



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 5, 2022

Day 30

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Third Session

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New Democrat: 23

Independent: 3

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 5, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will be led in the singing of *God Save the Queen* by Ms Brooklyn Elhard. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the Queen!

Statement by the Speaker

Red Dress Day

The Speaker: Hon. members, today we pause to recognize the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and two-spirited people, also known as Red Dress Day. We wear red and display red clothing to remember and honour the lives of the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people in Canada. I know that there are several members who have joined in recognizing this important day through their dress.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us today are a number of very special guests in the members' gallery. They are the family of the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche. Please welcome his wife, Kim Jean, his daughter Annabella Jean, and their friend Kristin Morrison. I ask you each to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, also joining us in the galleries today are three early childhood educators, who are guests of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Please join me in welcoming them: Thula Sibanda, Ashak Bara-Morad, and Kathy Rickett. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Finally, members, there is a large group of students joining us from the constituency of Chestermere-Strathmore. Please welcome students and teachers from Westmount school. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Government Policies and Cost of Living

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, Albertans judge a government by actions, not words, and with the UCP Albertans get lots of words but virtually no action to back it up. There's no more clear example of this than the debacle this government has made when it comes to supporting Alberta families coping with the cost-of-living crisis this government created.

The UCP lifted caps that our government put in place to protect consumers and did nothing as prices began to climb. The Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity showed the true colours of his government when he told Albertans that his plan to support them was to do nothing. The UCP then announced their rebates, but after months not a single Albertan has seen one cent, and according to

the UCP's own plan Albertans might be waiting until December 31 to see the electricity rebates that the Premier promised in March. As for the natural gas rebate that Albertans were promised in February: not until October.

This is more than just incompetence. This is what you get when you have a government that is reluctant to do anything at all to support Albertans in their time of need. They put their friends in the insurance industry before their constituents and let premiums climb by 30 per cent. They used a tactic that the Premier used to oppose in Ottawa, to use inflation to take a billion dollars from Alberta families. They decided to slash supports for disabled Albertans and seniors, taking thousands from them. They decided to make it harder and harder for people to get an education by slashing tuition, hiking interest rates on student loans, and levelling deep cuts on Alberta's postsecondary institutions.

This is a government that fundamentally does not care about Albertans, and their decision to delay these rebates for months just shows how true that is. Albertans know that while the UCP doesn't care about them, the Alberta NDP has their backs, has a leader and a team that will always put them first.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hope that you will indulge me just for a brief moment. I did notice that the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche's family snuck in just moments following the introductions, so I hope that you'll please welcome them. Kim, Annabella, and Kristin, please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Red Dress Day

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Red Dress Day is held every year on May 5 in honour of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Hanging red dresses or wearing red on this day helps raise awareness of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA-plus people. These are people who are loved and are mourned. We stand with the survivors and the loved ones of those impacted by this crisis.

Like Sisters in Spirit Day, Red Dress Day has been a grassroots movement to raise awareness about Indigenous strength and resilience despite the high rates of violence they face. People will hang red dresses in private and public spaces to remember those they've lost. Others will gather in places around the province to remember their lost loved ones, including in Edmonton today.

Higher rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA-plus people stem from root causes that need to be addressed. Mr. Speaker, during my time as a member of the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, along with the other members, I had the chance to hear from Indigenous communities, survivors, loved ones, and families about how to address these urgent issues.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government is choosing action. We set up the Alberta joint working group to review the calls for justice that the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls identified. The Alberta joint working group's research and engagement with families and communities helped clarify actions the government of Alberta can take to change outcomes.

We'll have more to say on this in the coming weeks, but I want to assure survivors and their loved ones that this is something that we take very seriously, and we are committed to getting it right to make real and meaningful change. Alberta's government has also established the Public Security Indigenous Advisory Group to help improve the safety of Indigenous communities, with Indigenous

people playing a central role in developing solutions and strategies to improve public safety across Alberta.

We all have a part to play in ending racism and violence, so if you see it, call it out. On Red Dress Day I want families, loved ones, and survivors to know that we will honour those lost by working together to address this crisis.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Physician Supply

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 26 it was my honour to host the Premier, ministers, and many other local leaders to mark the official opening of the Grande Prairie regional hospital. The new hospital began accepting patients on December 4, 2021, and I was there at 5:30 in the morning cheering on the arrival of the first patients and the first ambulance dispatched to the new facility.

This hospital is a key investment in health service to northern residents, boasting 62 additional private in-patient rooms, five additional operating rooms, one dedicated to obstetrics and two dedicated to driving down surgical wait times for Albertans, and also a new state-of-the-art cancer centre with two radiation vaults.

Mr. Speaker, finally getting to this point to offer better acute and surgical care is a huge win for Grande Prairie and the surrounding region. However, I still hear from my constituents that it's hard to find a family doctor. Staffing challenges in rural areas have been a long-standing issue, and without accessible primary care, many Albertans cannot be referred to the health care services they need.

That's why I'm proud to see our government working for rural Alberta when it comes to recruiting and retaining doctors in rural communities. In the past two months alone two more pediatricians have been hired in Grande Prairie, and that's just the start, Mr. Speaker. The ministers of Advanced Education and Health are continuing to work with postsecondary institutions to train more health workers, dedicating spots for rural students. In particular, I want to highlight \$6 million in funding dedicated to rural medical education, providing rural rotations for nearly 1,000 medical students and a two-year rural-based family medicine residency training program.

Health has been funded at the highest level in Alberta's history, Mr. Speaker, by this government, but we know that throwing money alone at the problem won't fix it, and that's why we're dedicated to system transformation to provide real results for Albertans. We know there are challenges, and we are dedicated to hearing them and addressing them with real action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Red Dress Day

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, May 5, is Red Dress Day, a day that honours the spirits of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people. The red dress acts as a visual reminder and is a powerful symbol of the Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people who have been murdered or gone missing across this country.

1:40

Métis artist Jaime Black helped to inspire the red dress movement. Throughout the province you will see red dresses hung from windows and trees, a representation of the pain and loss felt by loved ones. The colour red was chosen by the artist after conversations with a friend who told her that red is the only colour that spirits can see. In the words of Jaime Black: it is a calling back of the spirits of these women

and allowing them a chance to be among us and have their voices heard through their family members and community.

Today in Edmonton many of us gathered to march from Churchill Square to beaver hills park, many wearing red dresses to remember the loved ones that are so very dearly missed. For everyone who visits the Federal Building, one of the first things you will see upon entering is a red dress that was presented to the Minister of Indigenous Relations by the Awo Taan Healing Lodge in Calgary and created by artist Emily Taylor.

This is important because in order to truly honour the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people, we need to take action every day. This means working with our Indigenous and Métis brothers and sisters to action the calls to justice from the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. That also means ensuring we learn about Indigenous-Canadian history from the Indigenous perspective, listening to the truths shared through the inquiry, and being an ally.

Today I encourage all members of this Assembly to visit the red dress and listen to the voices of the spirits and pledge to ensure their voices are heard and the genocide of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people ends.

Thank you.

North American Energy Security

Ms Rosin: Mr. Speaker, in the wake of everything going on around us, we need to talk about the importance of North American energy security. Alberta is home to the third-largest oil reserves in the world. We produce 4.6 million barrels of crude per day, and we do it with the highest human rights, labour, and environmental standards. Now, there are those on the left who would have you believe we can just shut the taps off overnight and cease production, but at a time when much of the world has been unable to impose the sanctions that could truly cripple the Russian petrostate's war on Ukraine because of their dependence on Russian oil and gas, phasing out the energy sector right now is nothing more than a pipe dream.

