Racism Advisory Council. If they are so committed to addressing systemic racism, legislation like this is a critical step. If the Premier won't vote to even allow Bill 204 to have debate, will he commit that he will take the recommendations of the bill and that he will step forward with a government bill to accomplish this this session?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we have a deliberative process for legislation. I haven't read the bill. I haven't commented on the bill. It goes to the committee. Members study the bill. I know that what he's asking me to do is to tell members to vote against their judgment. I won't do that. The real question is: why did that member and his party vote against this Conservative government bill to ban the often racist practice of carding? In four years the NDP did nothing to address that often racist abuse of police power. This government brings forward a bill to ban carding, and the NDP voted against it. Why?

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, what we did was debate that bill, introduce amendments brought forward to us by members of the community who expressed concerns that that bill had loopholes and did not do enough. We did our job, unlike this Premier and unlike the members of that committee who were unwilling to even take the time to actually look at what the bill would accomplish or bring forward a cogent argument against it. All it requires is for this House to have the opportunity to fairly debate. If the Premier won't support that, will he at least commit that he will sit down and speak to the stakeholders that his committee members shut out to hear their concerns?

Mr. Kenney: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. In four years in office the NDP did absolutely nothing about carding. They did nothing about the often racist practice of carding . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: The Premier.

Mr. Kenney: I know they hate hearing the truth, Mr. Speaker. The record is clear. For four years they did nothing about carding. When this government brought forward a bill to ban carding, they voted against it. This government is taking unprecedented action to combat the reality of racism in our society, including banning carding, limiting street checks, appointing a special liaison in the hate crimes unit to work with communities, creating the security infrastructure program, the fairness for newcomers office, and so much more.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has the next question.

Surgery Wait Times and Chartered Facilities

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last election and over the last three years I've heard concerns from many of my constituents about long surgical wait times. I wanted to take this opportunity to let them know that I have heard them. I am proud to be part of a government that campaigned on reducing wait times. The pandemic has made that harder by forcing us to postpone some surgeries to free up resources to support the ICUs. To the Minister

of Health: what is our government doing to ensure that Albertans receive critical surgeries in a timely manner?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the important question. The member is correct. COVID-19, unfortunately, has forced us to slow down scheduled surgeries at several times, but we're making progress in spite of it. The overall wait-list continues to come down. Most recently it was about 73,000 compared to 76,000 in March. Just last week we reported that we cut the wait time for cataract surgery nearly in half, from 19 weeks to 10 weeks. That's the shortest in seven years, shorter than at any time under the previous government.

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's good news to hear that cataract removal surgery is shorter today, even after two years of COVID-19, than at any time under the previous government and given that I've heard it claimed that cataracts are just an exception, as if that particular wait time was the only problem we inherited from the previous government, to the same minister: are cataracts an exception, and what are we doing about all other surgeries?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. Cataract surgeries are not an exception. Wait times also went up under previous governments for hip and knee replacements, heart surgeries, for MRIs and CTs, for some cancer surgeries as well. Emergency delays, discharge delays in hospitals, and access to continuing care got worse without a pandemic. That's why we campaigned on reducing wait times and improving access to our health care system. COVID made it tougher, but we're continuing to work on delivering on our promise. We will do that.

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his efforts. Given that I've heard that we've achieved the reduction in wait times for cataract surgeries by contracting more surgeries to chartered surgical facilities and given that the NDP appear to have an ideological focus on eliminating chartered facilities, could the same minister clarify: what is the role of chartered surgical facilities, and what are the plans for them going forward?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. We're doing exactly what we promised, funding more surgeries in hospitals and chartered surgical facilities to reduce wait times. We need to maximize our resources, so we're increasing capacity in hospitals and in CSFs. Contracted surgeries are publicly funded surgeries. Patients do not pay, just like visiting their family physician. Any space freed up in the hospitals is used to do more surgeries in hospitals, so more complex surgeries are done there. The previous government contracted surgeries, just like we are. The difference is that on their watch wait times went up, but they're going down on ours.

Support for Small Business and Economic Recovery

Mr. Bilous: New data shows that retail sales in Alberta are down in February, the fourth decline in the last six months. When you

factor in inflation, sales are down 6 per cent. That's effectively a 6 per cent cut to revenue, yet the UCP keeps piling costs onto businesses and consumers that are hurting them and hurting their viability. Our recovery is still very fragile, but the UCP is already declaring mission accomplished, patting themselves on the back, and saying that we're in a boom despite that small businesses are still struggling. How could the UCP be so out of touch?

2:10

Mr. Schweitzer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you: after four years of the NDP, where they chased business out of Alberta, we are proud of our record, 6.5 per cent unemployment. Just to educate the members on the other side, that is a lower unemployment rate than when this government formed office, when they were in power. We're going to continue to have the best possible business environment. We're leading the country in growth. We're creating jobs and diversifying our economy.

Mr. Bilous: And there are fewer head offices in Calgary under the UCP.

Given a 6 per cent drop in sales and that the UCP is doing nothing to support these businesses and given that many small businesses I've spoken to are still struggling from the pandemic, many waiting for supports the government promised months ago – the government has failed small businesses over and over – and given that the UCP is actually adding costs onto businesses with higher utilities and insurance, if the UCP won't provide direct supports to these small businesses, will they at least stop making a bad situation worse by increasing costs?

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank goodness the NDP was not in office during this pandemic because they would have shut down small businesses for years at a time. We're going to be there with them. We're open right now. We're moving forward to live with this pandemic. Moving forward, Mr. Speaker. On top of this, we've created the best possible business environment, lowering our corporate taxes from 12 per cent down to 8 per cent. On top of that, the NDP increased taxes, their carbon tax, chasing away businesses. We are diversifying when it comes to manufacturing, when it comes to aviation, when it comes to logistics. Our economy is thriving.

Mr. Bilous: Given that the minister missed the questions, that are based on small businesses, and given that at the national level year-over-year retail sales rose by an impressive 7.6 per cent in February, a full 6 per cent higher than Alberta, and given that once inflation is factored in, this is a decline in Alberta while the rest of the country managed to grow and given that Alberta's unemployment rate lags the national rate, with Calgary having the highest unemployment rate among major cities, why is Alberta lagging the rest of the country on these key indicators, and more importantly why are Albertans and small businesses falling further behind under the UCP?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's economy is booming right now. People are moving here for the first time in about seven years. The NDP chased away thousands upon thousands of people from this province. Right now there's this thing that is happening in Calgary – I live there – where we're starting to see licence plates again from other regions of the country, people that are moving to Alberta. Now, why are they doing that? Affordability. Calgary and Edmonton are two of the most affordable cities in the entire country. Alberta's economy is diversifying, creating jobs.

Obstetric Services in Rural Alberta

Member Irwin: This government is failing rural Albertans when it comes to access to health care in their communities. In Whitecourt

Alberta Health Services paused obstetrical care at the Whitecourt health care centre for a month due to limited physician resources. Patients are trying to work with their family doctors to ensure they have the supports needed to safely deliver their babies, yet last week the Health minister boasted about the record number of doctors in Alberta. What message does he have for families in Whitecourt who are being told they can't have babies in their own community?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. Alberta, like all provinces across the country, is facing challenges in terms of recruiting doctors, particularly in rural areas. We understand that that is a challenge, and that is why we are investing more than ever to build capacity within our health care system: \$600 million this year, \$1.8 billion over the next three years. As indicated by the Premier earlier, we're also investing an additional \$90 million to be able to attract and retain workers, particularly in rural Alberta, and I'll speak more to the details of those programs.

Member Irwin: Given that it appears that the minister's plan isn't working, because this government's war with doctors hasn't just impacted expectant parents in Whitecourt – in Provost there is no surgical coverage for C-sections due to a lack of physician coverage; in Lac La Biche there are no obstetrical services because of a lack of physician coverage – can the Minister of Health explain to folks in these communities why he is boasting about his government's record when it comes to doctors while parents are being told to just wait because there aren't enough doctors in their communities to deliver babies?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as indicated, this is a very important issue. The comment made by the member opposite that Albertans are being told to wait simply isn't true. We are focusing on providing the services. We recognize that in certain areas there is a shortage. Now, we have a detailed plan to work on that, \$90 million this year. We announced – and I was pleased – the RESIDE program, the rural education supplement and integrated doctor experience, which is supporting 60 doctors, physicians, annually to practise in rural or remote communities. In addition, we understand that obstetrics is challenging in terms of finding individuals, and I will speak more about that in the next . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Member Irwin: Given that the former Minister of Health created this crisis by starting a war with doctors, at the beginning of the pandemic, might I add, and that one of his biggest boosters was the Minister of Environment and Parks, who's also the MLA for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and that in both Rimbey and Sundre there are no obstetrical services on-site because of a lack of physician coverage, what message does the Minister of Environment and Parks have for parents in his riding who can't safely deliver a baby in their communities? Does he regret putting the interests of the former Health minister above the health of his own constituents?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as previously indicated, we understand there is a challenge in rural Alberta, particularly in regard to obstetrics, which is very specialized, and AHS is working with family physicians to be able to provide those services in other areas. We are working towards attracting and retaining physicians, family physicians and those involved in obstetrics, with that specialty. We'll continue to work on that, and we've devoted \$90 million to be able to do this. We are

working with other plans in terms of the increased training within our province. We will deliver on providing better health for Albertans.

Electric Utility Oversight and Power Prices

Mr. Barnes: ATCO Electric has agreed to pay a \$31 million penalty after an Alberta Utilities Commission investigation. ATCO deliberately overpaid for sole-source work on a transmission line, and the reason for this overpayment scheme was to guarantee that ATCO would maintain a deal to work on the Trans Mountain pipeline and a guaranteed rate of return of 8.5 per cent. This is the type of thing we expect from Quebec's SNC-Lavalin, not ATCO. Given that the provincial government regulates electricity transmission, Minister, please inform Albertans when and how you became aware of this fraud against Alberta ratepayers?

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

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a system in this province where the Market Surveillance Administrator polices the electricity industry. We've got the Alberta Electric System Operator, and we have the Alberta Utilities Commission that actually does the investigations. So in terms of when I found out, I found out about it the same time that that hon. member did, when it was in the paper and the Alberta Utilities Commission released their statement to the public, because they don't clear their decisions through government. They are an independent agency. That member ought to know that.

Mr. Barnes: Given that as a result of this highly fraudulent scheme Alberta ratepayers have once again been stuck with a high utility bill and given that Alberta ratepayers have already been paying more for the massive overbuild of Alberta's electric grid under the former PC Redford government and given that ratepayers face pressure from inflation, the federal carbon tax, as well as this government's industrial carbon tax again being passed on to Alberta families, can the minister tell us: how much are Alberta ratepayers being overcharged because of this scheme, and where is the \$31 million fine? Is it going to be returned to Alberta families, or is your government going to hoard it?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, our government has done something that the previous administration did not do. We stopped the overbuild of the electricity transmission system. The Alberta Electric System Operator recently released their report for their forecast for the next 10 years, and they can clearly show that they have deferred a billion dollars' worth of transmission infrastructure. In addition, they're forecasting that they're going to spend between \$150 million to \$200 million a year versus the \$2 billion a year that was spent by previous governments.

Mr. Barnes: Given that ATCO's fraudulent scheme may never have come to light without a whistle-blower coming forward to warn the Alberta Utilities Commission and given that it begs the question, "How many other you-scratch-my-back-and-I'll-scratch-yours schemes are taking place that leave Alberta ratepayers on the hook for these crooked dealings?" can the minister tell us if he intends to beef up the AUC's investigative powers or whether there will be additional sanctions against ATCO to crack down on these types of fraudulent schemes and restore all Albertans' confidence in our electrical system?

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

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like the hon. member is complaining that the system worked. We have an Alberta Utilities Commission that did the investigation, and they brought about their appropriate ruling. In addition to that, we have a system that's managed by the Alberta Electric System Operator, and it's policed by the Market Surveillance Administrator. I would say that the system is working. However, if that member is aware of anything that I'm not, then he should refer that to the Market Surveillance Administrator.

**2:20 Deaths of Children in Care
and Youth Transitioning out of Care**

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Speaker, on Friday it was confirmed what we already knew: 2021 was the deadliest year on record for children in government care; 49 children and youth died. This is a 44 per cent increase from the year before. I have continually raised this troubling trend in this House since last year, but the UCP has ignored these warning calls. Thirty-nine of the children and youth who died were Indigenous, yet the minister's recent review indicates that no consultations were done with Indigenous families, elders, or communities. How can the Minister of Children's Services expect to change these trends if she won't engage with the very families and communities that are affected?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said a number of times before, this for our government is a call to action. That is why I did ask the ministry for an additional review into what has happened here. We are not ignoring anything. We took action. We committed to transparency and accountability. I'm also happy to report to this House that when it comes to the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care, this is something that we are committed to. We are making progress on the all-party panel for child intervention recommendations; 23 of those have been now completed, with three in progress, which is definitely an increase over just a few months ago.

Ms Pancholi: Well, the minister has ignored these families.

Given that the minister's report, which she only released a week ago, includes no action items to deal with increasing caseworker vacancies, burnout, caseloads, and turnover and given that the last report of the former Child and Youth Advocate points to the redeployment of a specialized caseworker in one instance which impacted a youth who died and given that the advocate highlighted the negative impact high caseloads are having on youth in government care, why is the minister refusing to take action on the caseworker staffing crisis in her own ministry that is directly affecting the safety and well-being of children and youth in care?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, as typical, not one thing that the member opposite has said is accurate or correct. When it comes to staffing front-line child intervention, this is one of the most important things that we do as a government. This is one of the most important roles, I do believe, and also one of the most challenging. I am so grateful for the caseworkers who have supported kids and families, some of the most vulnerable kids and families in this province, over the last two years. We continue to hire caseworkers any time that there is a vacancy. We also are working on a recruitment plan, especially for rural and remote communities.

Ms Pancholi: There are no new caseworkers hired by this ministry this year.

Given that the issues faced by youth and their families in the child intervention system are complex and often systemic and include poverty, food insecurity, and housing insecurity and given that safe housing is even more important for youth transitioning out of care and that deaths in that age group have been more rapid – they have tripled, actually – under this government and given that the former Child and Youth Advocate found the ministry's response of focusing on the shelter system inadequate to support these young people, does the minister believe that shelters are all these young people deserve, and if not, what actions are forthcoming to address systemic issues like poverty and access to safe, affordable housing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, one of the things that I've continually said in this House when it comes to supporting the most vulnerable children and youth is that it's also focusing on better transitions for young adults who are transitioning out of the child intervention system. This does in fact require multiple ministries to work together on this. It's why we introduced the new transitions to adulthood program to make sure that instead of being a financial program, we do have a program that asks young people those questions. Do you have housing? Can we help? Do you know how to apply for a lease? Do you know how to find a doctor or mental health supports? Now we have caseworkers dedicated to that very specific work to make sure that we're focusing on a successful transition into adulthood. That is important . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is next.