Alberta recently had a visit by United States Senator Joe Manchin. Not only is he chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, but he is an important vote in an evenly divided Senate, a vocal supporter of oil and gas, and, Mr. Speaker, he's a Democrat. Senator Manchin is evidence that heating our homes, commuting to work, and manufacturing household goods should not be partisan issues. During his visit to Alberta's oil sands he was clear: North America could be the energy leaders of the world, but it can only be possible with Canada's help and alliance.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when the U.S., under Democrat leadership, is scrambling to fill oil and gas shortages, Senator Manchin is powerful, because honest recognition of the need for a true North American energy alliance is what the world needs. It's not a partisan issue. Our oil reserves could lift millions of people out of poverty and siphon away the funding stream of the Russia-Ukraine conflict if we allow them to, but we need international collaboration and a concerted, unified strategy. Canada has been blessed with an endowment of natural riches beneath our surface, and the world needs our energy now more than ever. With bipartisan international collaboration, one day we'll get it to them.

Early Childhood Educators

Ms Pancholi: May 20 is Early Childhood Educator Day in Alberta. It's a day to recognize and celebrate the incredible early childhood educators who are not just caregivers for our youngest children but are professionals in early learning and child development. I want to

highlight one very special early childhood educator, Mr. Speaker, who is here in the gallery today. Thula Sibanda is one of 11 Alberta early childhood educators who was recently recognized with a Prime Minister's award of excellence in early childhood education. Like many educators, Thula has superpowers, and her superpower is always meeting each child where they are. Her teaching and care is tailored specifically to the interests of the child, empowering them to learn from play and to embrace their own path of development.

When I heard that Thula had received this extraordinary national recognition, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I wasn't surprised, because my daughter was one of the children who, as a toddler, was lucky to have been taught and loved by Thula. With her today in the gallery is another former Prime Minister's award recipient, Ashak Bara-Morad, who was a big part of both of my children's early learning and a big part of our hearts. They're joined by Kathy Rickett, the incredible director at Edmonton northwest child care centre.

Mr. Speaker, early childhood educators are the foundation and most critical part of quality early learning, but it's a sector that is struggling profoundly. The low pay, lack of benefits, professional recognition, and career opportunities mean programs can't find qualified staff for existing child care spaces, let alone the 10,000 new spaces that are supposed to be created this year. Because the UCP has never believed in a publicly supported system of universal, affordable, quality child care, they've wasted over three years without addressing any of the challenges that would support educators and grow the workforce now, when we need it the most.

But the Alberta NDP has always understood that early childhood educators are professionals who deserve not just thanks but to be valued, supported, and compensated properly. We know that educators are the most important part of quality early learning, and we can't wait to build that strong system with them.

Congratulations, Thula. You truly deserve it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose is next.

Sexual Violence Awareness Month

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and take this time to recognize Sexual Violence Awareness Month. Each year in May we focus our attention on serious issues related to sexual violence in workplaces, schools, homes, and communities in Alberta. We celebrate the work of front-line responders, who help survivors heal, get justice, and move forward with their lives.

Two in three women and 1 in 3 men in Alberta experience sexual violence in their lifetime. These numbers are horrifying. Given the prevalence of sexual violence I'm sure that many if not all in this Assembly have experienced it or know someone who has. Whether it's being catcalled in the street, hearing inappropriate comments from a co-worker, or being forced into a sexual situation by a partner, sexual violence must not be tolerated. Sexual violence strips you of your confidence, your sense of safety, your freedom. It's an attack on a person's most intimate parts of themselves. It leaves deep emotional scars that never truly heal.

Far too long society has ignored the warning signs and actions that lead to violence. It's time to fight back, and we always are responsible for taking action. These actions can be simple and ones that everyone can take. Learn to recognize the signs of sexual violence. Be an active bystander. Look to intervene or notify authorities when someone is being harassed or assaulted. Listen when someone confides in you and support them in finding the help they need to heal.

Alberta's government has introduced Bill 14 to help those seeking justice to be more confident in the system and ensure they are treated with respect. Throughout May Alberta's government will be sharing resources regarding sexual violence and what supports are available.

Many community partners such as the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services are hosting events. I encourage every Albertan to take part in this month and help build a safer province for everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Federal Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Targets

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I stand in this House in disbelief as I reflect on comments made by our federal leaders. Last week a federal Liberal MP said, quote: this country will be unable to meet its climate change targets by 2030 if certain provinces don't do their part. She called the inaction of Ontario's government irresponsible and, quote, a crime against humanity. Greenhouse gas emissions are a serious issue for Canada and the world, but it's no crime against humanity if provinces aren't able to help meet unachievable federal targets in eight short years.

Alberta has done an exceptional job when it comes to reducing emissions and continues to do so not only by reducing its carbon footprint but also by spending the time, the money, and the resources on renewable energy. To hear this Liberal MP knock on provincial efforts to reduce emissions and compare them to such horrible events is absurd. Earlier this year we saw their trust-fund leader Justin Trudeau call Canadians terrorists and bigots when they stood up for their rights under the Constitution. To see a member of his Parliament compare underwhelming climate change initiatives to the Holocaust is outrageous.

Alberta leads when it comes to environmental stewardship and conservation, but we're always under pressure by this federal government to do even more. Just last week I read an article showcasing how this federal government is unfairly expecting Alberta to carry the weight of reaching those emission goals. In that article, Mr. Speaker, policy-makers at Ag Canada said that they are concerned about greenhouse gas emissions from wheat, barley, and other cereal crops, crops that alongside our oil sands are a pillar to both the Canadian and international economies. Ag producers work extremely hard to feed us in a carbon footprint limited manner.

Alberta should not be the province this federal government continues to focus on when it comes to environmental stewardship. Alberta has made leaps and bounds in trying to reduce emissions. The federal government and their NDP opposition supporters need to reconsider how they plan to reach climate change goals if they continue to put down provinces like Alberta.

Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton Glenora has question 1.

Utility Rebate Timeline

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, Albertans need help with their utility bills today, but the UCP is way behind. It's been 93 days since the Premier promised natural gas rebates and 59 days since he promised to deliver electricity rebates. Today neither rebate is out the door, and Albertans have been waiting months, but the government now says that the electricity rebate won't be delivered until December, 200 days from now. Can the Premier explain why help for bills from January, February, and March won't come until Christmas?

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

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What an absolute despicable display from a caucus that has proven themselves to be as desperate as they are irrelevant. To frighten Albertans with categorically false information is disappointing. We had royal assent of this legislation on Friday; we handed the regulations to the retailers yesterday. In fact, we've moved at speed, and we've asked the retailers to do the same as well. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Hoffman: I can see that the UCP is angry, but you know who's really angry, Mr. Speaker? It's Albertans who are waiting for help.

The Premier also promised that they would fix the fake natural gas rebate, but the government's own fact sheet says that it won't be in effect until October, 150 days from now. Can anyone in the current government explain to Albertans struggling to pay their bills why they should trust the UCP when the current Premier is telling everyone to wait five months before he might maybe possibly try to help do something?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry there's nobody in that caucus that knows how to read a regulation. If there was, they would know that that date was put in there as nothing more than a safety net, because we're going to be giving this rebate to 1.9 million Albertans and we know that there are going to be, out of 1.9 million, some that have moved, and for whatever reason they may have an issue. We put the date as far out as possible to capture every Albertan to make sure they get the rebate. We know the vast majority of the 1.9 million will get these rebates sooner as opposed to later despite what they may have to say.

Ms Hoffman: The UCP is trying to take a victory lap on this while telling families that their March electricity rebates might not arrive until Christmas. They are celebrating natural gas rebates that won't be in effect until October at the earliest. We are tired of this government that refuses to act. We asked them to put in a deadline by the end of this month, and they said no. Albertans are being forced to choose between paying their bills or buying their groceries. Instead of telling Albertans to get a better job or to wait until Christmas, why doesn't anyone in the UCP just pick up a pen and get these cheques out this month? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The Minister of Finance has the call.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are taking action on affordability. We are moving forward with electricity rebates, price protection for natural gas users, and we suspended the fuel tax. What I find hypocritical is that the members opposite introduced and brought in a carbon tax designed to increase the cost of electricity, designed to increase the cost of utilities, and then they sit there across the way complaining about the cost. This government is taking action. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Gasoline Prices

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, nobody trusts this Premier or his Finance minister to understand the struggles of regular working families. If he tried to put gas in his own truck, he would see today that prices have shot up. They're over a buck 60 across the province. Albertans are looking for long-term relief and actual help with the cost of living, but prices keep shooting up under the UCP. Why

won't the government launch a third-party audit of gas prices to ensure that Albertans aren't getting ripped off at the pump?

Mr. Toews: Again, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there are affordability challenges in this province, and that's why we're taking action. That's why we're moving forward with the electricity rebate, price protection for natural gas users, suspending the fuel tax. Again I'll make the same point: the members opposite, when they were in government, brought in the largest tax increase in Alberta's history, unannounced, the carbon tax, the carbon tax designed to increase fuel prices, increase utility prices, increase electricity prices. We're taking action.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, life under the UCP keeps getting more expensive. We're paying more for electricity, more for car insurance, more for tuition, and the UCP clearly doesn't care. The Premier cares more about photo ops where he pretends to pump his own gas than he does about how much it costs ordinary families to do the same. Why won't the government promise an independent, third-party audit of gas prices? Albertans can't trust the UCP to stand up for them.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a well-known fact that 60 per cent of the cost of gasoline is related to the cost of crude oil. The cost of crude oil is going astronomically high – it was a buck eight this morning – in part because of the European Union ban on Russian oil that takes effect at the end of the year. It's also a result of OPEC not increasing supply. The cost of oil is going astronomically high. That funnels down into the cost of gasoline.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the current Premier jet-sets around the world complaining about having to take a yellow cab because back home he has a personal chauffeur. He drinks fancy whisky on the roof of the sky palace with his liquor cabinet while more than half of Alberta households are reporting that they are \$200 away from not being able to make ends meet. Why doesn't the Premier come down from the sky palace, drive himself over to a gas station, look at the price of gas, and then actually do something about it?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, this government has taken more action on affordability than any provincial government across the nation. We've suspended the fuel tax – that's 13 cents a litre – creating additional savings for every Albertan . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: . . . offering savings to every Albertan every time they fill up their vehicle to go to work, to take their kids to dance, providing affordability relief for every senior and every business every time they fill up their tank. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Depending on the order in which you would like, the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Children's Health Care

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Overwhelmed: that is one Calgary parent describing how they felt waiting in line with their children at the Alberta Children's hospital this week, a line so long it extended through the doors to the ER and outside onto the sidewalk. We're seeing the impacts of the UCP's mismanagement of the health care system, and it's not good for Alberta families: wait times of up to nine hours. Albertans expect to see lineups of

children at amusement parks, not hospitals. To the Premier: is he concerned by this event, and what action is he taking to address it today?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member for the question. During our media avail with Dr. Hinshaw last week we recognized that the system right now is under strain, and this is for a number of reasons. It's because we are actually getting through now on the other side of BA.2. We're coming down, but we're still going to see increased pressures on our hospitals. We're also dealing with the flu, which is actually adding to pressures. Plus, there's increased acuity because individuals who didn't go to their family physician are showing up at hospitals. We're adding capacity, and I'll talk more to that in a moment.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, the minister is right. There are a number of factors, and they are all factors his government made worse. Indeed, we're seeing rising COVID numbers coupled with the late influenza season, and that is impacting children. Indeed, Dr. Stephen Freedman, a professor of pediatrics, emergency medicine, called it a perfect storm. He said that the rising number of children presenting with respiratory illness in recent weeks is clearly linked to the lifting of restrictions. To the Premier: was this scenario ever flagged as a concern by health officials, and if so, why did they not take action to prepare for this?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the system is under strain, and the system is under strain not unlike we're seeing across the entire country, not unlike we've actually seen in earlier periods where there are high instances of flu. But we are taking action. We know that we need to invest in capacity to be able to ensure that we can respond not only to other waves of COVID in the future but whatever is thrown at our health care system, and we're doing that: \$600 million this year, \$600 million next year, and \$600 million after that. I want to thank all of our health care workers for the tremendous work they're doing. Relief is coming.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, this crisis is happening now. Indeed, Dr. Freedman also noted that a lot of Alberta children under five are undervaccinated against COVID-19. According to provincial data only 49 per cent of children five to 11 have received one dose; only 34 per cent have received two. This UCP government refused to offer vaccines in schools. They said that they didn't need to do more to ensure that that population was vaccinated. The minister promised that he was going to do more to get people vaccinated, but we have not seen much action. Will the Premier rise today, admit it was a serious mistake not to invest in this and one that is contributing to rising illness amongst children in our province?

2:00

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, we have made vaccines widely available, and in regard to the provision of vaccines at school, when we did this for the older age groups, it was not very successful. We continue to urge all parents to get their kids vaccinated. We continue to urge all Albertans to get all the doses that they're eligible for, and I want to thank all Albertans who have gotten their doses so far. As indicated in the House earlier, we'll be running another campaign to increase the rates of vaccination, but we need to invest in capacity. That's the way we solve this. We are taking action, we are doing it, we are investing far more than any government in the past has done, and we will continue to invest in our health care system for . . .

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

Women's Reproductive Health Care in Rural Alberta

Member Irwin: Once again the UCP is letting down folks in rural Alberta, particularly those seeking reproductive health care. Getting ready for the birth of a child can be an exciting moment, but it can also be uncertain and anxious at the best of times. No one knows when a baby is ready to be delivered, and having a lack of local options for obstetrics can be deeply challenging. Why is this government putting the well-being of so many Albertans in harm's way by refusing to support obstetric services across this province?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, we are working to ensure that all expecting mothers have access to the services they need, including a plan and a place where they can safely deliver their babies. Now, as I've already indicated in the House, we do have certain challenges in certain areas due to a shortage of doctors. We are assuring expectant mothers that there's a plan in place and that they can go nearby to be able to deliver their babies while we are working on ensuring we can attract and retain doctors. We are putting our money where our mouth is. We are providing \$90 million this year to be able to recruit and retain doctors, and I'll be able to speak to that.

Member Irwin: Nearby isn't good enough because expecting parents in Whitecourt already have to leave their community to give birth, and now the service has been cut into June, so they have to drive hundreds of kilometres, figure out costs of accommodation, travel, alongside trying to anticipate when birth might happen. As it turns out, babies don't take into account your calendar and planning when it comes time to be born. Whitecourt joins – let's see – Sundre, Rimbey, Three Hills, Provost, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, my hometown of Barrhead as places where UCP failures mean expectant parents cannot access the services they need. Will the Premier provide clear and accurate details today on how critical obstetric services will reopen across the province?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. We fully appreciate that we want to provide these services across the entire province, and there are some challenges in doing so right now, but I just want to put this in context. The hon. member talked about Whitecourt. Well, nearly half of all deliveries for Whitecourt moms are done in centres normally outside of Whitecourt. That's because for the level of service and the expertise required, they'll go to Edson, which is about 97 kilometres away. Now, unfortunately, we've had to temporarily suspend these services in Whitecourt. That has impacted two families at this point in time, but we're working very hard to get the services stated back there, and we understand that . . .