Kindergarten to Grade 6 Draft Curriculum

Ms Hoffman: This government is doubling down to defend their horrible curriculum, the process that most charitably would be described as chaotic and rushed. Rather than working with teachers, community leaders, parents, and academics to get a draft that Albertans can be proud of, the minister refused to listen and only backtracked at the last minute, causing more chaos and more confusion. Schools boards have overwhelmingly rejected this minister's drafts. Rather than doubling down to defend her failed curriculum, will she admit that she missed the mark and delay implementation until a reasonable number of public, Catholic, and francophone boards are willing to pilot the curriculum?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the school systems will be ready. In fact, we've allocated \$191 million over the next three years, \$59 million in this upcoming year. I'm hearing from school authorities. They've already started along the process of ensuring that they have professional development and the resources available for their teachers so that they can implement in September of 2022. Looking forward to it.

Ms Hoffman: Given that they all still hate it, Minister, and given that 97 per cent of teachers say that they won't be ready for a new math, English, phys ed curriculum as well as wellness by September and given that the minister's only response has been to praise her own process, one that's been universally rejected by Albertans, and given that the minister has a thousand fewer teachers in school now than when the NDP was in government and that students have suffered significant learning loss under her leadership, will she at least get out of the way and let educators start over with her Dumpster-fire curriculum?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I was up in the Fort Vermilion area the other week, last week, and I was so happy to go into a classroom, an elementary school classroom. In that whole school they've been implementing the draft curriculum since last September in math, English language arts, and phys ed and wellness, and you know what? They're seeing two levels of growth, two years of growth, in mathematics, three years in English language arts. Doesn't every Alberta student in elementary school deserve that? We believe so. [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is the only one with the call.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the minister had to drive eight hours to find one school division willing to pilot her Dumpster fire of a curriculum and given that last week we learned the true feelings of this government towards teachers when the Member for Taber-Warner told the Coaldale council that involving teachers is not necessary for a good curriculum and given that the Premier refused to condemn these antiteacher claims last week – let's hope that the Minister of Education will at least stand up for teachers today – will the minister admit that removing teachers from the curriculum-writing process was a huge mistake? Will she admit that kicking teachers off and inviting Chris Champion in was wrong, and will she apologize for her colleague's disrespectful remarks towards Alberta teachers?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should apologize. She continually trashes the curriculum when, in fact, she admitted two weeks ago that she hadn't even read it yet. We are bringing in a curriculum in math and English language arts . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, we had the most transparent, open engagement process with hundreds and thousands of individuals right across this province, including teachers, including superintendents, including education partners, all of them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When new educational programming is introduced, as the former member mentioned, and modifications are made to what students are learning and the age at which they learn these items, difficulties can arise. Given that these challenges commonly include a shortage of resources during the transition, limited time for training, and high work volumes as the new material is adopted system-wide in classrooms, to the Minister of Education: what is the implementation plan to support the new curriculum, and how will you ensure it is resourced appropriately when implemented across Alberta in the fall to facilitate this transition? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the great question. We are taking a staged approach to implementing the new curriculum. Beginning in September 2022 English language arts and mathematics will be implemented for students in kindergarten to grade 3 as well as physical education and wellness for K to 6 students. Implementation of the new subjects by common grade groupings such as K to 3 and 4 to 6 will ensure successful implementation, and \$59 million in this upcoming year has been allocated to help prepare teachers, parents, and students for the new curriculum. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that the draft curriculum for kindergarten to grade 6, set to be implemented this fall, represents a massive program shift for both educators and students and further given that there will be adjustments required for both students and teachers throughout this transition period, to the same minister: what consideration is there for students this fall that began their schooling under the former curriculum? For example . . . [interjections]

2:30

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. It's one thing for members to heckle; it's an entirely other thing for members to have conversations across the bow while their colleague is asking a question. Perhaps it would be reasonable to allow her to do so in a manner that the Speaker could hear.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Education: what consideration is there for students this fall that began their schooling under the former curriculum – for example, a child going into grade 3 – and what is the plan for a smooth transition of their current knowledge into the new curriculum to mitigate any potential gaps?

Member LaGrange: Thank you again for a great question. This implementation rollout is based on the expert advice that we receive from the Curriculum Implementation Advisory Group. Focusing on K to 3 mathematics and K to 3 English language arts and literature will help younger students strengthen their numeracy and literacy skills, which are essential for early-years learning. The new K to 6 physical education wellness curriculum will support students in learning how to build resiliency, manage their health and mental well-being as well, Mr. Speaker. These are great subjects that our students need to have the improvements in.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for her answer. Given that the new curriculum includes wellness education to support the mental health, safety, and well-being of students and we know that general wellness is the basis for long-term health outcomes for our kids as they grow, again to the Minister of Education: why is the financial literacy piece of this curriculum, including banking, being incorporated into gym classes, and how will this support a physically active cohort of students who are already more sedentary coming out of the pandemic?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Let me be clear that the physical education and wellness curriculum is more than just gym class. The new phys ed and wellness curriculum has also been finalized to support elementary students in developing life skills and building resiliency to manage their physical and mental health and well-being, which also includes learning about financial literacy and consent. These additional learning outcomes will not prevent our students from participating in physical education, which we all know is so critically important to our young people.

South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, the south Edmonton hospital is critical to so many people living in Edmonton and nearby municipalities. Our

NDP government was proud to approve this project in 2017 and pledge to have it open by 2026. This government abandoned those timelines. They said that they intended to start construction in 2023 and open it by 2030, but then another change: earlier this month the government's own website for this project pulled the 2023 start date, and now it's blank. Is the minister really delaying the south Edmonton hospital yet again?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Budget '22 includes \$371 million over three years towards a \$930 million total investment, with additional funding to be provided in future years as project planning progresses. We made a commitment on the south Edmonton hospital. This is part of our budget, and we're going to deliver on this. As an overall approach to expanding capacity in health care, the overall \$3.5 billion that we've committed over a three-year budget – we know that we need to expand capacity, and we're going to deliver.

Member Loyola: Well, given that the Minister of Infrastructure doesn't even seem to know what's on his own website when it comes to the south Edmonton hospital and given that this same site also removed the project costs for this project and that we know that the government has made the ridiculous decision to move to a P3 construction model and given that schools in south Edmonton were massively delayed by decisions from previous Conservative governments to go the P3 route, can the minister confirm that his move to a P3 construction model is part of the reason constituents in Edmonton will now wait four extra years longer for a hospital that they desperately need?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, as you know, this is a large, multiyear project. Budgets move across the years based on the progress of the work. Right now the work is going on. As regards the P3s: we campaigned on it. We are going to implement P3s where it makes sense, where there is a value for money. In this particular case we haven't got to that stage about the procurement method. When we know, we'll let him know.

Member Loyola: Given that the UCP can't be trusted with health care, can't be trusted with construction of hospitals, managing a pandemic, clearing the surgical backlog, and taking real action to improve mental health services, will the minister admit once and for all that he, like so many on the government bench, has failed when it comes to building the south Edmonton hospital, and will he come clean on whether he's actually trying to sabotage construction of the hospital so he can kill the project once and for all?

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Panda: Sabotaging is only in their DNA, not in our DNA. The project is progressing well. There are 24 health projects happening across the province. In your own region, Mr. Speaker, in central Alberta, last year we approved \$1.8 billion for the Red Deer hospital, so we are not sabotaging anything; we are actually adding capacity in the health system to deliver care where it's needed, when it's needed.

The Speaker: The point of order is noted at 2:35.

RAPID Force Fish and Wildlife Officer Deployment

Mr. Schmidt: It was a big plan of this government to enable members of the sheriff highway patrol and fish and wildlife enforcement services as part of their RAPID response to tackle rural crime. The move was met with criticism and concerns. According

to AUPE at least 10 fish and wildlife officers originally assigned to RAPID are now being dropped. This would mean 10 fewer officers being able to support the government's plan to have fish and wildlife officers to respond to calls by citizens, making response times worse. Why is the government dropping 10 officers after just recently preparing them for the RAPID response and risking making response times worse?

Mr. Shandro: That is untrue, Mr. Speaker. Since the RAPID response program began, six months ago, we continue to make sure that all Alberta fish and wildlife officers have included in their training the module for the RAPID training. We have the same number of officers who are responding to priority 1 calls as before. There's been no reduction in the amount of officers, and everybody who is responding to the priority 1 calls is getting the wage top-up.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that training fish and wildlife officers for the RAPID response has cost a lot of time and money and given that these resources could have gone to good use supporting fish and wildlife officers in doing their jobs and given that Alberta sheriffs have a smaller budget this year than in 2018, these resources are badly needed. To the minister: how many resources have been diverted from sheriffs and the important work of fish and wildlife officers to the government's RAPID response, that it's now scaling back?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're very proud to have implemented the RAPID response program and make sure that we are adding our Alberta fish and wildlife officers to being able to help with rural crime, something that, by the way, the NDP refused to address in their four years, but we're going to take it seriously. This is one of our tools in making sure that we use our Alberta fish and wildlife officers and making sure that all of them have included in their training the module that is providing them the training of RAPID response and making sure that we have those resources available to us to help reduce crime in our rural areas.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that Albertans cannot trust the UCP with protecting public lands and resources and given that Albertans are seeing more and more chaos in the justice system and that the UCP has proven to be incapable to address the concerns of Albertans and given that the UCP government has made cuts to undermine important public services before and officers are concerned about what is to come in the months ahead, do these 10 reductions just show that even the government believes their RAPID plan failed and that we will see further reassignments going forward?

Mr. Shandro: Once again, Mr. Speaker, that isn't true. There has been no reduction in the amount of officers responding to priority 1 calls. Now, we do know that for many different reasons not every fish and wildlife officer can respond to a priority 1 call, but everyone who is responding to a priority 1 call is continuing to do so. Everybody who has been responding to a priority 1 call has been and will continue to get the wage top-up.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

High Level Disaster Response and Recovery Funding

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I represent the constituency of Peace River, and I couldn't be more proud. Inside my constituency is the town of High Level, a hard-working economic engine of Alberta in the oil and gas industry particularly. These northern communities like High Level are no strangers to damaging natural disasters – forest fires, floods, and others – so to

the Minister of Municipal Affairs: when can the town of High Level expect their full reimbursement from the disaster recovery program that they incurred from the Chuckegg wildfire?

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

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for being such a strong advocate for High Level. The member would be interested to know that High Level has already received over \$7.2 million in disaster recovery money from the province. That's out of the current cost estimate of \$9.7 million. DRPs are administered out of the Alberta disaster assistance guidelines to determine eligibility of expenses and to maximize the federal reimbursement available. Reconciliation of the file is in progress, and we should have another \$2.3 million by the end of . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

2:40

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that northern Albertans are faced with natural disasters – as I said, wildfires and floods – and given that the town of High Level has encountered many of these in recent years and that they've put a proposal forward for a multipurpose community evacuation centre, the question to the Minister of Infrastructure is: have you been briefed on this, and how are you responding to my constituents?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I have visited High Level with that hon. member twice, and I can understand and also appreciate that the town council is very passionate about that project. I also know that High Level is a border town, is an important hub for the north region and for the neighbouring First Nations. While I can't promise the funding right here and now, I can work with the hon. member and his community to find innovative and creative ways to finance that project. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of my communities have undergone natural disasters and received no funding for new aluminum roofs or houses that burned down and given that after these natural disasters many of them struggle with all sorts of issues, including mental health, and we have huge lineups to get access to mental health in our community, can the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions please let us know what he's doing or what can be done to find support for communities in my constituency, including High Level? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The associate minister has the call.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Of course, Alberta is very focused on ensuring that all Albertans have access to a range of mental health supports to improve their mental wellness. This includes the good people, of course, of Mackenzie county and High Level, which is why we've created funding to enhance mental health supports in that north zone. This includes the recent hiring of a new mental health therapist, a nurse practitioner, to help residents improve their mental wellness. Of course, we've streamlined the 211 system to make it easier for people to access mental health supports. Anyone can call 211 and get connected today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Anti-Muslim Discrimination and Hate Crimes

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, I'm rising today in support of the Muslim community in Alberta and to condemn those who would seek to harass, terrorize, or inflict their hatred on them. On Thursday the Edmonton police confirmed that two mosques had received packages containing white powder. It is concerning that this occurred during the holy month of Ramadan, a time when mosques will see many gatherings for prayers, fellowship, and to break their fasts. While both counts turned out to be innocuous substances, this is still an unacceptable act that requires immediate action from all levels of government and law enforcement to ensure that it never happens again. I'm glad no one was harmed by this, but I'm worried about the chance of copycats and backlash from the racists who think it is okay to terrorize an entire community because of their hateful views.

This cowardly act, designed to cause panic, fear, and create frustration in the community, must be condemned by each and every leader in this province and country. Every single Muslim deserves to feel safe in Edmonton, Calgary, all over Alberta and everywhere. At a time when racialized Albertans are seeing increasing instances of hate crimes and intolerance, it is distressing to see someone specifically targeting the Muslim community during such a holy time. It is concerning to see increased cases of Islamophobia around Alberta and Edmonton, vandalism of mosques, attacks on women wearing hijabs, and it shows that we still have a long way to go to address racism. We must take those steps together as a province to ensure that these instances of hatred and violence are driven out of Alberta.

Despite this tragic news, I'm proud of Edmonton's Muslim communities and mosques, who opened their doors to people of all faiths and backgrounds during the pandemic, who welcomed everyone during the final days of Ramadan. While some show us the worst in humanity, the resilience, strength, compassion, and welcoming of Alberta's Muslim community shows us the best.

Hailstorm Recovery

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, in July 2012 Cardston was hit by a devastating hailstorm. What seemed like a lifetime only lasted 20 minutes as baseball-sized hail pelted the town. When it was all over, the destructive storm caused in the ballpark of \$100 million in property damage, and that was just for a town of 3,500 people. In 2020 a hailstorm ripped through northeast Calgary, one so devastating that it ranks as the fourth-costliest natural disaster in Canadian history, at nearly \$1.2 billion, and some of the property damage is still visible to this day.

But these are not isolated storms. In August 2019 grapefruit-sized hail smashed parts of west Edmonton, destroying property and farmers' crops. In July 2021 Red Deer had its own bout with hail that caused flood and massive property damage, and in July 2017 the small town of Evansburg in northern Alberta was hit with hail the size of billiard balls.

Mr. Speaker, Mother Nature doesn't care where you live, but the NDP sure do. That is why the opposition leader announced last week that, if elected in 2023, they would buy everyone in northeast Calgary a brand new roof that is hail proof. Why, you ask? It's simple. The NDP want to buy votes with taxpayer money, and it

won't come cheap. Let's do some quick math. There are about 150,000 houses in this part of Calgary. Multiply that by \$17,000 per roof. This puts the price tag of this crazy idea at over \$2.5 billion of taxpayer money.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't some episode of daytime television where the opposition leader comes out and says: you get a new roof, and you get a new roof, and so do you. This is the people's money. They expect the government to spend it wisely, not use it to buy target seats. The next time the NDP shed hail-sized crocodile tears about a natural disaster in some part of the province, just remember: Alberta taxpayers aren't buying it, especially not for 2 and a half billion dollars.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I am pleased to present the committee's final report on Bill 204, the Anti-Racism Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre. This bill was referred to the committee on March 24, 2022. The report recommends that Bill 204 not proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 204.