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

Member Irwin: Unbelievable.

Obstetrics isn't the only way rural Albertans are struggling to access reproductive health care. Abortion, as we know, is medically essential, but currently there are no abortion services offered in rural Alberta, none whatsoever. Yesterday the Minister of Health said that he has no intention of further allowing access to reproductive rights in rural Alberta. It turns out the UCP just don't support anyone being pregnant or wanting an abortion in rural Alberta. Can anyone over there explain why pregnant Albertans or

those seeking abortions don't deserve access to those services simply because of where they live?

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

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned yesterday and the day before, part of the issue with access to services in this province for rural Albertans is due to the fact that the opposition, when they were in government, actually diverted health care capital away from rural Alberta to urban centres. I will also point out that in this province the actual drive time to access abortion services is actually shorter for most of the geography of Alberta as compared to other provinces, and that's the . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Highwood.

Hydrogen Industry

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have seen significant movement in the hydrogen sector recently, including key investments announced as a result of the first Canadian Hydrogen Convention. This includes the Alberta government's own clean hydrogen centre of excellence, a \$50 million centralizing organization that will help expand hydrogen technology across our provincial economy while supporting Alberta-led innovation. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity: can you advise this House on what hydrogen means for Alberta's economy and the transportation sector?

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

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for that question. Hydrogen-fuelled transportation can drive both decarbonization and demand for clean hydrogen from local producers, something our hydrogen road map recognizes as essential for scaling up hydrogen production for export readiness. At the Canadian hydrogen conference last week we learned about Nikola motors' hydrogen-fuelled heavy transport trucks . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the Canadian hydrogen conference last week we learned about Nikola motors' hydrogen-fuelled heavy transport trucks, Mitsubishi's passenger vehicle, and just yesterday ATCO announced it will build hydrogen production facilities and refuelling stations to support CP Rail's new hydrogen-powered locomotives.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the associate minister for that answer. Given that hydrogen is an emerging technology and that there are many myths about the safety and availability of the fuel and given that much of this stems from information and incidents from decades ago, again to the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity: can you tell the House about the advancements in liquefied hydrogen as a sustainable fuel source?

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

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that this hydrogen may make people uncomfortable because it's a new technology, but I

can assure you that hydrogen fuel cells have been around for generations. In fact, I can assure you that I personally reviewed the safety features of these vehicles. Industry has done a great job in making these vehicles safe. In fact, I took a drive in a hydrogen fuel cell vehicle last week. A phenomenal experience. I'm proud to tell you: hydrogen is not the future; it's the present.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given the extremely competitive Alberta petrochemical incentive program, low corporate tax rates, reduced red tape in the province, a skilled workforce, and enormous reserves of natural resources to produce clean hydrogen and given that there is a tremendous interest in developing made-in-Alberta advancements in the space, can the minister inform this House on the industry's current response to Alberta's approach to hydrogen technologies?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to say that our Alberta petrochemical incentive program, which applies to hydrogen as well, has received \$24 billion worth of applications, and the vast majority of those are for hydrogen. Authorities like the Edmonton International Airport are also seeing tremendous international interest in advancing hydrogen technologies in Alberta thanks to our many intentional and natural advantages. Last week I was honoured to witness EIA sign over a dozen partnerships with local and international organizations.

Hate-motivated and Violent Crime Prevention

Mr. Sabir: The number of hate-motivated crimes in Edmonton is increasing at an alarming rate, with nearly double the number of attacks in the first quarter of 2022 compared to last year. Racialized Albertans are living in fear. This province belongs to all of us regardless of race, religion, colour, or ethnicity. We should all be able to feel safe in our communities, but that clearly isn't the case. Yet this government does nothing. Why is this government failing to ensure that racialized Albertans can feel safe in their communities?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am actually very proud to respond to this question. As a government we have done so much to make sure that racialized communities feel safe, welcome, and able to achieve their . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Unparliamentary remarks, on or off the record, are still unparliamentary.

The Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are heckling because they know that they have nothing to stand on. For four solid years, when they were in office, they lifted no finger to help racialized communities in our province. We were the government that banned carding, we were the government that included First Nation police services in our Police Act, and we have so much more to do.

2:10

Mr. Sabir: Given that people have been physically assaulted, threatened with firearms, spat on, had racial slurs shouted at them, and are being discriminated against systematically and given that this government still refuses to even debate a bill to collect race-based data and given that we are increasingly seeing the rise of racist rhetoric on the right, apparent in the recent trucker convoy that shut down our border and occupied our nation's capital as many

waved Confederate and Nazi flags, yet members of this government actually supported this group, why?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Albertans can be confident that their government shares their anger and disgust with hate crimes. We continue to work in making our province a safer and more welcoming place, and that's why the Minister of Labour and Immigration, when he was in my role, had established the hate crimes community liaison, establishing that to engage with communities that are most affected by hate crimes. Province-wide collaboration among law enforcement agencies has been enhanced and will further be strengthened by the new hate crime co-ordination unit when it launches later this year.

Mr. Sabir: Given that we aren't just seeing crime on the rise in Edmonton, that we are also seeing increased violence in Calgary, drug overdoses, and even murders, and given that many of these crimes are increasingly taking place with weapons, including guns, and given that this government actually wants to put more guns in people's hands while increasing barriers to accessing mental health and addictions, the question I have is: what is the government doing to stop these killings in Calgary and across this province and address the rise in crime?

Mr. Shandro: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the premise of the question is totally incorrect and totally false. I will say, though, that it is a multifaceted approach, and we are leaving no stone unturned in either of our major urbans or in rural crime. I know that the member failed to mention even the rising rural crime rates that we continue to see. But we are taking action on rural crime as well as the increasing crime in our major urbans. We're going to continue to work in a multifaceted approach with our law enforcement agencies when it comes to addressing these issues and continue to work in building a recovery-oriented system of care.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Affordable Housing and Health Care Costs

Ms Sigurdson: Poverty is a health care issue. Albertans who do not have the stability of a home face worse health outcomes because they are more likely to have precarious living situations, less access to healthy food, and have experienced trauma. Therefore, increased poverty adds pressure and strain on the system. Unfortunately, under the UCP both poverty and chaos in the health care system are increasing. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing. Communities across the province are losing access to health care by also not having provincial support to build affordable housing. Why isn't the UCP building affordable housing to ease the strain on the health care system?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently this government is building approximately 1,500 units over the past two years. As well, we have our stronger foundations, Alberta's 10-year affordable housing strategy, which is increasing, changing dramatically how our government builds in support of affordable housing. With this housing, we will create an additional 25,000 households and increase it by 40 per cent by the end of 10 years.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that a night in a hospital is more expensive than one in a shelter and that a night in a subsidized home is cheaper than both and given that since the UCP are not maintaining homeless support

at levels they have for the last two years – Edmonton is set to lose 800 shelter spots in June, and homelessness is also rising in Calgary and across the province – and given that the UCP has also refused to work with municipalities to build permanent supportive housing and has left hundreds of millions in federal money on the table, to the Minister of Health: how much more is the UCP spending on health care because of their bad decisions?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is so shameful that the NDP repeat and repeat again the same question, that we leave the federal dollars. We left nothing on the table. We spent every single penny, and currently we have a commitment to work with the federal government. We committed \$561 million for affordable housing. Again, the former NDP government's Minister of Seniors and Housing is aware of this agreement, but she still keeps questioning about it.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that a recent study published in the *Harm Reduction Journal* proved that preventing overdoses saves over a thousand dollars per visit to an emergency room and nearly \$400 per ambulance visit and given that housing provides stability to people with mental health concerns and provides dignity while also saving money in the health system – I know that the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions doesn't support the science and the evidence, but will he stand in this Chamber and explain how much his government's decision to not invest in permanent supportive housing and harm reduction measures is costing the Alberta health system?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite would probably be aware of this if she had attended the select special committee on safe supply, that more opioids in the community actually causes more harm to the community. That's actually what the experts say. We are committed to a recovery-oriented system of care. We want to help people with the illness of addiction. It is a health care issue, and we are going to continue to help people with their addictions. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-East is next.