The Speaker: This is a debatable motion, and I see a number of members have risen, providing commentary that they would like to join in the debate for concurrence, which will take place at the next available Monday.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 22, Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta's Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022, sponsored by the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 24, sponsored by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 18, the Utility Commodity Rebate Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 25, sponsored by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 18, the Utility Commodity Rebate Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Finally, I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 26, sponsored by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 18, the Utility Commodity Rebate Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

2:50

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Bill 21

Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 21, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

With Bill 21, our sixth red tape reduction bill, we are continuing to cut red tape that will support investment and economic growth, reduce unnecessary regulation, improve service delivery, and make life better for Albertans. The amendments included in this bill will speed up government approvals, enable local solutions for local problems, and streamline and update legislation for greater clarity. We are committed to cutting red tape by one-third, and Bill 21 is one more step to help us get there.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 21, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a first time]

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Health, responses to questions raised by Mr. Shepherd, hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, and Mr. Loewen, hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley, March 15, 2022, Ministry of Health 2022-23 main estimates debate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order.

At 2 o'clock and 2:01 the Deputy Government House Leader rose on a point of order. I understand that he intends to withdraw the point of order at 2 o'clock and debate the point of order at 2:01, but I will wait to hear his remarks.

Point of Order Remarks off the Record

Mr. Schow: Yes. Mr. Speaker, thank you for acknowledging me. I rise on a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j). At the time the Premier was speaking, in answering a question in the first set of questions of the day in question period, when the Leader of the Opposition said – it was so important to say it twice – in a heckle: you're making things up. This is certainly one indirect way of saying: you're lying. It imputes false motives to a member, which would be a contravention of Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). I would ask that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona or on her behalf the Opposition House Leader apologize for and withdraw those remarks.

The Speaker: The Deputy Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly didn't hear that heckle, so I will leave it to you to decide.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, certainly, if the Leader of the Opposition did say, "You're making things up," that would be a point of order because the Speaker has ruled on a number of occasions that that particular language is a point of order. In particular, on page 6144 of *Alberta Hansard* from November 16 – I'm sure you will all remember such an auspicious occasion – a member of this Assembly had to apologize for saying just that.

Having said that, while I heard many things that the Leader of the Opposition heckled today, I did not hear that. If the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader also makes such an assertion, I am unable to rule. According to page 624 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* we all know that it says that the Speaker cannot be expected to rule on comments that they may not have heard. As

such, this is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Also, at 2:35 the hon. the Deputy Government House Leader rose on a point of order. I'm not sure if he would like to . . .

Mr. Schow: Withdraw.

The Speaker: He's withdrawn that point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Privilege Threatening a Member

The Speaker: Hon. members, last week there was significant debate around a point of privilege, on which I am prepared to rule. However, I believe that the Deputy Government House Leader has a statement he would like to make.

Mr. Schow: Indeed, I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me. On March 31, 2022, during extensive tablings that included multiple cases of unparliamentary language being used by the Member for Central Peace-Notley, the Government House Leader rose on a point of order. During the argument of this point of order the hon. Government House Leader stated that he would bring forward a standing order motion so that members opposite could not abuse the tabling process.

On this side of the House we maintain that stating that a motion be brought forward for members' consideration and debate in no way constitutes a threat and certainly was not intended as such. While no offence was intended with the remarks, the member opposite has indicated that he felt offended during the exchange. As such, on behalf of the Government House Leader I happily withdraw any remark that occurred during that exchange in the point of order on March 31, 2022, that may have caused the offence.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I find it quite unique that the Government House Leader would provide a statement for a colleague to read on such a serious matter.

Having said that, I have been in correspondence with the Government House Leader today and have accepted his absence from the Assembly as a significant, serious, and reasonable absence from the Assembly. Because it's important that the statement be made prior to the ruling and while there may be areas of disagreement in the statement of the Deputy Government House Leader, I will, as I have in the case of members of the opposition, accept the withdrawal on a point of privilege and consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills

Bill 201 Eastern Slopes Protection Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this bill, the motion for concurrence with respect to the Eastern Slopes Protection Act. I think it's worth going through two things by way of speaking to this bill, the first being: why is this bill important? The second is the history of this matter, because I think the history of this matter demonstrates fairly clearly some very interesting things.

This is not the first time, Mr. Speaker, that this bill has been introduced. The Leader of the Official Opposition introduced this bill in the last legislative session as well, and knowing that they intended to prorogue the session, the members of the UCP voted for it to go forward to the House to be debated. Because they knew that this issue is incredibly important to Albertans and that they would expect their representatives, the elected members of this House, to debate it because it is of major interest to members of the public, the members of the government voted for it to go forward.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Then they prorogued the session, Madam Speaker, and the bill comes forward again. Lo and behold, in an instance where they would have to vote against it in this Assembly, they used the committee they created for the purposes of preventing private members' bills from the opposition getting to this House for its intended purpose, to prevent bills by members of the opposition from getting to this House.

I mean, it's not just bad policy, Madam Speaker, but it is incredibly cynical. [interjection] And it represents a policy and an attitude, an attitude being displayed by the Member for Calgary-Klein, who's chirping at me right now, in great spades. It represents the UCP's view of the people of this province, that they would vote for the bill to go forward when they knew it would never reach the House and that they would use the committee they created to prevent debate of the ideas of the Official Opposition from moving forward.

It's disrespectful, Madam Speaker. It is disrespectful. It is disrespectful, as the Member for Calgary-Klein was being disrespectful just now. It is disrespectful as the government staff is disrespectful.

Mrs. Frey: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mrs. Frey: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), imputing false motives to another member. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View very clearly stated that the Member for Calgary-Klein was aiming to be disrespectful. That is not fair, nor is that accurate. She should withdraw her comments, apologize, and stick to the bill.

3:00

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In fact, you know, this is clearly a matter of debate. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View was trying her best. She was clearly being heckled quite closely, and I know that the member involved is going to be having a conversation about that. So I would love for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View to be able to continue her debate as this is clearly not a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we've just begun this afternoon's debate, and here we are in a familiar spot. This isn't a point of order. This is a matter of debate. However, there was very clearly some stuff happening here that was perhaps a whole lot more than it should have been. I've noticed that members in this Assembly seem to be working things out on their own in the background, which is great. I encourage all members of this House to settle their debates outside of here, should they be personal ones.

I will ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View to continue her debate.

Debate Continued

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. That is, I think, what's problematic about the history of the particular bill.

Now, the second thing I wanted to speak to was the bill itself and why it is so important to the people of this province. Madam Speaker, it's worth noting that the government members are going to take the position that there's a ministerial order in place in this instance, and they are correct. There is a ministerial order in place in this instance. Why is a ministerial order insufficient? Well, a ministerial order is insufficient because it can be repealed with the stroke of a pen. Repealing important protections on open-pit coal mining in the Rockies with the stroke of a pen with zero public debate, with zero public consultation, is exactly the reason we find ourselves in this conversation in the first place.

The history of this matter is that the government repealed the 1976 coal policy, a policy that has been in place, much as the name would suggest, since 1976 protecting the mountains from strip mining. This was something that was important to Albertans in 1976. It continues to be important to Albertans in 2022, Madam Speaker, and the government repealed that with zero consultation. There was a massive public backlash because this is an important issue for Albertans, but of course the UCP chose not to bring it before this House. They did it quietly on a Friday afternoon, trying to do it in secret, after being lobbied by coal companies.

So the Official Opposition brings forward this bill because the problem that we are trying to solve is twofold. It is both a problem about coal mining in the Rockies and Albertans not wanting coal mining in the Rockies, but it is also a problem about a government repealing important protections with zero public consultation with Alberta. The only way to achieve both of those goals is to pass this act. Now, obviously, we're not here talking about whether or not we're passing this act. We're here to concur in a report, a report from a committee that was created to prevent the debate of opposition bills.

After they rescinded the coal policy, after there was a massive public backlash, the government committed to coming forward and preventing those contracts they signed from going forward. That was, well – it can charitably be described as a splitting of hairs that I think was inappropriate. There had been a whole number of applications that had come in during the time that the protections were in place, that were basically on hold while those protections were in place. When the protections were lifted, all of those applications went through. Now, new applications also came in, and the government got rid of those new applications, but they certainly left the public with the impression that they got rid of all of the applications. That is not correct. They got rid of only the new applications, so a number of projects did in fact proceed forward. That is the reason that we bring forward this bill: because the government can't be trusted on this issue, and Albertans know that the government can't be trusted on this issue.

Albertans deserve to have a public debate in the Legislature – the Legislature – which is their House. They send elected representatives here to have public debates on issues that are important to them, but the UCP members of that committee have voted to prevent that debate from occurring. They didn't just vote against the bill; they didn't just vote not to protect the eastern slopes from coal mining; they voted not even to discuss it in this place. So this one hour, this debate on the concurrence in the motion, is the only public debate that Albertans will ever get on this. I think, Madam Speaker, that that is incredibly

sad. I think that that is a disservice to democracy, and it is a disservice to the people that we serve.

It is also a disservice to the future of this province, because the reason Albertans so vehemently oppose this is because of the effect that it has on our beautiful landscapes, on landscapes that make us who we are. These are part of us as Albertans, and they are important to us. That is why Albertans responded so strongly to the UCP's removal of those protections, and that is why I think it is the obligation of every member of this House to vote against concurrence in this report and to ensure that the bill can proceed to the House so that we can have the debate on these issues that are important to Albertans.

It is also important to Albertans that we protect our water and our land for future generations. We all know that water is a resource becoming increasingly important and increasingly rare. And this, the removal of the protections that this bill is meant to reinstate, has a huge impact on that. They have a huge impact on the protections of our land and water, protections that are important to the people of this province. So I think that the actions of the UCP members on the committee, in denying so much as debate on a bill that is this critical, that is this important to the people of Alberta, are disrespectful. I think it's disrespectful to their constituents.

I think it suggests that they don't understand how important this issue is. It's one thing, Madam Speaker, to disagree on policy; it is quite another . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Mrs. Frey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am rising today to support the recommendation that Bill 201 should not proceed. Alberta is one of the few locations with ethical coal mining operations and policies, and we take the process, of course, very seriously. Suppose we were to think about some of the first coal and mining policies introduced in Alberta. In that case, you will see that they proceed after years of research and public consultation. Thanks to that research, Albertans can enjoy the Rocky Mountains, and the world has access to an ethical and safe supply of coal, of other minerals.

Madam Speaker, as the scientific knowledge and findings develop, so do Alberta's mining practices and those around the world. Two springs ago we began consultation on a new policy to strike the right balance between protecting the areas we cherish and the need for economic opportunity for rural communities in the province. As a direct result, the Coal Policy Committee was formed. The committee conducted meaningful consultations to ensure the development of modern coal policies by Albertans and for Albertans.

Madam Speaker, the Eastern Slopes Protection Act is extremely hypocritical and divisive. And, what's more, the Leader of the Opposition and MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona failed to address any of Alberta's coal policies while in power. Perhaps that's why she's in opposition now. But those are not the main issues with it.

In fact, in 2017 the NDP government and the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, while she was Premier, approved a two-year drill permit for Altitude Resources to drill and define the potential coal resource at its Palisades property. If the opposition truly has an issue with coal mining and policy in the province, then they had the opportunity to address this for the four years that they were in government. But, instead, here's what they did, Madam Speaker. They supported six category 2 leases, that are currently being explored on category 2 land, and even issued a letter to the AER requesting that the application for the Ram River proceed.

3:10

In addition to their hypocrisy, Madam Speaker, is their claim that the decisions made by the government were unilateral or malicious in

nature. That's so far from the truth. The Coal Policy Committee was formed to lead a comprehensive engagement to ensure everyone's views are represented. We heard from Albertans north to south, urban, rural, Indigenous – you name it – as well as other various communities and organizations, and the coal policy received more than 170 technical submissions, more than a thousand direct e-mails, 25,000 responses to the survey initiated by the government, and had round-tables with approximately 35 Indigenous communities.

That's as diverse as a consultation gets, yet the NDP continues to stand here and light their hair on fire about a lack of public consultation. So let me ask you this: who did they consult? Did they reach out to anyone?

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on about the NDP's assurances on this bill; however, it all comes down to their claims being accurate and not in favour for Albertans. Currently Environment and Parks regularly monitors water quality, including selenium levels, at 116 river and tributary sites across Alberta plus an additional 31 tributary sites throughout the oil sands monitoring program. In addition, all exploration and development are now restricted in the eastern slopes on category 2, 3, and 4 lands.

On top of that, Madam Speaker, you know, our government has made historic investments, the largest investments in the province's history, in irrigation. We've also made historic investments in drought mitigation with that irrigation investment. We've also talked about flood mitigation. So if the NDP wants to talk about water, they can talk about water all they want, but they've done absolutely nothing in their four years or as opposition – I don't even think they've talked about this – to deal with water insecurity for farmers, especially in drought-ridden areas like southern Alberta, that I represent. So it's hypocritical at the very least.

Alberta will continue to provide feedback to Environment and Climate Change Canada about the federal coal mining effluent regulations, which are expected to be finalized by the end of 2023. Madam Speaker, I'm opposed to Bill 201 because I reject the shameful and divisive politics of the NDP, and I urge all other members of this Chamber, on both sides of the aisle, to do what is best for Albertans and the environment, not a hypocritical bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am certainly enjoying this very public debate that we're having here in the Legislature on Bill 201. Thank you, all, for taking part in this important discussion. I rise today to state that Bill 201 should not proceed. Let's be honest here: this bill is not necessary.

The Minister of Energy went back to the drawing board on March 4 as it was made clear that our government and Albertans want to get the coal policy right. I want to thank the minister for listening to Albertans. I'm very comfortable that the minister and this government are getting it right. The NDP's private member's bill is hypocritical and a distraction from the Coal Policy Committee's meaningful consultations, which are an essential step to ensuring that the modern coal policy is developed by Albertans for Albertans.

However, Madam Speaker, there is no need to take my word for it. I trust the more than 170 technical submissions as well as over a thousand direct e-mails related to this topic from Albertans. How about the 25,000-plus survey responses from Albertans? The consultation did not end there. There were more than 70 meetings with interested parties, including industry, nongovernment organizations, Indigenous representatives, academia, subject matter experts, and 15 municipalities. Consultations also included bilateral meetings and virtual round-tables with approximately 35

Indigenous communities to go along with three tours of coal-producing regimes. All of the examples I just mentioned seem like consultation to me. I actually think that if we were in the opposite seats here and the government was pushing this bill forward recklessly without actually properly consulting with Albertans on this, we would be being criticized right now for not doing proper consultation. That's why I'm opposed to moving forward with Bill 201.

I'm also confused as to why this bill lists category 1 lands. The Leader of the Official Opposition and members across are well aware that coal exploration and development has never been allowed on category 1 lands, which include national parks, provincial parks, wildlife sanctuaries, just to name a few. So why waste the paper writing this thing?

The government has also heard the Coal Policy Committee loud and clear. That is why the ministerial order expands the halt of coal exploration on category 2 lands to also include exploration and development on category 3 and category 4 lands as defined by the 1976 coal policy. The restrictions on activity on category 2 lands has been in place since April of last year, so what we see, based on the language of Bill 201, is again virtually identical to the policy already in place. This bill is redundant.