AGLC Charitable Gaming Model and Rural Alberta

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ability and opportunity to fund raise within a community is extremely important. Fundraising can help to subsidize the costs of certain activities or events that are popular and important to communities, making them more affordable for individuals and families. Given that I've recently heard complaints and concerns from my constituents in Airdrie-East about the disadvantage that they have when it comes to fundraising opportunities with the AGLC, especially compared to our neighbours in Calgary, can the Minister of Finance please tell us how smaller towns or cities such as Airdrie can receive fair fundraising opportunities?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. AGLC initiated a review of the province's charitable gaming model in 2019 to examine how the model is meeting the needs of Albertans and to look for

opportunities to improve it. The review has involved a comprehensive engagement with our many varied stakeholders involved in charitable gaming in the province, including more than 90 charitable organizations throughout Alberta, both urban and rural. I assure you that the government and AGLC remain committed to maintaining and maximizing charitable gaming proceeds to support eligible programs and services.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Airdrie Skating Club has high ice costs, comparable to the prices in Calgary, and that Airdrie is trying to reduce costs for families in order to encourage kids to be active and participate in sports and given that our opportunities to fund raise are less frequent, bringing in significantly less funding than the clubs in Calgary, putting us at a disadvantage to the point where we often lose families to Calgary that can subsidize their ice costs, Minister: can you please tell us what the AGLC's plan is to make fundraising fair for rural areas like Airdrie when they're competing with the larger cities? [interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the importance of civil society organizations and addressing issues and creating opportunities in our communities. I'm proud to report that AGLC has received a milestone of 38 per cent reduction in red tape, which is part of the solution to efficiency. In two years AGLC has reduced over 9,100 pieces of red tape, including a number of policy changes that reduce financial reporting and admin requirements for charities, allowing these organizations greater flexibility to put resources back into their communities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister. Given that my constituency of Airdrie-East is trying our best to fund raise and make things affordable, such as the skating club, for families in our community and given that the AGLC will assign fundraising opportunities to groups that are registered with them and apply to participate but given that rural areas are at a significant disadvantage when it comes to these opportunities and that casinos are allocated less frequently and that the casinos assigned to rural groups are much quieter and therefore don't have the same earning capacity, Minister, could you please tell us how rural areas can receive more fundraising opportunities from the AGLC?

Mr. Toews: Well, I want to thank the hon. member for her questions and the commitment she has demonstrated to the charities in her community. I know full well the importance of charities and that there are indeed unique qualities to our province's rural areas that rural charitable organizations deliver on. We've made tangible changes, including greater flexibility on how charitable organizations can use their proceeds. AGLC announced these important changes relating to charities earlier this week. For those who are interested, more details can be found on their website.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Diabetes Treatment Coverage

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear when I hear from my constituents that this government is not doing enough about the cost of living. Indeed, it seems the UCP is more focused on their internal

squabbles than the needs of Albertans, and now they've decided that more than 4,000 Albertans living with type 1 diabetes should fend for themselves by discontinuing the insulin pump therapy program without any warning. Apparently, the UCP would rather fight for insurance profits than for Albertans with life-saving medication. Can the minister today attest that the changes he's making to the program will not increase the cost of living for a single Albertan?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We are supporting Albertans with diabetes. We are making changes to improve access to supplies and new technology while at the same time enabling us to manage costs. Phase 1 of this was expanding coverage of supplies. Phase 2 was access to continuous glucose monitors for our youth, and then phase 3, which is access to new insulin pumps. Now, as part of the way to manage costs, we are transferring individuals as part of that program on to the Blue Cross program. Many are already on those programs, and I'll speak to more about that in a second.

Mr. Dang: Given that the minister admits that the cost of managing type 1 diabetes is rising and given that the insulin pump can cost someone between \$6,000 to \$8,000 and given that a lot of the employer-backed insurance programs don't cover the pumps because previously the government's insulin pump therapy program covered them, can the minister explain how this change benefits those who have to switch back to multiple insulin injections a day because they are unable to afford the care that they need since he refuses to provide actual clarity about these changes?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as previously indicated, many individuals already are on government plans in terms of Blue Cross plans, and the coverage for the pumps move over there. In addition, there are also a number of individuals who are covered under their private plans in terms of pumps. I'd like to point out that our Blue Cross plan, for those who don't already have plans or are not already on them, is a subsidized plan through the Alberta government. Everyone on this program will have access to this. They will not need to be spending the \$6,000. For those who are low income, there will be no cost associated with them in terms of moving over to the program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has just acknowledged, of course, that there may even be insurance premiums required for these changes and given that that means many Albertans will see higher costs than they saw under the insulin pump therapy program and given that this government is responsible for many Albertans struggling with the exponentially increasing cost of living, can the minister explain to these families how he sleeps at night while they're up worrying about these new costs?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as I already indicated, low-income families will be fully covered and there will be no additional cost. In addition, many of these families are already on these Blue Cross or insurance policies, whether private or the government-subsidized programs, so there will be no additional costs to them. Our focus is to be able to provide new technologies for those with diabetes. The cost of insulin pumps to the government has basically doubled over the last five years. We are spending \$50 million, and we need to put our program on a sustainable path so we can be able to cover those who are suffering from diabetes now and into the future.

Confined Feeding Operation Proposal

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, this government is considering approval for a feedlot near Pigeon Lake, a very popular spot for Albertans to visit, especially over the summer, without enough notice to residents and neighbours. Most users of this area found out about the project through a small weekly flyer and understandably were upset that they did not have adequate time to provide feedback or to ask questions about the impacts on the lake. Pigeon Lake already experiences runoff with cow manure and, given its slow water turnover, is very vulnerable to algal blooms, which residents in this area have already spent millions of dollars fighting to fix. Why did the Member for Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin do nothing to defend Pigeon Lake?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The natural resources board, the NRCB, is the regulator that regulates confined feeding operations in Alberta. The public notice period for this project closed on April 7, and the NRCB is now reviewing all of those statements of concern submitted by the public. It's the responsibility of the NRCB to ensure that the proponent offered reasonable accommodation to all those concerns, and they will be reviewing those statements of concern.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that the government refuses to accept any responsibility for this matter and given that residents and users of this area were only given a short window to provide comments and that the board's narrow window only judges concerns for those who are directly affected, excluding many residents who own recreational properties at the lake, and given that, despite this government's attempt to restrict deadlines for feedback and ignore the concerns of Albertans, more than 300 people filed statements of concern with the board anyway and given that the county of Wetaskiwin has asked for an environmental impact assessment as well, will the Minister of Environment and Parks actually listen to Albertans, pause this project, and do his job for once?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of agriculture and forestry.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NRCB published official notice of the application in the local newspaper, which covers the area in which the proposed confined operation is located. The NRCB also posted the notice on its website and sent courtesy letters to neighbours residing on or owning land within the notification radius. NRCB granted Wetaskiwin county's requests for extension of the response deadline to April 21 from April 7 to provide additional information on its initial response.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that Pigeon Lake consistently sees health warnings due to levels of toxins in the water from existing cattle manure runoff, which can cause gastrointestinal illness, skin, ear, and eye infections, and given that over 100,000 Albertans use this lake annually for fishing, camping, boating, hiking, and beaches, which become rendered unusable by the consistent algal blooms, and given that the blue-green algae escalates with warm weather and we're on track for more record-breaking temperatures this summer, only making the problem worse, will the minister not make the problem worse and conduct a proper environmental impact assessment on this problem?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of agriculture and forestry.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The role of Environment and Parks regarding confined feeding operations is to regulate the use of water under the Water Act, and the department will respond to the NRCB regarding these requirements in due course. Albertans place very a high value on this province's water resources, and

there's been significant effort in protecting and improving water quality at Pigeon Lake, including development of the Pigeon Lake watershed management plan.

Federal-provincial Relations

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, in 2017 I introduced the idea of Albertans forcing constitutional changes via an equalization referendum. The Premier picked up on the idea. Last October a clear majority of Albertans endorsed the referendum; a few weeks later this Legislature passed a constitutional resolution giving force to that referendum. Can the Premier tell us when he wrote to the Prime Minister and the other Premiers informing them of the constitutional resolution passed in this Legislature? Can he tell us, please, when the constitutional negotiations are set to begin?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. Welcome to him for coming back to the House. As well, thank you to the Premier for being the only politician in Alberta with a vision to bring two political families together to defeat the NDP to form a Conservative government that got more votes than any other party in the history of this province. It's because of that vision that we were able to introduce Dr. Morton's idea of a referendum on equalization.

Mr. Jean: Given that constitutional discussions are never easy and given that the Premier has admitted that Canada is broken – equalization is unfair to Alberta. Alberta is underrepresented in both houses of Parliament and the Senate. The Trudeau government has also passed laws that are designed to hurt only Alberta. All of these things can be fixed with constitutional changes. Will this government commit to standing up for Albertans and demanding that the rest of the country come to the constitutional table to work at fixing Canada?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the leadership of this Premier our government has challenged the federal incursions into, for example, the federal carbon tax. We've challenged the constitutionality of the no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69; the Alberta tanker ban bill, C-48; and we intervened in Quebec's challenge to Bill C-92. We are fighting the federal firearm ban, and we're intervening in challenges to federal use of the Emergencies Act to be heard in federal court this July. This government makes no apologies for standing up for the people of Alberta.

Mr. Jean: Given that while constitutional change is never easy, it isn't impossible – in the last few weeks the House of Commons, the Senate, and the Saskatchewan Legislature have changed the Constitution section that applies to Saskatchewan and CP Rail. By the way, that same section exists in the Constitution about CP Rail in Alberta. So since constitutional change is actually possible in Canada, what will it take to make the government of Alberta stand up for the needs and worries of Albertans and start the process of fixing Canada? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

2:30

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This government has stood up for, is standing up for, and will continue to stand up for Albertans. Under this Premier's guidance all of Canada's provinces

unanimously supported Alberta's request to fix the broken fiscal stabilization program, which sees Alberta support Canada through tough times only to have Ottawa turn its back on Alberta when we need support the most. Alberta's government has publicly called on the federal government to respect the wishes of Albertans regarding equalization and continues to demand a fair deal for Alberta in the federation.

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

Mr. Feehan: Today we remember, reflect, and fight for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. We do not know the true number of Indigenous women and girls missing or murdered in Alberta. That alone is a tragedy. Here are some numbers that we do know: 1,068, the number of days since the national inquiry report was released; 792, the number of days since the Alberta joint working group was formed. The Alberta website states that the final report will be published January 5, 2022; 121 days later and still no public report. Why has the minister failed to release the report, and when will he release it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, we are committed to building a safer province for Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people. I and the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations were pleased to formally receive the report and recommendations from the joint working group to inform our response to the national inquiry's final report. Thank you to each member, by the way, for all their incredible work on the joint working group. My colleague will be providing an update on Alberta's response this spring.

Mr. Feehan: It's been your whole term in office, and you've not done it.

Given that the families and the communities of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls deserve justice, peace, and reconciliation and given that the minister has had the final report from the Alberta working group for four months and given that each day without a strategy could mean more women and girls are lost to these horrific crimes, why has the UCP government failed to present a plan and recommendations from the report?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It is an important issue. Alberta's government is now reviewing the recommendations from the joint working group and their final report. This is a crossgovernmental effort, and we all have to work to create safety for Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people. My colleague the Minister of Indigenous Relations will be providing an update later this spring on Alberta's response to the national inquiry's final report.

Mr. Feehan: Given that the final report from the national inquiry includes 231 calls for justice and given that the UCP government stated that it is, quote, committed to true, meaningful, reconciliation, unquote, but has failed to provide the necessary resources across all ministries to achieve this and given that zero action means zero steps toward reconciliation and given that each and every one of us has a duty to address reconciliation, something this government has yet to fully commit to, can any member of the front bench tell me today why they have chosen to fail these women?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I are going to agree on something, that this is an important issue. Because it's an important issue, we want to do it right. I think we also will agree on how many recommendations there were. There were quite a lot, and because of that, it takes time necessary to study the recommendations in the final report. As I said, my colleague the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations will be providing an update on Alberta's response this spring.

Invest Alberta

Mr. Bilous: Invest Alberta has now been in operation for almost two years, and we still have very little insight into their operations beyond their press releases and what the minister tells Albertans. For almost two years they were not subject to access-to-information laws. Requests have been filed and denied, shrouding the Crown corporation in secrecy, much like the UCP's war room. When I asked about this yesterday, the minister informed me that he signed the paperwork to open Invest Alberta up to FOIP. My question is: why the delay? Why did it take the government almost two years to do this?

Mr. Glubish: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Investment Attraction Act established the Invest Alberta Corporation in 2020 with a mandate to promote, identify, and pursue investment for Alberta. As per the act Invest Alberta is a corporation with one share owned by the Crown. It is the government of Alberta's intent to designate Invest Alberta as a public body under the FOIP Act, and on May 2 of this year Service Alberta received a request from the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation to designate the Invest Alberta Corporation as a public body under the FOIP Act. We're following up on that request, and our intent is to follow through with that, to designate it as a public body.

Mr. Bilous: Given that Invest Alberta was created almost two years ago but wasn't open to FOIP because of either incompetent oversight or intentional secrecy by this government and given that we have partial records pertaining to a lavish dinner hosted by Invest Alberta in Lake Louise, where several ministers and their staff attended, and given that Invest Alberta is now open to FOIP but access to information requests take several months under this government, will the minister release all of the expenses related to their party in Lake Louise, and if not . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, as the member noted, it is true that it is taking longer than normal to process FOIP requests. This is very understandable given the fact that we have just come through two years of a pandemic, and all aspects of government have been a little bit slower to tackle the challenges that they have had over the last two years, and our FOIP department is no different. But we have been making investments to ensure that our FOIP divisions in government are operating more efficiently. We have added new tools to help them to process requests more quickly. That work will continue, and we will take our obligations on disclosures through FOIP very, very seriously.