Madam Speaker, Bill 201's aim is to cancel all coal activity as well as under category 3 and 4 lands unless these leases were issued prior to May 1, 2020, and hold approvals for actively operating mines or processing plants. Our province has always – always – had a strong track record in regard to reclamation of land. The bill does not specify whether reclamation activities will be permitted to continue; however, these activities will be required even if a lease is cancelled. Now, the previous government had an opportunity to act on the coal file. They did. It's interesting that the former Premier and the former Justice minister, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, did not act on this, and I wonder why they did not act when they were in power. Was it not important to this government?

There are six category 2 leases currently being explored; four began exploration under the 1976 coal policy. During her Premiership, when she had the opportunity to address this policy, her government supported these initiatives; the Member for Calgary-Mountain View supported these initiatives. The NDP went far enough as to issue a letter to the AER requesting the application for Ram River to proceed. I guess they had the political capital to burn at that time. Madam Speaker, I know that this is not question period and, thankfully, the NDP are no longer in government; however, if I were to pose a question to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona or the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, it would be based on the current bill. Is she now opposing the types of projects that her government supported only a few years ago? If so, what has changed?

The hypocrisy doesn't stop there, Madam Speaker. In March 2018 the Member for Lethbridge-West and former minister of the environment was questioned about development of metallurgical coal in the eastern slopes. In response she said, "Of course, Alberta does have a number of metallurgical coal interests and [we] will continue to develop those [interests]." Again I would ask: what has changed for these members since they were in government and now are opposition?

I would also like to highlight another redundancy. One amendment states: restricting coal exploration and development in the eastern slopes until land-use planning is completed. Madam Speaker, I am thrilled to tell members opposite that that is already in the coal report, which the government is currently acting on.

Madam Speaker, I want to remind the House that the committee's report and recommendations in combination with input from Indigenous engagement processes make it clear that modernizing Alberta's management of coal resources is a complex undertaking

that must be done with care. It does not mean cancelling projects that are already under way by the snap of a finger. What do you tell the workers in this industry when they are out of work and not able to feed their families? We will not be putting hard-working Albertans out of work or endangering projects that are safely already under way. This is just more evidence that our government is there for the hard-working men and women of Alberta who are safely, responsibly harvesting our resources. The bottom line is that the coal report was done with thorough consultation with industry, municipal governments, Indigenous communities, experts, and, of course, everyday Albertans.

I cannot speak for the NDP and who they may or may not have consulted with their bill; however, I have the utmost trust, faith, and confidence in the Minister of Energy and the government to get this right. With industry being consulted, this will help us create a coal policy that will protect our most precious spaces while also creating a business environment where responsible projects will not simply be cancelled because of ideological drive. I am opposed to Bill 201, and I urge all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of nonconcurrency.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

3:20

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the chance to respond to the last couple of speakers, some of the things that they were mentioning in their comments. You know, maybe I'll start off here: we keep hearing about: "Well, why didn't the former government do this? Why didn't the former government do that?" Well, the former government didn't, under the cover of evening, right before what I believe was even a long weekend, remove the 1976 coal policy just like that. They probably thought: "Oh, 1976: that must be red tape. That's just old. Let's just get rid of it." That is what triggered this whole exercise, so it's funny that the members opposite seem to leave that detail out, okay? This has been going on, certainly, for a very long time. Alarm bells were raised when that happened.

Now, all we need to do is look to one of the provinces right beside us to see a living example of what happens when our water system gets contaminated. You can always go down that road: oh, you know, the human body needs selenium. Sure, in very, very tiny quantities. But when you're sitting here measuring down from that disaster that happened to our neighbours and you're – I think it was something like 20 miles downstream from the event – seeing levels something like five or six times higher – like, lethal – than the human body can absorb, that needs to be the moment to pause. Listening to the one member talk about the historic investment in irrigation in southern Alberta – absolutely great; totally onboard with that – that would be a complete waste of money if we contaminate the water. People won't be able to drink it, we won't be able to irrigate with it, and all of that money that we just spent on all of that great infrastructure is now put to waste. That is what people in southern Alberta had a really big problem with.

Hence, leading to Bill 201, the exact same bill that members opposite voted in favour of at the Private Bills Committee, that it should be debated. Nothing changed, so as a member who's sat on this committee since the beginning of the 30th Legislature, I've clearly seen members who have sat on that committee, through a concerted effort, deciding that private members' bills from opposition members don't deserve debate in this House. The ones that did, clearly, we've seen are far enough down on the list, and we all know, from the limited amount of time private members get in this House, that those bills wouldn't be debated. How do you get

from supporting a bill to be debated in this House to all of a sudden not? "Oh, well, the government took action. We did all kinds of consultation." Great, so all of that effort and all of that work and the best thing that could come out of that, Madam Speaker, was a ministerial order?

Everybody knows, and if you don't, you should learn, that a ministerial order as fast as it's tabled can be taken away. Just look at the 1976 coal policy. That was actual legislation; gone, snap of the fingers. You think a ministerial order is going to slow things down? Come on. I'd hope that you were all able to get to this House with some degree of understanding. I keep arguing over and over and over again in this House, Madam Speaker, about language. Where does it say in that ministerial order that it cannot be cancelled unless approved by this House? Spoiler: there isn't. There's no language for that, so it can be removed by the decision of one person, snap of a finger, no problem. We're left to, basically, that same thing that we've heard over and over again: well, just trust us; we'll get it right.

Well, I hate to tell you this. I can't trust this government, because the leader of this government couldn't manage a simple promise of delivering a donors list. How am I supposed to trust something much larger, then protecting our water system? That's what triggered Bill 201 and why we need to get something in place. That way it comes before all of us. We get the opportunity to go back and talk to our constituents if that's the case, if some kinds of changes need to be made.

If you're sitting here telling me that Bill 201 is useless, that the government is taking action, then I have to ask the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks: where's the legislation to guarantee the safety? What's taking you so long?

Again, going back to this whole: well, the past government; the past government. You've all been in charge for three years. I remember members of the government caucus, members of the government bench, back when they served in the opposition, were busy telling us that same line after six months, let alone three years. Start owning what you're doing.

Madam Speaker, this bill needs to be debated in this House where Albertans can watch. You thought it was worthy then; it's still worthy now unless, of course, you're trying to duck Albertans. Here we go back, full circle, again to that whole trust issue. I've heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs before, in the past, saying: we need to work harder to regain the trust of Albertans. I agree; you do. You have an opportunity here.

We need to vote against the committee's report. I know that members of the opposition that sit on that committee, including myself, disagreed emphatically with that. We provided a minority report to say as much. At the end of the day, if it doesn't pass, then so be it. At least it was debated in this House.

I know that my colleagues have more to say on this. Hopefully, I've managed to get my point across. I'm certainly going to urge members to vote against the report from the committee, and hopefully we get a chance to talk about Bill 201 and maybe a few other opposition bills in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the motion for nonconcurrency for debate of Bill 201, the Eastern Slopes Protection Act. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this; however, I'm disappointed that this will be the only opportunity that I have to speak to this bill and that this is the only opportunity for this Chamber, for the members of this Legislature, to debate this bill.

I've been quite surprised to hear some of the arguments coming from the members from the government side with respect to why we should not even consider this bill in the Legislature. I actually want to highlight again that that is what we are discussing here today, whether or not we should even debate Bill 201 in the Legislature. We certainly know that government members may have different views about certain provisions in Bill 201. They may take issue with it. They may raise some of the concerns that they've raised here today in the concurrence debate or in the committee, but that should be properly had in a debate on the merits of this bill.

What's troubling about this is that if we look at what Bill 201 is about, it is about protecting the eastern slopes, full stop. That's what it's about. And there should be almost unanimous understanding that that is what Albertans want from the members of this Assembly by now. I actually fail to understand how this is even up for, I guess, any discussion, because I don't think there's been one issue that has so galvanized Albertans from all different stripes, from rural, from urban, farmers and ranchers, and people who love to hike and experience our eastern slopes for their beauty. Whoever you are, it has been overwhelming.

I am willing to bet, Madam Speaker, that every single Member of this Legislative Assembly, regardless of which constituency we represent, has been inundated with correspondence on this issue, and the overwhelming consensus is that Albertans do not want coal exploration on the eastern slopes of the Rockies. In fact, that is also the conclusion that was reached by the coal committee in their report, that very conclusion.

3:30

Why, then, would the members of the government caucus be so opposed to debating a bill that does just that? They may say that it's because, yes, there's a ministerial order that has already been passed and therefore it's not necessary. That's something that we could have a discussion about in debate on this bill. We could actually have that discussion about: what's the difference between a ministerial order and legislation? Policy and law geeks like me would love to have that discussion. But the biggest difference, Madam Speaker, of course, is that a ministerial order can be changed by one minister by simply rescinding it by the stroke of a pen, and it's over.

If it's in legislation, however, Madam Speaker, as you know, that comes before this Assembly. Whether it be amendment or passing such legislation, it has a fulsome debate: three readings, the opportunity for amendments, an opportunity for Albertans to watch through, you know, Assembly Online or to read *Hansard* debates and to put forward arguments to have their MLAs represent them in the Legislature. The democratic process: that's what that's about. That is the primary difference.

We could discuss that in a debate on Bill 201. Instead, the government members of this House are saying what they have said over and over again in their time as government, which is: trust us. Now, they've said that over, and they've proven to Albertans over and over again that they cannot be trusted. There's no issue that that is more true of than on the coal issue.

I heard members, the Member for Calgary-Klein, say: oh, if this issue was so important to us, why didn't we pass the eastern slopes act when we were in government? The answer to that, Madam Speaker, is plainly obvious. It's because when we were in government, the 1976 coal policy was in place. We didn't need to pass this legislation. The need for this legislation arose only as a result of the conduct of this government, which was to eliminate with the stroke of a pen a policy on a Friday before a long weekend, hoping that no one would notice. Now they're asking Albertans to

trust them that they won't do the exact same thing on the exact same issue again.

I think what we have determined, Madam Speaker, is that on many issues this government can't be trusted: on what they say about health care, on what they say about education, on what they say about the economy, on what they say about how they're going to be good stewards of taxpayers' money. We can't trust them on any of that, that they're not going to make things more expensive, that they won't increase taxes or fees on Albertans. We can't trust them on any of that, but certainly there is no clearer example of what Albertans can't trust them on than coal.

I know that that's the case because, Madam Speaker, even this past weekend in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud – I was out door-knocking this past weekend, a beautiful day for it, might I add, gorgeous weather for knocking on the doors, lots of people excited to talk to me, and I was excited to hear what they had to say – do you know what issue kept coming up again? Coal. I want to give a shout-out to Ken, who I spoke to at the door this weekend. Ken said to me specifically, "I don't trust these guys on coal as far as I can throw them." He said: "Yeah, yeah. They're now saying that they're not going to do coal development, but they said that before, and guess what they did? They got rid of that coal policy."

This is in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. Now, my constituents may not be directly affected by any resulting coal exploration on the eastern slopes. They may not have their ranches, their farms, their drinking water – although, by the way, it does affect our drinking water eventually, they may not be as directly impacted as constituents of many of the other MLAs who sit in this Chamber. But Ken and many others do not trust this government on coal, so when the members of this caucus stand up and say that they don't even want to debate a bill that will put into legislation the things that they claim to agree to, which are actually preventing exploration of coal on the eastern slopes – that's what the report said. That was the conclusion overwhelmingly, what Albertans wanted.

They claim now to be the grand stewards of the eastern slopes, so why don't they want to even debate a law that would protect that? Perhaps, once again, when given the opportunity to earn back Albertans' trust, they're going to throw that in Albertans' faces again. Honestly, Madam Speaker, this is an opportunity. The government should be thanking us for providing them this opportunity, or thank the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for bringing forward a bill to put into legislation, to codify what they claim to be the case, which is that they do not support coal exploration on the eastern slopes. Instead, at a committee, which has every single time prevented the debate of private members' bills from the opposition members from coming forward for debate, this committee has stopped it once again.

I honestly feel like this is a missed opportunity for this government to try to earn back a little bit of trust, but perhaps they're not trying to earn back trust. Perhaps they're actually once again showing their true colours, which is that they're not interested in protecting the eastern slopes. They got their hand slapped pretty hard by Albertans when they eliminated the coal policy and then tried to pretend it wasn't happening. This government came up with lots of fictional stories about what was going on and what wasn't going on. They couldn't even own up to it right away when they did it and admit that what they were doing would permit coal exploration on the eastern slopes. So they've lost the trust of Albertans, and this was an opportunity to regain it. It sounds like they're not interested in regaining that trust. They're interested in, perhaps, coal exploration on the Rockies.

Certainly, this ministerial order could be struck out as I know the cabinet members who have done that with ministerial orders, who have issued them and revoked them without any debate in this House. They know that. In fact, many ministerial orders are not

even publicly available. They're not even published. This was a shock to me when I actually worked within the public service, that there are many ministerial orders that Albertans might not even know of. Perhaps, in this case, they'll once again try to strike it down, and nobody will know.

So I have to say, Madam Speaker, that I'm deeply frustrated not only by the fact that this government won't even take those opportunities that are presented to them to really gain back Albertans' trust on the coal issue – they have this opportunity, and they're not taking it – but I'm also deeply frustrated for the state of democracy in this province right now. Not one single private member's bill from a member of the opposition has come forward for debate in three years. Not one.

I do recall that when the NDP were in government, there were several private members' bills that were passed by opposition members. I know we discussed some of them. Some of them had been brought in, at least had a fulsome debate. It's no doubt that this government has a majority in this House. If they don't like a piece of legislation, they can prevent it from passing – they can – with their numbers in this House, but the fact that they're even afraid to have that debate speaks volumes about who this government is and why Albertans continue to not be able to trust them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others wishing to join the debate on the motion for concurrence? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is, as always, an honour and a privilege to rise in this House. I was chatting with a school group not long ago, and a couple of people kind of asked what the hardest part of my job was. I always stumble on that question because I have to talk about the fact that we are so privileged to be in this Chamber. You know, I'm one of only 87 MLAs, so I think it's just a good reminder to think about the role that we have.

As always, the first time I rise during a week, I would like to also give a shout-out to all of those on the front lines who are doing so much for all of us as we are still in the midst of a pandemic.

I talk a little bit about, you know, the privilege that we have as members. I lay that as some context to my argument today because the opportunity to present a private member's bill is a very rare one. It's a privilege that many MLAs may not even ever get a chance to do. I have not been lucky enough to have one myself. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was incredibly lucky to be drawn first. I'll have to check with her. I can't recall actually if she's had multiple opportunities to introduce a private member's bill. I mean, she has been around a long time. That's not an ageist joke; she's just one of our longest serving members, I think in the entire Chamber, in fact. It is such a privilege.

I know the work that my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona put into this bill and, of course, the previous iteration of it as well. You know, I know the consultation that was done, so for the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat to ask about consultation is just quite disingenuous and quite disappointing, I might add.

3:40

Oh, gosh, I'm getting serious *déjà vu* from quite recently having the honour of sitting on the private members' bills committee and seeing my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre – the truly countless hours that were put into his bill, Bill 204, the Anti-Racism Act, and just how much consultation was done. You know, I sat back, and I can't claim to have helped to write the bill, but I certainly sat in on many consultations. These were consultations

that took place on weekends, where community members, primarily racialized community members, gave up their time, volunteered their lived experience, their expertise, their knowledge, their wisdom, resulting in a bill that everybody in this House could and should be quite proud of. It was absolutely – and I'm not even exaggerating – heartbreaking to see what took place just the other day on that bill. I was going to say which day, but now the time is just all confusing to me. But it was quite, quite recent.