Mr. Bilous: Given that Invest Alberta has signed a hefty sponsorship deal with Alpine Canada and the event at Lake Louise was an FIS World Cup race put on by Alpine Canada and given that questions have been raised about the relationship between an Invest Alberta board member and an Alpine Canada board member and given that the UCP claims to suddenly be all about transparency, will they release the

details of this sponsorship deal, including board meeting minutes and any communication related to the deal?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Additional information will be forthcoming, but Invest Alberta has been a key piece of positioning this province for investment attraction and economic growth, and I want to point out a few metrics. These are 2022 metrics versus 2019, when the members opposite were in government: business and corporations, up 42 per cent; wholesale trade, up 29 per cent; manufacturing sales, up 34 per cent; merchandise exports, up 81 per cent. Our economic plan is working. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Strategies

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would appear that the Liberal-NDP elites are once again at odds with everyday Albertans. The clean fuel standard will be placing a carbon tax on trucks. Trucks that are critical to wealth production in Alberta could face a tax from \$1,000 to \$4,000 each. It was recently reported that one-third of pickups are bought by Albertans, who make up about 11 per cent of Canada's population, while one-third of cars sold in Canada go to Quebecers, who make up 24 per cent of the population. Does the Minister of Energy believe that the Trudeau Liberal-NDP alliance would have brought in this tax if it had targeted the eastern urban elites?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do know that any tax that targets pickup trucks would be disproportionately aimed at Albertans. While we haven't heard any specifics on this tax, we do know that Steven Guilbeault and the Trudeau-NDP alliance are continuously moving the goalposts when it comes to emission reduction policies, targets, and taxes. They continually say one thing and then move the goalposts. That's why we continue to stand up to Ottawa-made policies that discriminate against Alberta, and we always will.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Trudeau government intends to use the clean fuel standard tax to subsidize the purchase of EVs and given that the EV subsidy could rise to \$8,000 or more per vehicle and given that the average income of an EV purchaser is in excess of \$100,000 while the income of the average truck buyer is just over \$60,000 and given that this plan is a transfer of wealth from the Alberta middle class to the eastern upper classes, to the Minister of Energy: is the government of Alberta supportive of the Trudeau Liberal-NDP alliance's desire to support the subsidization of electric vehicles, predominantly found in Quebec?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. No, we are not considering a rebate for electric vehicles here in his province. We believe a defensible approach is the market-based approach. In fact, we're convinced that if we depart from the market-based approach, there will be unintended consequences such as extra pressure on our electricity grid before

it meets its time. We are not in favour of subsidizing one vehicle type over another. Pickup trucks have a great future in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that EVs are mostly bought by affluent eastern urban dwellers to commute to work and given that an EV simply isn't practical for a rural Albertan because of the distances we have to travel, their limited battery range, and too few recharging stations and given that you cannot trust the Trudeau Liberal-NDP alliance, whose support for EVs is an attack on hard-working Albertans under the guise of carbon reduction, to the Minister of Energy: how will the Alberta government balance the need to reduce carbon while still maintaining their support for Albertans' jobs and our economy?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been really clear. Alberta will not accept or develop any emissions plan that will drive up inflation, drive up costs, hit Canadians' pocketbooks, and do little, if anything, to reduce emissions. We can and we must balance the need for responsible resource development and protecting the environment, and we can do that. This isn't an either/or proposition. This government is making great progress on lowering emissions using real-world, practical solutions, and at the same time our oil and gas sector is thriving and having its best year ever.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. [interjections] Order. In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of the daily Routine.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Child and Youth Mental Health

Ms Sigurdson: This Saturday marks National Child and Youth Mental Health Day, part of Mental Health Awareness Week. The theme this year is empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. All people are being called upon to listen to the concerns, anxieties, and issues that our neighbours, friends, families, and colleagues are facing and to support them however we can. Mental health awareness is crucial against stigma to ensure that everyone is able to grow and prosper. We mark this day to acknowledge that we must act to end the discrimination on mental health issues and support youth in all of their needs.

This year it is even more critical as we see the impact of the past two years of the pandemic on Alberta's youth. Youth have dealt with so much over the past two years, and we as a Legislature, a province, and a people must be there for them in any way that we can.

Our caucus will never stop advocating for the mental health of Albertans. We have called for every school in Alberta to have a counsellor to be there for the support of their students. We are committed to ensuring that every Albertan has access to at least five mental health sessions.

Many things have changed over the years, Mr. Speaker. While we are still far from perfect when it comes to helping people dealing with mental health issues, I can attest that certain things have improved, but as we are called upon to do this week and on Saturday, we must first listen, be compassionate, and be empathetic.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell children and everyone who is suffering from mental health issues that they can call the mental health helpline at 1.877.303.2642. They are not alone.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Community and Social Services has a tabling.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the disability advocate's 2020-2021 annual report.

I'll be also tabling five copies of Family Violence Death Review Committee 2020-2021 annual report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members there are no points of order today; a gold star for everyone.

Just prior to calling Orders of the Day, I beg the indulgence of the Assembly just for one brief moment because I see that the chief of staff for the Hon. Ted Arnott, the Speaker of the province of Ontario, has joined the Assembly this afternoon. Ms Rachel Nauta, I invite you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 16

Insurance Amendment Act, 2022

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move third reading of Bill 16, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2022.

This legislation proposes improvements to Alberta's insurance regulatory framework with a goal to diversify Alberta's insurance industry and modernize our financial services sector. The amendments propose to make Alberta the first Canadian jurisdiction to allow provincial companies to focus on reinsurance and raise capital through limited partnerships. Increasing the availability of insurance in the province, Mr. Speaker, is good for our entire insurance market. By allowing insurers to attract more capacity to Alberta, we're enabling the entire industry to be better positioned in serving its customers.

The amendments also propose improvements to our new legislation for captive insurance companies. Alberta is getting ready to welcome captives, and this amendment is intended to facilitate smooth relocation of foreign captives into the province. It would give Alberta and Canadian companies contemplating moving their foreign captives here – it would provide them certainty around the relocation process.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 16 is about moving our economy forward by supporting diversification, attracting investment, and creating jobs. I encourage all members to support this bill.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

With that, I move third reading. Thank you.

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

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer some comments on Bill 16 in third reading. Let me first of all extend my gratitude to the Minister of Finance for his best speech ever in this House. I think it had a total running time of about three minutes and contained nothing but facts. Well done, to the minister, for a real stellar job. I wish that every speech and every answer that

he gave in this House were as factually accurate and as succinct as that speech. Thank you very much for that.

I want to spend some time with my comments this afternoon on this issue of reinsurance because the Minister of Finance is on record as saying that the reason that the province of Alberta is allowing the establishment of reinsurance companies here is to allow for oil and gas companies, which are awash in cash right now, to use some of that cash to fund their own reinsurance programs or fund reinsurance companies to provide reinsurance to themselves. We here in the NDP Official Opposition have no issue with that. We think that reinsurance may very well serve the public interest when it comes to providing those services to the oil and gas sector.

I think it's interesting to talk about one example where reinsurance was a help to the public interest, and that's with the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, in 2010. The costs of that disaster were so astronomically high that British Petroleum had to access reinsurance in order to cover some of the costs related to controlling, ending the release of the oil from the well and cleaning up some of the mess in the Gulf of Mexico and compensating the people who lived along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico for some of the hardship that they endured as a result of that disaster.

2:50

I'm pleased to see that this kind of financial safeguard for potential environmental disasters is being allowed here in the province of Alberta because everybody knows that the oil and gas companies here in the province of Alberta have significant unaddressed environmental liabilities. It's my hope that by allowing reinsurance companies here in the province of Alberta, oil and gas companies will have the reinsurance that they need to cover some of the costs of those environmental liabilities should those costs spiral out of control.

But I think that on this issue of getting environmental liabilities in the oil and gas sector under control, much more needs to be done. Reinsurance will not be a sufficient measure to get environmental liabilities related to the oil and gas sector under control. We know that right now the mine financial security program is woefully underfunded. There are hundreds of billions of dollars of potential environmental liabilities attributed to oil sands companies alone that do not have sufficient funds in place under the mine financial security program to cover those costs if those companies are unable to deal with the costs on their own. We have yet to see anybody from Executive Council present a coherent plan to the people of Alberta for dealing with those costs, and my fear is that it will be the average Albertan who will be left on the hook to pay for those expenses.