You know, so that Madam Speaker doesn't get concerned about my staying on track here, I'm framing all this to give a little bit more context. I can echo some of what my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud just spoke about. I've been able to serve on this committee, the Private Bills Committee, since it was formed, and we've seen a clear pattern from this government. Bill 204, just the other day, was another bill in a long, long list of many that this government refused to move for debate in this Chamber.

You know, if the Member for Calgary-South East would like to join debate and present his position on this, I'd love to hear that, and from other members from Calgary, too. You know what? I've spent a number of hours knocking in various Calgary constituencies, and I love being able to talk about door-knocking in Calgary. I've knocked in a number of members' ridings, and protecting the eastern slopes, protecting our mountains comes up a lot. It really does.

I've knocked on doors in Calgary-Klein, in Calgary-Foothills. Oh, gosh, the list goes on. I don't need to tell you the whole list. I'm going back, in fact, in early May, and I'm going to be knocking on many more. I've even knocked in Calgary-Mountain View, so I'm not just going after seats we plan to flip. You know, I know that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who spoke quite eloquently about this bill, hears about it at the doors a lot.

You know, often my line when I talk to Albertans is: I'm there to listen. I don't want to plant any seeds. I just say, "I'm your MLA" if I'm knocking on the doors in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, as I was this weekend in beautiful Highlands. If I'm knocking in another MLA's riding, I say: I'm so-and-so from Edmonton, and what issues are top of mind for you? I can tell you that the top issues that I've heard recently in ridings outside of my own are health care; education, primarily curriculum; and mining, coal mining; and protecting our environment.

It truly should be, you know, incumbent upon all of us in this Chamber to be listening to our constituents. I don't know how much the members opposite are knocking on doors in their ridings. I know I do hear from a fair number of folks who say that they haven't heard from their MLAs a whole lot. I would urge them perhaps to get out there and do so and take a similar approach. Ask your constituents what they're hearing, because what you get in your e-mail inboxes or even on social media is not necessarily representative of the broader community. Often the people who reach out to you are the ones who might be incredibly passionate about issues. They're a little bit, perhaps, more engaged than other constituents. So when you come to constituents, constituents who aren't expecting you, and you put them on the spot – I mean in a respectful way, of course – it's really interesting to see the responses that you get. I would urge the members of the UCP to be doing that, to be listening, not to be explaining away decisions that aren't supported by our constituents. That's what we're hearing today. That's what we've heard from the members who've stood up to try to defend their position on Bill 201, the Eastern Slopes Protection Act.

I can't wait until the next time I'm in Calgary-Klein, which will be, hopefully, fairly soon again, you know, to talk about the fact that we are protecting the Rockies. We're protecting the eastern slopes. We're protecting our mountains from further coal mining. Sadly, I was here in the Chamber and heard their current MLA

denying this reality and refusing to stand up against coal mining on the eastern slopes and against the specific legislative requirements on environmental effects.

Water, right? Sorry; I have this in my notes here, too. I meant to touch on a point around water. Apologies; I didn't get everything down that that member said, but one of the members talked about: why isn't the NDP talking more about protecting water? I can tell you, defend her honour, that the Member for Edmonton-Manning, who is, of course, our agriculture critic, has done a great deal of consultation. She's been on the road a whole heck of a lot, talking to rural communities and talking about the connections with the environment. I know she's talked to me about irrigation, some of those issues that are probably mostly above my head, I must point out. She's done that consultation. She was just on the road for, I think, a full week quite recently, talking to folks who are directly impacted.

You can say, you know, that, well, it's the surrounding communities around the eastern slopes that are most impacted. Well, no. I distinctly recall talking, the last time I spoke to the previous iteration of this bill in the Chamber, about the fact that the water sources are impacted up here in the Edmonton area as well, right? There are deep interconnections there. It's not just an issue that impacts those communities surrounding the eastern slopes; it has an impact on all of us. I hope we can acknowledge this.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to join in the debate on the recommendation of the committee. I speak to strongly encourage all members of this Assembly to vote against concurrence, to vote for this Assembly to consider this piece of legislation fully here in the Alberta Legislature. I believe that the Eastern Slopes Protection Act deserves a full and robust debate in the Assembly, an opportunity to listen to the feedback Albertans have given to put protections into legislation that cannot be undone with the stroke of a pen. I will speak more to my reasoning and my support for the Eastern Slopes Protection Act. I do want to echo what we've heard.

Right now we have a single hour to debate what the committee has recommended to this Legislature, which is that the Eastern Slopes Protection Act not be debated, the same thing that this committee has essentially recommended for all NDP private members' bills, the exception to that, of course, being when this committee first reviewed the version of the Eastern Slopes Protection Act at a time during the last sitting when the government knew that the session was going to be prorogued. At that point the members of the committee said, "Yes, we should debate this legislation," knowing full well it would never actually get that opportunity, a level of hypocrisy that really is quite startling. Of course, the same members who voted that, yes, it did deserve debate in this Assembly, when it was brought back again in the exact same form, with the exact same logic and reasoning behind it, then changed their recommendation.

It's been very frustrating during the past three years as members of the Official Opposition because of how this government is using the committee to ensure that no private members' bills from the Official Opposition ever receive full debate in this Assembly. So many suggested bills have deserved that debate. I think that it is an abrogation of this Chamber's duties and quite shameful.

3:50

When the standing orders were originally changed by the UCP government to insert a committee that would essentially vet whether a private member's bill deserved to be brought forward or

not, allowed debate or not, we said during the debate of those standing order changes that it would be used to suppress issues that deserve debate in this Chamber.

Private members' business does not receive very much time in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, and the choice from the UCP government to interfere with and to suppress private members' business: we argued against that when the standing orders changes were brought forward in 2019. And now three years later we continue to see the same behaviour and the same application of those changed standing orders, in this case not only to not allow Bill 201, Eastern Slopes Protection Act, to be fully debated in the Alberta Legislature, but the members of the committee said, "Yes, it should be debated" in one form, because they knew it would never actually happen, and then when it became Bill 201 in this sitting, they changed their mind.

I believe I heard my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood talking about the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, who has moved this bill, and wondering if she'd had the opportunity to have a private member's bill before. The answer is no. As a member of this Assembly since 2008, when she first won her seat, Bill 201, Eastern Slopes Protection Act, is the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona's very first private member's bill, which perhaps goes to show how rare the opportunity is for members. You literally have to win a draw, a lottery, Madam Speaker, to have the honour to bring forward these pieces of legislation.

To now know that Bill 201 will not be debated is incredibly frustrating, specifically because of the substance of the bill. I've spoken now about how frustrated I am that the process is what it is and that the government is not allowing these bills to be debated. I'll speak briefly now about why I believe Bill 201, the Eastern Slopes Protection Act, should be debated. I would strongly suggest that for the past two years the province has been engaged in an incredibly important conversation about coal mining within . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but under Standing Order 8(7)(a.1), which provides up to five minutes for the mover to close the debate, hon. members, I will now call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for concurrence carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:53 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	LaGrange	Schulz
Amery	Long	Singh
Copping	Luan	Smith
Fir	McIver	Stephan
Frey	Nally	Toor
Horner	Nicolaides	Turton
Hunter	Pon	van Dijken
Issik	Savage	Williams
Jean	Schow	Yaseen
Jones		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Pancholi
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd

Totals: For – 28 Against – 9

[Motion for concurrence carried]

4:10 **Bill 203**
Technology Innovation and Alberta Venture Fund Act

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, on April 20, 2022, the chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills presented the report of that committee on Bill 203, Technology Innovation and Alberta Venture Fund Act, and requested concurrence of the Assembly in that report, which recommended that the bill not proceed. As a member other than the mover rose to speak on April 20, 2022, debate on the motion will proceed today.

The motion to concur in the committee's report on Bill 203 has already been moved, and I will therefore now recognize any additional members who wish to speak. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Happy to rise this afternoon to try to maybe persuade members of the government side to finally debate any private member's bill that's been brought forward by an opposition member. I likely won't succeed but will certainly give it the old college try, as they say.

Bill 203, the Technology Innovation and Alberta Venture Fund Act, sponsored by my good friend from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, proposes to create a venture fund that does not risk a single penny of Alberta taxpayer dollars, giving them the ability to invest in Alberta's future through tech, through AI, basically an opportunity that Albertans haven't seen since the Great Canadian Oil Sands project under Ernest Manning and the Alberta Energy Company. Right now Albertans do not have the ability to be able to participate in these things unless they're in a very specific position. What a great opportunity for Albertans to be able to invest in the success of Alberta right here in Alberta, again, something that happened which kicked off a sector of the Alberta economy which, you know, very unabashedly, every member of the UCP supports, as they should. So why would you not give Albertans a chance to duplicate that experience that they had back then?

Like I said, Madam Speaker, I mean, as a member of the private members' committee since the beginning of this 30th Legislature I don't know what words I could even use – disappointing, frustrating, surprising, completely confused – about why a bill that was clearly supported by very, very successful business people here in the province with regard to investing in Alberta businesses, investing in start-ups, why they would not listen to those individuals. I can only come up with the one reason, and that was because it was an opposition member that brought this bill forward, a very good piece of legislation.

Now, I know that there have probably been some arguments about: well, you know, there was no consultation around who could manage this type of endeavour. Well, if there was such a great concern, Madam Speaker, around that, why didn't the government members invite stakeholders that could have spoken to that? I'm actually going to go out on a limb here. I'm going to bet that there weren't any. I'm betting that what little consultation members opposite partook in: all they heard was good stuff, because that's what there is.

It's about allowing Albertans to share in the prosperity. You know, I've said it time and time again: tech, AI – I mean, please. We had an opportunity to jump on this train in the past, and unfortunately it didn't happen for whatever the reasons were. I remember this back when I was in college and whatnot. Some opportunities had presented themselves to Edmonton, and, you know, whatever the decisions were at that time – I wasn't as engaged – all I remember thinking was: wow, what a great opportunity. Unfortunately, it wasn't taken advantage of, and look where things went. Very few times do you get a second go-around to do that.

I always use the example, because it's so blatant, Madam Speaker, of the gaming industry. You know, again, in what little free time I have, I get to participate and play games, including developed by our very own company here in Edmonton, with BioWare. When I was really excited about this, that industry was poised to be a \$150 billion industry by 2023, so you can imagine my surprise when I decided to do a little checkup and see how things were going, to see if maybe things had improved even a little bit further, and it actually doubled. Right now: a \$300 billion industry. Why don't we get a piece of that action? Why don't Albertans get the chance to get a piece of that action? Well, they could if we could set up the conditions for them to be able to participate, just like they got the opportunity to participate in driving what would become one of Alberta's major economic sectors.

I have absolutely no doubt that tech and AI are going to jump up there very, very quickly, but if we don't act now, Albertans, through, actually, no decision of their own, are going to lose out on that opportunity. Why? Because the government doesn't want to entertain an opposition bill? If it's really that problematic, why don't you consider amendments? I mean, I would certainly never speak for the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, but, you know, I have a bit of an idea that perhaps he would entertain some amendments to the bill if there is such a concern around it, thereby taking a bill that Albertans get a chance to participate in and make it even better. Like I said, he's done his homework. He's had major stakeholders speak in support of this bill. But, unfortunately, we're not going to get the opportunity to really debate the bill, because all there is an hour here. That's not debate.

Madam Speaker, why would we deny Albertans at least the opportunity to learn why they're not going to get a chance to participate in the success of Alberta companies? We've got some great opportunities here. Like I said, BioWare: a huge success story. What are they, 25 years now here in Edmonton producing world-wide games? I play them; they're fantastic.

Mr. Bilous: And Aaryn Flynn, one of the cofounders of BioWare . . .

Mr. Nielsen: Aaryn Flynn, one of the cofounders of BioWare . . .

Mr. Bilous: CEO of Inflexion.

Mr. Nielsen: . . . CEO of Inflexion, supports this bill. I feel like I'm stealing from his notes here almost. But it is a good point, you know, seeing as how I am on the subject, and I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for pointing that out, seeing as I am talking about it.

4:20

Are you telling me that you don't trust his opinion? The amount of success that he's had here in the province of Alberta, the jobs that have been created – and I know that these jobs are not minimum wage jobs, by any stretch of the imagination. My understanding is that there is still roughly somewhere between \$70,000 and \$80,000 a year, on average. That's a good, mortgage-paying job. They're probably even higher than that now. Again, my stats are probably a couple of years out of date here. Why would you deny Albertans an opportunity like that?

We could get a chance to debate this bill. We could quickly, probably, get it into Committee of the Whole. We could address the concerns that members opposite probably have.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise once again to discuss this motion for nonconcurrency on Bill 203, the Alberta venture fund, brought forward by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I'd actually thought that one of the government members was going to speak, because he seemed interested in speaking, but I'm happy to take this time.

I once again have to raise my concerns about the fact that not a single private member's bill from the opposition side of this House has been brought forward for debate in the three years of this Legislature under this government. This is incredibly undemocratic. We have heard discussions over and over again about how rare it is for private members to have the opportunity to bring forward a private member's bill. I should be so lucky, Madam Speaker, to have the opportunity as a private member to bring forward a bill. It hasn't happened to me yet, and I understand – for example, today we discussed private member's Bill 201, which was the first time the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, has had a chance, since being elected in 2008 as an MLA, to bring forward a private member's bill.

At every step this government seems to be undermining our democratic institutions and the ability to even debate those bills that are brought forward by private members. Let's be clear, Madam Speaker, that we could hear spirited discussion about the nature of the provisions of Bill 203 – what's good, what's bad, what could be improved – and amendments could be proposed. I know that the members on this side of the House would be welcoming in hearing those amendments. Those are the opportunities that this legislative process affords us. Yet for some reason this government is so afraid of any true democratic engagement and even the consideration of ideas from others – well, anybody other than, in fact, even just the cabinet members, because it's well established by now that members of the backbench of the government don't have their voice heard either. So, really, it's only those core 20-odd people in cabinet who appear to have any say over any legislation that's considered by this House.

I want to speak to Bill 203 and just – you know, I was looking over some of the considerations that were made by the committee members when looking at Bill 203. There are not many situations, Madam Speaker, where I and the Member for Banff-Kananaskis are in agreement, but I noted a comment that she made in debate on this bill that I actually very much agreed with. I believe, when considering it at committee, the Member for Banff-Kananaskis said: "I think there are several of us who are quite intrigued by the concept of this bill. I think it's the most Albertan concept ever if it can be executed properly, allowing good-hearted people to invest in good-hearted, homegrown companies."

Madam Speaker, that is actually precisely what this bill is about. It actually capitalizes on what Albertans do best, which is that we are risk takers, we are innovative, we are creative, and we take leaps forward on things that sometimes other people in other provinces don't. It's the reason why our oil and gas industry has been so successful; it's because people took risks. People took risks in innovation, and they took risks in terms of technology. They did that, and that's what, apparently, is very strong about Alberta. So why would the government members of this House not want to support even the debate of a bill that does precisely that?

Let's be clear. Bill 203 would have established the Alberta technology venture capital fund under the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, and this fund would do what we've heard members of the government talk about. We want to encourage venture capital. We want to encourage start-ups. We want to encourage that innovation. What it would do is that it would allow Albertans to invest a small amount that, you know, could be manageable by an individual Albertan who maybe is not able to make big investments

in other start-ups, but they could contribute in a small way to make an investment into an Alberta company. It's a win-win in that Albertans could invest their own dollars and see potentially great reward, but they're also investing it in Alberta companies.

Those two things are things that I would think there should be agreement in this House that we want to support. It appears that that's something that the government claims they want more of, venture capital. They want more investment in tech. We've heard the Premier and the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation, you know, talk about, with big, loud voices, how Alberta has got its swagger back, but when they're given a good idea, which even members of the government caucus agreed were good ideas, to actually create this venture capital fund, which would allow individual Albertans to invest in Alberta companies, they say no.

There are two reasons. There are the reasons on paper that they say no, and then there is the other reason. We'll get to that. The reason on paper that they say no is, shockingly, because they thought it was too risky for Albertans. First of all, there are no taxpayer funds involved in this, so it's not a risk of taxpayer funds; it's individual Albertans making their decisions about how they want to invest their dollars. To say that Albertans can't be trusted with making potentially risky but also potentially innovative decisions about how to invest their dollars: I am shocked to hear government members say that. Why don't they trust Albertans to be able to make really strong and creative and groundbreaking investment ideas? Isn't that the basis of enabling business and breaking down red tape and trying to encourage and attract investment in business?

It's harbouring that kind of risk taking. Of course, any time there's an investment in a start-up, there's risk involved. Nobody is trying to hide that or belittle that. Certainly, those Albertans who are deciding to invest in this would be – I believe it was part of the bill that there'd be education about this so that they would understand what their investment is going towards. I can't believe that the government, this government, doesn't trust Albertans to be investors. It's quite shocking, Madam Speaker, actually. That's their reason on paper, that for some reason all of a sudden they want to make business decisions for Albertans. They know better, and they're worried about Albertans' ability to make those decisions about when to invest in a venture capital fund.

The other reason is simply because this government can't conceive of any idea other than that coming forward from the 20 people in their cabinet. Maybe it's 20. Is it more than 20 now? I can't even remember. Who could keep up? There are so many associate ministers. Is it 24? Any time there's somebody who they need to make happy, they get an associate minister job. Yeah. I think there are quite a few. I think – what is it? – two-thirds of Calgary MLAs now have a cabinet position of some kind. It must be a little bit frustrating for all the rest of their caucus. In any event, anybody other than those 20 people, 24 people, in cabinet who get to actually put forward bills: nobody else seems to have a good idea that's heard by this government, certainly not members of the opposition.

Again, as I said in my earlier comments, Madam Speaker, you know, this is only about debating a bill, right? We're not even actually supposed to be discussing the substance of the bill right now; we're just supposed to be talking about whether or not it should be heard for debate in this space. Why would the government caucus be so opposed to debating this bill in the Legislature? Is it because they don't want Albertans to hear that they don't trust them with being investors? They don't trust them in making investment decisions? That's a shocking position. I mean, it is their position, apparently, if you look at the committee. That is their position. Maybe they're hoping that nobody reads committee transcripts, and maybe I'm the only one who does.

They're trying to avoid having that debate here in this Chamber, but ultimately this is a good-idea bill, and we can talk about how to make it better, how to change it, how to mitigate some of those risks, perhaps. That could be done within the process that this Chamber set up to do, which is to debate a bill, make amendments. I don't know if it's laziness about not wanting to do the work, or is it that they just don't want to contemplate good ideas if they don't come from that front bench? That's certainly what it feels like on this side of the House but certainly what it feels like to Albertans who see that not one single private member's bill from the opposition MLAs has been brought forward.

I will say once again, Madam Speaker, that when we were in government, there were a number of private members' bills brought forward by at that time opposition members that not only got to see the light of day for debate but were passed in this House with the support of government members. Yet this House is so afraid of the opposition, of anybody in their backbench, that we don't even debate bills in this space anymore. As a private member myself I find that deeply discouraging, but all Albertans should also find it deeply worrying, because there is a blanket of silence that this government places on anybody except for those 20 people.

4:30

I think Albertans are getting sick of it. I know they're getting sick of it, Madam Speaker. I know I certainly am. So I look forward to an opportunity where private members in this House have the opportunity to bring forward bills with good ideas – it doesn't matter where it comes from – to represent their constituents, local issues, local ideas, issues that may affect people all over this province. Nobody has a right to the good ideas. They come from all of us. We have a right in this limited time, this limited space in this Chamber to actually hear those.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others wishing to join the debate? I'm seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to this bill. It's disappointing that the government is shutting down debate on this bill, especially because of the ideas of this bill. The two things it would do is that it would create or legislate a technology innovation advisory council to the minister, which is what industry is asking for, and two, it would create a venture fund and unlock, well, hundreds of thousands, potentially, of Albertans to be able to invest millions.

Honestly, I think this fund could have easily surpassed \$1 billion, so unleashing \$1 billion of private capital into Alberta start-ups and companies looking to grow. I promise you, Madam Speaker, that that would have turned the heads of investors, venture capitalists around the world. Silicon Valley would have been looking at Alberta and asking: what is going on there? You know, the minister talks about Alberta by 2030 leading the country in venture capital investment. This bill would have helped the minister and this government deliver on that commitment.

Now, I'll talk about the merits of the bill and, you know, why the government should reverse their decision, but I also want to talk about the different steps that brought us here today. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that when I first introduced the bill, I had a number of UCP MLAs reach out to me to get together to ask questions about the bill. They were intrigued by the idea. They had some concerns. We talked them through. I'm not going to out the members to their own party, but I appreciated the fact that they were able to set aside partisan differences to say: "This idea is intriguing. Let's learn a little bit more about it."

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that the ideas for this bill came from industry. So when I say that I'm disappointed in the government's actions, you know who's more disappointed in the government? The very entrepreneurs and businesspeople of Alberta who were asking for this. This is not an NDP idea. It's not a UCP idea. It doesn't belong to a political party. Quite frankly, the fact that the government – and, again, it's the government. It's not the private members of the UCP. It's the government that has decided that this bill should not even be debated because it came from the NDP.

Madam Speaker, that is precisely what is wrong with this place. The state of Alberta politics is in really bad shape. The fact is that Albertans elected all of us – it doesn't matter which party you belong to – to come to the Legislature to represent them, to debate policy, to bring forward good ideas, ideas that are meant to be improved through the role of the opposition, which is why we have Committee of the Whole and the ability to amend legislation to make it better, because nobody has a monopoly on good ideas.

On this bill, as I made clear in both committee meetings, I am open to amendments from the government. If the government points out issues or flaws or shortcomings with this piece of legislation, I am happy to accept amendments, and I'm happy to share this as a win for Alberta. I said that to the UCP members that I spoke with and in the committee, and I mean that sincerely, Madam Speaker.

I'm not playing politics with this bill. It's a phenomenal idea that would help diversify the economy and grow Alberta businesses at a pace much quicker than the track that we're on right now. The beauty of this bill is that it is private dollars being invested. There are no government tax dollars.

Now, Madam Speaker, I can tell you and the Chamber and Albertans that I've been consulting on this concept for about six years now. I've spoken with dozens of venture capitalists, from some of the biggest names in the province to new and smaller VCs. I've spoken with entrepreneurs. I've spoken with small businesses in every sector.

The beauty about this bill, Madam Speaker, is that it would have supported the energy sector, the agricultural sector, life sciences, forestry, artificial intelligence. It would have improved and supported companies from every sector. Again, arguments of picking winners and losers don't apply.

Madam Speaker, the other disappointment with this is that, you know, again, we were all elected to this place to perform different roles, and the opposition, under the leadership of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, have made it abundantly clear that we will not just be an opposition that criticizes or critiques. We will also be one that proposes ideas. We want to be propositional, and I honestly believe that that's what Albertans are looking for.

Here is an example of a bill that was free from any partisan language, and the purpose of that, Madam Speaker, was to debate the concept of the bill and not to go back and forth, which sometimes occurs in this Chamber. The bill – here's the exciting part – was modelled on a fund that was created under a former PC Premier, Ernest Manning, who initiated the Great Canadian Oil Sands project.

That project helped unlock Alberta's potential in our oil and gas. It gave Albertans the ability to invest collectively, reducing risk. Instead of an Albertan having to go out and research all the different start-up oil and gas companies, they could invest in a fund that would go and do that due diligence for them. It had nothing to do with government. It was arm's length. They brought in industry experts to evaluate industry, which is how it should be done. And those investments, Madam Speaker, were the equivalent of about \$13,000 today, the amount that they were able to invest.

If you take that \$13,000 and you apply it to, say, 100,000 Albertans, you now have a \$1.3 billion fund. And I'll remind folks that Alberta's population under Premier Ernest Manning was much smaller than today. I mean, I can only imagine a fund being past a billion, maybe past \$2 billion. That would act as the magnet that everyone is looking for or hoping that Alberta will be for venture capital for companies.

We would have companies relocating from across the country and around the globe to participate in this kind of fund. We would give Alberta companies a competitive advantage over every other company globally. That opportunity is in jeopardy in this moment.

You know, Madam Speaker, what was frustrating for me was the fact that both parties were given the ability to invite stakeholders to speak on this bill, and I was ready for a stakeholder to come and maybe present, you know: is this the best idea? Now, I will tell you that in all of my consultations over the past six years I never had a single industry expert speak against this. Some had concerns, which we spoke through, which we talked through, as far as: how do you ensure that you set this up so that it's arm's length, and how do we ensure that it's not government picking the companies? We worked hard to do that.

4:40

Madam Speaker, I know my time is running short, but I want to use my last minute to thank a number of people who helped me on this bill. First and foremost, I want to thank the very stakeholders. We had two, Aaryn Flynn and Trent Johnsen, who came to the committee meeting to speak in favour of this bill. My third stakeholder was Brad Zumwalt, who was prepared to speak but had trouble connecting. And dozens and dozens of other stakeholders provided input into this bill and actually are disappointed because they were hoping – hoping – that for once we could set aside partisan differences, share the stage, and bring forward and pass legislation that would benefit Albertans.

I also want to thank our policy staff's Jan-Niklas, who did an incredible job helping me write this, and a shout-out to Parliamentary Counsel and Trafton for helping me to write this bill. As government we will bring this forward.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the debate on concurrence on Bill 203. I will be voting against the recommendation from the committee seeking to deny this private member's bill even the opportunity for fair and open debate on the floor of the Legislature. I think my colleagues have pretty ably laid out our concerns with this new process, this additional red tape that this government decided to put in place around how private members' bills are presented, a drastic change from how that's been done for decades here in the province of Alberta.

I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs across the way. Certainly, he presided in a number of governments in which they allowed private members' business to proceed in a way that gave fair and open debate to every single bill. But he sits with a government now, Madam Speaker, that is looking to use mechanisms behind closed doors to silence anyone that they deem not worthy of making their voice heard on behalf of their constituents and on behalf of Albertans in this Legislature.

My colleagues have noted how rare it is to be chosen for a private member's bill, what a privilege it is as a member to have that opportunity. I can speak from my own experience at the amount of work it takes to sit down, consult on a bill, to draft, do that work,

the effort, talking with stakeholders, the excitement you feel at putting forward something that you truly believe would be good policy that could make a difference in this province. And I can think of no other word, Madam Speaker, than "contempt" for how this government approaches this process and the members of the opposition.

I recognize that we don't give them an easy time. I don't believe that's my job as a member of the opposition. I certainly try not to be any more disingenuous than the Premier himself or the members across the way in their attacks on us, either when we were in government or certainly as they continue now in government. But it is disappointing that on a bill like Bill 203, which has no partisanship attached – none, Madam Speaker. I've never heard the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, in presenting this bill, in bringing it forward, use it as an opportunity to attack and criticize this government despite many stumbles that it had in regard to tech and innovation in the province of Alberta.

Now, eventually, Madam Speaker, they did come around. You know, we had a change in the minister of economic development and trade, and certainly we saw an improvement after that, where he began to awaken to the importance of the tech and innovation sector in the province of Alberta, and we've seen much more positive engagement in policy, for instance. But the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview did not reference any of that. He simply brought forward a bill from his consultation with these stakeholders.

And let's be clear. He has built some excellent relationships – and he continues those relationships – with CEOs, innovators, entrepreneurs across the province of Alberta who are working in this sector, who respect the work of that member because of his engagement and his willingness to take actions and invoke policy that was brought forward from them, from the community, during his time as minister and again now as the critic. We hear from these government members complaining about how we as opposition criticize too much, but, Madam Speaker, when we bring forward real proposals with no partisanship attached, we're met with contempt and dismissal.

On the bill itself, as a representative for Edmonton-City Centre I certainly recognize the incredible importance of the tech and innovation sector. You know, it was back in 2019, around the time that this government ended and cancelled every credit that was available to support tech and innovation, including the SRED credit, which was a national credit, Madam Speaker. Every single province in Canada provided that credit; this government ended it.

In that year, this report was brought forward, from the Edmonton Downtown Business Association, called Accelerating Tech in Downtown Edmonton: Impacts and Opportunities. They talked about how Edmonton, at that time, was home to 394 tech companies – we know it's more today – the majority of them located here in my constituency in the downtown core. They noted that supporting and attracting more would take a major shift in mindset. They noted that of those 394 tech companies at the time, 44 per cent were considered start-ups, companies that could potentially grow into major companies with the right support and resources. As of 2018 there were just under 30,000 tech employees in Edmonton. We know there are more today. The number of employees in that sector had grown by 26 per cent over the previous five years, and the report showed that 65 per cent of Edmonton tech companies were looking for funding.

Now, I have great admiration for those who work in the tech and innovation sector, particularly in start-ups. Madam Speaker, it is the very definition of hustle. These are folks who have an idea, work with a very small team to build that idea out, have endless numbers of meetings with potential funders, work, on a shoestring, long hours,

often getting by on their savings while they develop an idea that they had. Funding is absolutely core to the opportunity to develop these technologies, these ideas, and the incredible economic benefits that come when those companies are able to succeed.

That's why we introduced things like the Alberta innovation tax credit, which is a credit that is available in many provinces across Canada to help support investment in Alberta tech and innovation companies. It has been incredibly successful in many jurisdictions; it was incredibly successful here. Same for the interactive digital media tax credit. These are proven policies and principles, and they are essential, again, to helping these companies grow. Indeed, there are hundreds more jobs here in Edmonton-City Centre because of those credits, because of those actions that helped support companies in their growth. There are companies that were start-ups four years ago that are now beginning to thrive and expand because they had access to that support here in my constituency.

The proposal from the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to create the Alberta venture fund is another potential tool in that tool box. It would be another way to support these start-ups, these companies as they are beginning, Madam Speaker, because these companies do not benefit from the steps that this government is proud of taking to stimulate the economy. They do not benefit from the corporate tax cut because they are not yet making a profit. They don't benefit from many of the steps that this government has taken. They would absolutely potentially benefit from an Alberta venture fund.

Indeed, some of the very folks who are the experts in supporting start-ups, in growing the tech and innovation system, folks like the gentleman from the A100 – Aaryn Flynn, one of the founders of BioWare, part of the A100, a group of investors across the province of Alberta who have an expertise in this field, spoke in support of this bill. He sat and he answered questions from members of government. He provided many compelling arguments that were summarily dismissed.

4:50

It is clear, Madam Speaker – and it is incredibly unfortunate – that no matter how good an idea, no matter how nonpartisan it may be, it is the intent of this government and its members on that committee to never allow any opposition bill the opportunity to have fair and open debate on the floor of the Legislature. That is deeply unfortunate.

You know, one of the arguments these members brought forward at committee – and it's interesting to me that not a single government member is rising in this House today to speak to this bill. I hope that's not because none of them have bothered to take a look at it. I hope it's not that none of them feel that it is worth speaking to Albertans about this bill. Not one has. But at the committee they brought forward a somewhat disingenuous argument, pointing to an investment fund in Manitoba that had not been successful, that had been government run, very different, Madam Speaker, from this particular bill, which risks not a single public dollar. Let's be clear on that. This is a government that was very happy . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak against this committee's recommendation that the bill not proceed. You know, I will echo some of the comments made by my colleagues, and they're absolutely right. That failure of all of us here to ensure that we open a path so that we can debate legislation, private member bills – we all know that

we don't have many opportunities to do that, but it's incredibly problematic today.

But it's actually not surprising, Madam Speaker. I'm sure you'll know that this is just a history. This is just the way that it's gone for this particular government. They are completely focused on themselves. They don't listen to Albertans. They certainly don't listen to good ideas from the opposition, because it's this governing party that believes that they know best about everything, and they actually don't. They've demonstrated that over and over and over again, yet they are still unwilling to let a debate proceed, a debate on a piece of legislation where the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has talked about the depth of consultation that has gone on for, I believe, six years, he said.

There was some interest and some support from members of the committee. Suddenly that changed. What changed? You know, it's funny. It's hilarious to me, in a really sad way, that we can hear – we saw some reporting recently. I think it was eight UCP MLAs that were willing to go on the record and talk about their leader and corruption that we all know exists in this particular party and talk about the internal problems. They're sure brave when it comes to saying things like that, but they are not brave enough to go against instructions and stand up and pave the way for a private member bill to be debated in this Chamber. That's why we're here. We all have different points of view. We all have different ideas, and the fact that all of them are standing together to deny an opportunity to debate this private member bill is incredibly problematic. It's incredibly disappointing.

You know, it's not surprising, though, because this has been years now of just chipping away at democracy. They can laugh. They can heckle, whatever they want, but it's happening. We saw it over and over again. We see even threats that standing orders will be changed if the person in charge doesn't like it. I hope that is not the case. You know, we saw at the very beginning of this government's mandate, we saw them fire the Election Commissioner, the independent Election Commissioner, that was investigating. That was a chipping away of democracy. We saw standing orders changed to actually limit all kinds of things that had not been limited before.

As we all know, we all have an opportunity or chance to have a private member bill come to this place so that we can debate it. The chances of us getting a number that actually helps is slim to none. Nevertheless, we participate in this lottery, and we hope that, in good faith, all 87 members of this place will actually take a fair look at the piece of legislation and then decide accordingly whether or not it deserves the time and space to be debated in this place. I think that just reading the legislation, even comments from some of the committee members, it is clear that this piece of legislation is that, as are the other two that have come up in debate this afternoon, the Anti-Racism as well as the Eastern Slopes Protection acts.

It is incredibly disappointing – incredibly disappointing – Madam Speaker, that members in this place that claim to have the best interests of Albertans at heart refuse to hear from members that are not part of their political party, even when we have good ideas, because they are too focused on what is good for them. That is called self-serving, and this is what this government is. It is absolutely self-serving. The interest of themselves is number one, not what's best for Albertans, not at all.

With that, Madam Speaker, I am going to take my seat.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members that wish to join the debate?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for concurrence carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:56 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	LaGrange	Schow
Copping	Long	Schulz
Fir	McIver	Singh
Frey	Nally	Stephan
Horner	Neudorf	Toews
Hunter	Orr	Toor
Issik	Panda	Turton
Jean	Pon	Williams
Jones	Savage	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Bilous	Irwin	Shepherd
Ganley	Renaud	

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 5
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[Motion for concurrence carried]

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Alberta and Canadian Federation

505. Mr. Barnes moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool at the province's disposal to maximize its ability to achieve a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour and privilege to rise and introduce to this Assembly Motion 505. The motion is as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool at the province's disposal to maximize its ability to achieve a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation.

Madam Speaker, now, you may wonder why I chose to read the text of the motion aloud to you when you all have a copy of it readily available. Well, I am happy to explain. Renowned poet and writer T.S. Eliot once said: good writers borrow; great writers steal. I wish I could take credit for the text of this motion, but I can't. The motion is based on a quote taken directly from the Premier, from the Premier's speech to United Conservative Party members at the 2019 annual general meeting. You see, back then the Premier said that he had a plan to win a fair deal from Ottawa, a plan that would go beyond sending semiregular angry letters to the federal government. If he did have a real plan for real action, Albertans have yet to see it.

The purpose of this motion is twofold: first, it is to serve notice to Justin Trudeau that the days of elbow-bump diplomacy between himself and his good friend in Alberta have come to an end; second, it is to remind the Premier that his first duty is not to the federal government nor to corporate donors and their lobbyists and certainly not to international billionaires and celebrities trying to cram untested economic experiments down our throats. Whether the Premier likes it or not, his first duty is to Albertans.

About every six months or so this Premier has attempted to delay action and shift blame for his lack of progress in fighting for us and our families for a fair deal. The reason is self-evident. There simply has been no progress to speak of. He has not been able to secure changes to Trudeau's Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill, which are necessary for our province to realize the full potential of its provincially owned resources and its great, hard-working people. All this Premier's so-called soft diplomacy has not prompted the removal of Bill C-48, the anti-Alberta tanker ban. Madam Speaker, the federal carbon tax has not been eliminated; indeed, it's even being steadily increased. The Premier has failed to negotiate the elimination of the cap to the fiscal stabilization program also, and maybe most importantly there have been no changes to the equalization program. In fact, there's been virtually no movement on this file whatsoever.

These are the five key issues that matter most to Albertans when it comes to obtaining a fair deal for our province, and the last one, equalization, is particularly important. Last October Albertans even voted 61.7 per cent in favour of removing equalization from the Constitution. In addition, this Assembly then provided a motion recognizing the results of this referendum. Madam Speaker, when it comes to fighting for a fair deal, Albertans have done their part. First, they elected this government. Then they approved the referendum. When it comes to recognizing the democratically expressed wishes of the public, this Assembly has also done its part. It's the Premier who has not, and while he constantly attempts to pass the buck and shift the blame for his lack of progress, Albertans know exactly who is to blame.

You see, shortly after the 2019 election this Premier appointed himself as Minister of Intergovernmental Relations. Fighting for a fair deal isn't somebody else's job; it's his job, and he has achieved nothing. In the private sector such failure to achieve results would be cause for immediate dismissal, cause to be sacked. In fact, this Premier has even fired ministers for much less.

With Motion 505 I am offering this Assembly an opportunity to remind this Premier of the promises he has made and his complete failure to deliver on these promises, but more importantly I'm offering you an opportunity – all of you an opportunity – to speak out for your constituents. It is not acceptable for this government to further delay or deny the democratically expressed wishes of both Albertans and this Assembly.

Unfortunately, this has become a habit for the gang of elitists running this government. Now, need I remind you that this cabinet under this Premier has delayed implementing the Citizen Initiative Act? This Legislature should immediately reform the Citizen Initiative Act by adopting my amendment from last year to make it possible for Albertans to have a referendum on independence, to hold Ottawa accountable, to give us a fair deal since this Premier is too much of an avowed federalist to get that job done.

They also delayed implementing recall. They also delayed implementing the opt-in provisions that would allow union members to avoid contributing to union-backed political campaigns. Now they're trying to run out the clock on defending Albertans' interests when it comes to fighting for a fair deal. They even scoff at their own party's policy on these issues and disregard the democratically expressed wishes of this Assembly.

Madam Speaker, enough is enough. For far too long the executive branch of this government has run roughshod over the legislative branch, and it has to stop. If you want to send a message to this government, colleagues, I am offering you a great place to start. I ask you to support my Motion 505.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Red Deer-South, followed by Brooks-Medicine Hat.

5:20

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand and speak in support of Motion 505, proposed by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who is a principled conservative whom I respect and consider a friend. His motion deserves more attention than it receives. Many Albertans are concerned that we are sleepwalking into a disaster. It is time to raise voices of warning and to prepare. I am concerned that it may be too late.

Canada is spending itself into oblivion, threatening to drag Alberta down with it. Sticking one's head into the sand does not alter inconvenient realities. Alberta is regularly attacked by policies of economic self-destruction, undermining the capacity of Alberta businesses and families to provide for themselves and others. Why are we having to succeed in spite of Ottawa and not because of it? What does Ottawa do for Alberta? Madam Speaker, they are too expensive.

Madam Speaker, we need to protect ourselves. Alberta businesses and families should not be subject to unprincipled federal politicians who have demonstrated that they will not hesitate to attack the livelihoods of Alberta businesses and families to further their political ambitions for power. The fact that Alberta can be continually subject to plunder and attack from unprincipled politicians like Trudeau is proof positive that Albertans are suffering under a rigged partnership arrangement. There are deep structural issues in this so-called fiscal federation, federalism, which are bigger and transcend Canada being afflicted by the worst Prime Minister in Canadian history, aided and abetted by a destructive Liberal-NDP axis.

Albertans need to understand that the NDP will do nothing for them. Parasitic policies and plunder are their stock and trade. That is their world. How can they speak against it? Like the NDP, we need to accept the reality that the majority of politicians in Canada will do little or nothing to assist Alberta to get a fair treatment from this rigged arrangement that they politically benefit under. In fact, the Premier of Quebec has said that one of his favourite things about Canada is equalization. Madam Speaker, politicians like him are not going to help. They will hinder and oppose.

So, Madam Speaker, we are compelled to take matters into our own hands. How do we free ourselves as hosts of parasitic laws and Trojan Horses? How do we free Alberta businesses and families? The less Alberta needs Ottawa, the more leverage Alberta has, but Ottawa will resist efforts to need them less. It reduces their power.

Many Albertans rightfully ask: what true progress has been made to need Ottawa less? Madam Speaker, it is not enough to compare ourselves to a useless NDP. We need to be better. Here's an example. It was estimated that CPP contributions by Alberta businesses and families were about \$3 billion more annually than benefits paid to Alberta retirees, but since 2019 Trudeau has been jacking up CPP taxes so that this annual transfer from Albertans is now in excess of \$4 billion. This year alone maximum CPP costs increased over 10 per cent.

Madam Speaker, this is crazy. Under an Alberta pension plan, without Alberta being forced to produce billions in subsidies, rates for Alberta businesses and workers could be the lowest in Canada while maintaining retiree benefits. This could produce a game-changing competitive advantage, supporting businesses to hire more employees, with Alberta workers taking home more money. It is inexplicable to me that we are not getting out of the CPP, which every year is ripping off Alberta businesses and workers more and more, billions upon billions every year. Why are we not stopping it? The NDP do not get it. They never will. But in the private sector, in the real world, we would never stand for it. This is unacceptable.

What is our moral authority to hold Ottawa accountable if we fail to do our part? A requirement for fairness needs to be founded on principle. Alberta needs great self-reliance to free ourselves from hostile interference and insulate ourselves and our children from a looming \$1 trillion plus fiscal train wreck.

I support the motion of the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Alberta must deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool to achieve a fair deal for Alberta. Albertans are tiring of overpromising and underdelivering. Less talk, more show. Trust is earned as one's actions are consistent with one's words.

In closing, Alberta is a land of prosperity. It is a land of opportunity. It is a land of freedom. We must be vigilant to keep it that way.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mrs. Frey: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to join the debate under Motions Other than Government Motions on private member's Motion 505 from my colleague and, truth be told, one of my favourite people, the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who I also consider a very dear friend. I am very happy to be supporting private member's Motion 505. I totally agree. We are in a situation where every day it seems like another Albertan is coming up to me and saying, you know, how unfair of a deal we have in the federation and how much we need to do to change that.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to report, though, that I am proud of the progress that our government has made on this file. The Fair Deal Panel released a myriad of recommendations, and I'm happy to see that so much work has been done.

On a personal level, I was very proud to be involved with the Alberta firearms advisory council, chairing that as well as making sure that we appointed Alberta's provincial Chief Firearms Officer. Teri Bryant is the new Alberta provincial Chief Firearms Officer. She's from Calgary. She is a sports shooter and advocate, really everything you can possibly dream of when it comes to a Chief Firearms Officer. She's truly incredible, Madam Speaker.

I know that there were many people who were concerned about this office and the time it took to get it set up. So just for the record what was going on was that in other provinces where they had appointed a provincial chief firearms officer, it kind of – the cart came before the horse. We needed to make sure that we had the office set up, that the backlogs were cleared, that we had the ability to let her hit the ground running as soon as she started. So just a shout-out to Teri and all of those who work in the provincial chief firearms office, to Marlin Degrand at Justice, and to everyone else because they are truly fantastic people.

We also had recommendation 2, which was to “proceed with the proposed referendum on equalization, asking a clear question along the lines of” and then, of course, the question on equalization. Of course, we know that Albertans voted resoundingly to scrap equalization from the Constitution. So that's done. We have a clear mandate from Albertans, and we're happy to move forward with that.

5:30

Recommendation 21 – just a couple of highlights here – “vigorously pursue access to markets for Alberta's [resources].” This one's really exciting, Madam Speaker, because just last week or maybe two weeks ago we had Senator Joe Manchin up here in Alberta, and for the very first time an Alberta Premier has been asked to testify before the United States Committee on Natural

Resources. This committee is obviously very widely broadcast. It's obviously very important. The Premier will be taking a delegation down to Washington to fight for Alberta's resources and to really put us on the map. Alberta has a great reputation world-wide for our natural resources, and I am very proud to see Alberta leading the way on advocacy and our government being in front of that because we know that governments prior had been doing everything they can to block Alberta's resources. It's time that we stood up for that, and if the federal government is not going to do it, then, by golly, Alberta should.

We're also making significant progress on TMX. We fought to keep line 5 open. We know that the governor of that state – I believe it was Minnesota if I'm correct – was asking for that to be shut down, and we had done the hard work to make sure that it stayed open. We are at all-time record exports of Alberta oil right now, Madam Speaker. Drilling activity is up. Jobs are up. It's really fantastic news for Alberta.

We've also had democratic tools such as referendum and citizens' initiative referendum. We passed those bills. They've come into force, much to the dismay of the NDP. We have held Senate elections, Madam Speaker, and three fantastic Albertans were nominated by Albertans to be recommended to go to the Senate. Now, I'm not going to hold my breath waiting for Justin Trudeau to appoint these fantastic people, but I sure can hope. I guess hope is going to have to be a strategy in this one because we have to make sure that Justin Trudeau knows that it's not okay to sit on your hands when there are democratically elected, competent individuals waiting to take their seats in the Senate.

We are also continuing to challenge federal legislation that impacts Alberta. We're currently in court fighting C-69 – that's the no-more-pipelines law – and we're working to support First Nations who are opposing C-48. So C-48 is a tanker ban, and we know that the Prime Minister has been, in a word, hypocritical about this as he's allowed tankers on other coasts but just not in this instance.

I already spoke about the Chief Firearms Officer, but I'll plug it again just because that is a really big deal for Alberta.

We also have the recommendation that I heard the hon. member touch on, which is “a comprehensive plan to create an Alberta Pension Plan.” I will say, Madam Speaker, just as a point here – I know you'll be excited about this – that AIMCo just released some really great numbers. We have Alberta's investment management company. I think it was close to 14 per cent. It was a banner year. It was a record year for AIMCo. That is really fantastic news if the work is done to pull Albertans out of CPP.

We know that we need every tool at our disposal to make sure that Albertans are getting a fair deal from the federation, that the Prime Minister knows that we mean business. Of course, we are in a situation where in Confederation we are – you know, of course, there is a division of power, but what we need to do is fight back when that division of power is stepped upon.

We have seen the federal government encroach on the lives of private citizens through things like the use of the Emergencies Act. We stood up for Albertans against the Emergencies Act with government motions calling on them to stop what they were doing. We've stood up against federal travel mandates. We have continued to fight for Albertans and their rights and their freedoms.

I'm really also excited to say that, you know, we are continuing this work on the Alberta provincial police force. While there are many thoughts out there, I know that in some of the more remote and rural areas of my riding there are many people who are concerned with the response times of the RCMP and have a real issue with rural crime. Of course, those of us who live in cities, who have police a maximum of five minutes away, don't have quite the same issues, Madam Speaker, but it's high time that we listened to rural communities and we listened to those people who live in some

of the more remote regions of our province and give them the access to policing that they deserve.

Those studies are still under way, and we'll make sure that we are making a pragmatic decision on that. We can't just, of course, be the first ones to move and do whatever we want just because it's what we want to do. We have to make sure that the proper due diligence is done and process is followed so that we know that Albertans are getting the best deal possible.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to hand the floor off to another hon. colleague, but I just wanted to once again thank the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for his relentless advocacy for a fair deal as well as for giving me the opportunity to speak to such an important issue today.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, followed by Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Motion 505, resolving “that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool at the province's disposal to maximize its ability to achieve a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation.” I think that all MLAs in this Assembly today will support this motion. I mean, after all, how could we not? It seems pretty obvious that our province should be strategic in our dealings with other provinces and with the federal government. It makes perfect sense that in doing so, we would deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool at our disposal to achieve those strategic objectives. So I think I and likely all my colleagues in the Official Opposition will support the motion.

But I think it's very important to be clear that there is considerable breadth in considering: what are the strategic objectives on the part of the people of Alberta, and what tools achieve those for the people of Alberta without doing harm to the people of Alberta? Certainly, I'd say that we in the Official Opposition and many Albertans have a sharp disagreement with this UCP government on what constitutes Alberta's strategic objectives and priorities and some of the means by which they go about seeking to achieve them. I think a real government would see that ensuring we get the best deal possible involves diplomacy, partnership, strength of purpose, certainly, at certain points, economic linkages, strategic political advocacy, but unfortunately what we often have, I believe, with this government is playing childish games, empty posturing, shaking the fist while looking east.

As a result, we haven't gotten much for Albertans, and indeed many of the proposals this government has supposedly to fight for Albertans would do Albertans further harm. Just think about the \$1.3 billion that this government chose to waste on a pipeline to nowhere because they couldn't manage to do their job of actual advocacy to get that over the hill. That's one good example. They could have worked to build allies across the country. They could have worked to advocate hard south of the border. They could have avoided insulting key elected officials who were involved in that. But no; instead, they gambled \$1.3 billion of Albertans' money, and those dollars are lost.

In other instances we've seen failed stunts that have had a real negative impact locally cause a lot of concern for Albertans. For example, some of the members have spoken about the fair deal report and one of the proposals in there replacing the RCMP with an Alberta provincial police force. Now, to be clear, even that report showed that there was very little support from actual Albertans for that proposal, Madam Speaker, and indeed we continue to hear loud and clear from Albertans that they do not want that. They don't. All Albertans have learned just how expensive that endeavour would be. We'd be looking at spending at least \$366 million in transition

costs alone, borne by the taxpayers in Alberta, and even more concerning, with an APP we would lose \$170 million in funding every year from Ottawa.

Simply put, over the mandate of one government Alberta would spend over \$1 billion of our tax dollars on an initiative that, to be clear, taxpayers, municipalities, folks across the province, a majority of individuals have said they do not want. The fair deal report, as I said, shows that two-thirds – two-thirds; 66 per cent – of Albertans do not support an APP. They are dead set against it. You know, the Member for Red Deer-South talked about unprincipled politicians who do damage to working people as part of their own pursuit of power. What an apt description of this government's mindless pursuit of an Alberta provincial police force. Indeed, I think that as Albertans hear more and more about that, they like it less and less.

As I said, Madam Speaker, we are working to listen to Albertans. Albertans want their government to act strategically, absolutely. They certainly want a better deal in Confederation, but they don't support the agenda of this Premier when he tries to wrap himself in that flag. His priorities are not the priorities of Albertans. That has been made abundantly clear on a wide swath of issues.

5:40

Another example: leaving the CPP. Now, I recognize that the Member for Red Deer-South spoke very much in favour of this policy, but again, a vast majority of Albertans, tens of thousands, have written to us on this proposal, and the message has been very clear: hands off my pension. They do not want it seized by this government. They do not trust it in the hands of this Premier, yet this government continues to dangle that out there. That is not negotiation on behalf of the people of Alberta, because the people of Alberta have been very clear that they do not want it. They do not trust it. And, hey, there are many fair criticisms to make about Ottawa, the current government, without question. But let's be clear. One of the things that works best in this country is the CPP. Albertans rely on it; they trust it. They do not trust this Premier or this government or those members who continue to push for it. They may be speaking for a vocal minority, but the majority of Albertans are opposed. So the message is clear: this government should keep their hands to themselves, keep them away from Alberta's CPP.

Again, I agree that any government representing the people of Alberta should be acting strategically, should be using the tools and levers at their disposal to act in the best interests of Alberta, to fight for the objectives that Albertans elect them to do. We'll support this motion, but we will not support the objective that this government has of giving up \$170 million a year from Ottawa so the Premier can advance his APP agenda, wave a flag on something that no Albertan – or at least a vast majority of Albertans have been very clear they do not want it.

We will not support giving this Premier or his government control over Albertans' pensions, and we will continue to hold this government to account for attempting to claim that it is standing up for Albertans when they are standing up for themselves, when they are attempting to preserve their own political power, when, as they have on so many issues, whether it's on the coal plan, whether it's on the Alberta pension, whether it's on the Alberta provincial police – APP seems to be a common acronym; I just realized that. But on all of these issues – their curriculum, Madam Speaker – where Albertans have been very, very clear that they do not support this government, we as the opposition will continue to speak out because that also is supporting the best interests of our province and the strategic objectives of Albertans.

I thank the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for bringing this forward and certainly reminding us of our duty as elected officials. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Pleased to get up today and support the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and his Motion 505. I'll read the motion. "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool at the province's disposal to maximize its ability to achieve a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation." I think this is something that is very important to Albertans, and Albertans overwhelmingly support this. It's good to see that this is coming forward in this Legislature as a motion.

When we look at what the Premier said in the past on this, in the 2019 UCP AGM he stated: our government is prepared to deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool at our disposal to maximize our leverage and to win a fair deal for Alberta. I want to point out just a couple of little differences there in words. The motion says, "urge the government to deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool," and what the Premier said is: our government is prepared to deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool. I think that's maybe a bit of a problem because being prepared to do it and doing it are two completely different things. I think what Albertans want to see is that they want to see action and not a lot more talk about some of these things.

If we look to the fair deal report, that was produced for Albertans, I'm just going to read a couple of them, a couple of the recommendations.

Develop a comprehensive plan to create an Alberta Pension Plan and withdraw from the Canada Pension Plan.

Of course, we've seen absolutely no movement on that.

I'm just going to look at another one.

14. Create an Alberta Police Service to replace the RCMP . . .

18. Opt out of new federal cost-shared programs, subject to Alberta receiving full compensation.

I think we've seen this government opt in on a bunch of different cost-shared programs with the federal government.

Looking down the list:

24. Use democratic tools such as referenda and citizens' initiatives to seek Albertans' guidance on selected Fair Deal Panel proposals and other initiatives.

I think we've seen here where the citizens' initiatives, that was passed, I think, last July, was finally brought into action just a week or so ago. That, I think, is a big failure. Then when we look at the actual bill that brought in the citizens' initiative referendums, we see that the standards to actually make them happen are so high that it is possible that we may never see it actually take place because those standards are so high. So we've seen a lot of failures in the government and this Premier as they've tried to bring – well, they've not only not brought some of these things in, but they've actually created barriers for them to happen.

I wanted to read just a couple more things out of the Fair Deal Panel recommendations. It says:

However, we believe that if the federal government and the rest of Canada do not respond positively and quickly to Albertans' demands for a fair deal, then support for secession will only grow.

I think that's something that we are seeing here in Alberta, that support for secession is growing. A lot of this we can't blame on the federal government. We're not demanding it. We're not asking for it, so the federal government isn't even in a position to respond positively or negatively to what we would like: our demands, Albertans' demands, for a fair deal. Until we put that into action, then I think Albertans will

say: okay. They'll see how the federal government responds. We need to have that happen.

I'll just read one more part out of the Fair Deal Panel recommendations.

How will we know when we have a fair deal for Alberta? In the panel's opinion, we will know when Albertans trust people in Ottawa to act in this province's best interests, and when Alberta's position within the Canadian federation has been equitably reset.

Well, Madam Speaker, I think we can clearly see that there's no trust from Albertans in Ottawa and that it's acting in this province's best interest. I believe that so far we have failed on getting a fair deal for Albertans.

I just want to kind of leave with just one final comment here. This has been said by other people, too, but I just want to repeat it here. If we were in Alberta here right now and we were looking at joining Confederation with Canada at this time and we were offered the deal that we have now, would we take it? I think it's pretty clear that Albertans overwhelmingly would say no. I think that speaks volumes as far as our position right now within Canada and how Albertans view our position in Canada and how we feel that we're being treated. Therefore, I think we need to pass this motion, but then, further, we need to act on this motion and start getting a better deal for Albertans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, I will ask the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close debate.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and a big thanks to all my colleagues that spoke and for the support for this government using every legal, economic, and constitutional tool at its disposal. Of course, the hon. members for Edmonton-City Centre and Central Peace-Notley talked a lot about empty posturing and not much happening. I want to come back and talk about four failures of this government, but first – and I felt it and I heard it when my colleagues all spoke – this is about our constituents. This is about our families. This is about giving them every opportunity to go to work and reach the full potential that they can and that Alberta can.

Madam Speaker, what has happened instead is \$650 billion – \$650 billion – has left Alberta since 1961 and gone to Ottawa and been redistributed. What has that gotten us? Sometimes it feels like it's gotten us only abuse. Has that gotten us resource movement? Has that gotten us Northern Gateway, which would get oil and gas to India and China a day quicker or at all? That would go a long, long way to clean the air and, you know, make that more secure for our kids and our grandkids. Has that gotten us Energy East?

One of my hon. colleagues – I think it was Brooks-Medicine Hat – mentioned line 5. Quebec and Ontario and the Maritimes almost lost their energy security because our pipeline has to go through America. Alberta put all those opportunities out there for energy security for the country of Canada, and it was met with a lack of respect.

This government has, so far from doing everything, the big failures. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre mentioned the \$1.3 billion lost in an empty pipeline, Keystone. Oil by rail: the previous government puts \$2 billion in oil by rail; the UCP government spends more than \$2 billion to get rid of it, claiming that that saved us \$400 million. The poor Alberta taxpayer, because of being landlocked by Ottawa, lost billions of dollars and didn't

move a single barrel. This government, this Premier applauded when the federal government bought Trans Mountain. What did Trans Mountain announce three or so months ago? No more federal money into Trans Mountain. Where's that going to go? Of course, this government put in a turn-off-the-taps legislation weaker than the predecessor NDP government. How that is using every tool in the legislative tool box is beyond me.

My hon. colleague from Red Deer-South talked about the fiscal train wreck of Canada. A couple of people have said to me, you know, in the last little while, "Well, thank God, Ottawa was there for CERB and for getting us through this pandemic," and, Madam Speaker, I don't know what the answer is to that. They printed \$400 billion. They increased the money supply by 20 per cent, meaning 1 out of every 5 dollars that's in circulation was put in by Prime Minister Trudeau in the last two years. That means that your family, my family, all of our constituents are paying inflation through the roof, and now we're looking at huge interest rates skyrocketing when all we have to do is give Albertans a chance to develop our oil and gas resources.

This is maddening, and it's important that this government do what the Premier promised at the 2019 UCP AGM. "Government to deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool at the province's disposal to maximize its ability to achieve a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation." No more angrily worded letters. No more posturing with insignificant appointments. Madam Speaker, let's come to work every day for a fair deal for Alberta families and Alberta communities. Let's make Alberta the freest and most prosperous place in North America.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion other than Government Motion 505 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:54 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, before we start, just a reminder that it would be very kind to the table officers counting the vote if there were to be silence while they do so.

For the motion:

Amery	Jean	Schulz
Barnes	Jones	Shandro
Copping	Loewen	Shepherd
Fir	Long	Singh
Frey	McIver	Stephan
Gray	Nally	Toor
Hanson	Neudorf	Turton
Horner	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Hunter	Pon	Williams
Irwin	Renaud	Yaseen
Issik	Savage	

Totals: For – 32 Against – 0

[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 carried unanimously]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the House now stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:10 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	777
Introduction of Visitors	777
Introduction of Guests	777
Members' Statements	
Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.....	777
Family Doctor Shortage in Lethbridge	777
Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness	778
Southern Alberta Concerns.....	778
Alberta at Work Initiative.....	778
Iftar Event at Rahma Mosque in Edmonton	779
Health Care Funding.....	779
Anti-Muslim Discrimination and Hate Crimes	787
Hailstorm Recovery.....	787
Oral Question Period	
Utility Rebate Timeline	779
Physician Supply	780
Calgary Storm Damage Recovery Funding	780
Anti-Racism Act.....	781
Surgery Wait Times and Chartered Facilities	781
Support for Small Business and Economic Recovery.....	782
Obstetric Services in Rural Alberta	782
Electric Utility Oversight and Power Prices	783
Deaths of Children in Care and Youth Transitioning out of Care.....	784
Kindergarten to Grade 6 Draft Curriculum.....	784
South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project	785
RAPID Force Fish and Wildlife Officer Deployment	786
High Level Disaster Response and Recovery Funding.....	786
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees	788
Notices of Motions	788
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 21 Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.....	788
Tablings to the Clerk	788
Orders of the Day	789
Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills	
Bill 201 Eastern Slopes Protection Act	789
Debate Continued	790
Division	795
Bill 203 Technology Innovation and Alberta Venture Fund Act.....	796
Motions Other than Government Motions	
Alberta and Canadian Federation	801
Division	805

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