It would be bad enough, Madam Speaker, if the government had just left the mine financial security program alone and did nothing to address the issue, but they actually scaled back the financial requirements for oil sands companies last year. Oil sands companies paid less in 2021 than they did in the previous year because – the minister gave the excuse of low resource prices. Well, you know, covering the costs of these environmental liabilities should take precedence over a whole host of other costs that oil and gas companies need to meet, so I don't buy this argument that because oil and gas companies had reduced profits, they couldn't afford to contribute the same amount as they did before to the mine financial security program.

Moreover, we currently see oil trading at well over \$100 a barrel, yet the minister has been completely silent about what the future of the mine financial security program holds for oil sands companies. As far as we know, the rates of contributions that will be expected from those oil sands companies aren't actually going to increase from last year. How is it that when oil sands companies are suffering from low oil prices, they get a premium reduction on their mine financial security

obligations, but when prices go up, nothing is done about it? That's not fair, Madam Speaker, and I think that the taxpayers of Alberta are being left at significant risk of having to pay for these environmental liabilities once the oil sands companies are no longer viable, whenever that happens, at some point in the future. We hope that they will continue to make money and have enough money set aside for dealing with those liabilities, but this government has done nothing to ensure that that happens.

We also see the same issue in the traditional oil and gas sector. It's been a privilege of mine to participate on the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights, and I've had the chance to travel to a couple of different locations around Alberta to hear from landowners who are having extreme difficulties dealing with traditional oil and gas companies and trying to get them to deal with their oil and gas liabilities. There are thousands and thousands of landowners who are going without lease payments right now. They've got inactive wells that need to be abandoned and sites that need to be reclaimed – and there's nothing being done – hundreds of thousands of sites all across the province where the traditional oil and gas, conventional oil and gas companies are not addressing their liabilities either.

It is my hope that by allowing these conventional oil and gas companies to set up their own reinsurance companies, they will provide some means of dealing with these liabilities, but I don't think that it will be sufficient. More needs to be done to protect the interests of landowners who will be left to suffer the consequences, because these oil and gas companies are very quickly reaching the end of their lives, so to speak.

Municipalities as well are going without tax payments from oil and gas companies. This government has done nothing to address any of those outstanding liabilities of the conventional oil and gas companies either. People in Alberta are incredibly upset. They see that the price of oil is as high as it's ever been, oil and gas companies are making more money than they've ever had before, yet the debts that they are owed are not being paid, and that is not fair.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to offer my support for this bill along with all of my Official Opposition colleagues. It is my sincere hope that this reinsurance scheme that the Minister of Finance is proposing will help to address some of these environmental liabilities, but I hope that members of Executive Council understand that much more needs to be done to make sure that oil and gas companies clean up the messes that they have made and that they don't leave the average Albertan on the hook for covering these costs.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will conclude my remarks.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join in on Bill 16? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Of course, it gives me great pleasure to stand and speak to third reading of this bill and discuss not so much the fact that – you know, I'm in agreement with the fact that it's very important that this bill create opportunity for reinsurance here in the province of Alberta, but the bigger issue, of course, is the fact that this government has had an opportunity to actually address issues regarding insurance coverage for Albertans, specifically car insurance and even home insurance. Unfortunately, over the past year and a half people's car insurance has actually gone up, in some cases by 30 per cent.

You know, to your average family out there – I find it interesting that a member across the way was talking about urban elites. I've never thought of myself as an urban elite. I come from a very working-class background, a very humble background. Both my parents worked every day. They did not run their own business or anything, but they brought home a paycheque, and they made sure food was on the table and that we were fed. We didn't have

everything we wanted, but we didn't go without. We had everything we needed. Of course, I come from a family where I was raised with three other brothers. There were four of us. I remember that at the time in the '80s when my parents decided to purchase a house or put a mortgage on a house, interest rates were, like, 17, 18, 19 per cent. It was a real difficult time.

For any average Albertan, you know, they obviously have their household budget that they need to deal with, and when the cost of insurance goes up by 30 per cent, I can tell you that that puts a tremendous amount of anxiety on those average Albertans. Maybe they're saving a little bit every paycheque. Maybe. I'm sure that, like other members on the other side of the House know, every paycheque that comes in: you save a little bit and you put it aside, but there always seems to be some kind of issue that will come up that will take down that amount that you're saving every month.

3:00

Currently, in the economy that we have right now, those average Albertans are finding it harder and harder and harder to put, you know, \$100 aside every paycheque. We're hearing from Albertans that they're \$200 away from not being able to make ends meet here in this province. So for me it's a shame that the minister wouldn't actually address this issue more concretely when it comes to insurance here in the province of Alberta. For the first time in a hundred years the minister decided to, I can only assume, hide the report on insurance profits. It's a report that comes out every year, but for some reason this year it didn't come out. Is that a coincidence? I don't know.

I can tell you that when that report came out, I heard from several Albertans that were just awestruck at the fact that insurance companies have gotten away with such huge profits while they have had to endure very difficult times during this economic crisis, that, of course, were made even worse with COVID-19. So many of them – and I remember in debate getting up in this House and telling members of this House that there were teachers, for example, that at the beginning of COVID were told to stay home, so, you know, they didn't have to drive anywhere. Maybe they went to the local grocery store. There could have been something worked out with the insurance companies to actually lower the monthly payments or the amounts paid to insurance companies, but this government decided to do nothing about that.

I get it because their ideology, Madam Speaker, is to let the free market do its thing; don't get involved. That's why, for example, when in the House I asked the associate minister of natural gas what he was going to do about utility bills, he got up very proudly and said: I'm going to do nothing. That's the ideology of these Conservatives. Their ideology is to let the free market do its will, and it doesn't matter how that's going to impact your average Albertan. But average Albertans want a government that's actually going to defend them, to stand up for them, to help them.

You know, it's very plausible that the minister – although he may not agree with a cap, well, then I invite him to come up with some other alternatives but to actually stand up for Albertans, because that's his job inside of this House. If he doesn't like the idea of a cap, then come up with something else. Work with the private sector, work with the insurance companies to actually come up with an alternative that makes the lives of Albertans easier when it comes to this issue, this problem, this deep concern that they have.

Unfortunately, we don't see things getting any better. The minister gets up in this House time and time again, and he says that insurance companies are actually coming down, but that's only 10 companies that have applied for their premiums to come down. We know, last I heard, that seven companies are actually requesting to increase their

premiums. So what is it? Is it coming down? Are they going up? What's the case?

Again I go back to the issue at hand. You know, Conservatives and champions of laissez-faire economics continue to tell us that more competition is actually going to drive the price down, but that's not what Albertans are seeing. That is absolutely not what Albertans are seeing.

I asked the minister the other day in debate – was it 46 insurance companies or 76?

Mr. Toews: Forty-five.

Member Loyola: Forty-five. Thank you, Minister.

There are actually 45 insurance companies here in the province of Alberta. Now, you'd think, you know, according to Conservative ideology and free-market principles, that 45 companies would be enough to bring down the price of insurance for Albertans . . .

An Hon. Member: Do you want to nationalize one?

Member Loyola: . . . yet we're not seeing the decrease of prices.

The members on the other side are like: okay; well, do you want to nationalize it? We're talking about the fact – how many companies are going to be needed? Is it going to be 50? Is it going to be 70? Is it going to be 100? How many do we actually need? [interjection] Go ahead, Minister.

Mr. Toews: Well, Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member, through you, for giving way. I just want to provide some metrics that are helpful here. According to the statistics from the National Insurance Agency in 2020, the most recent year we have data for, automobile insurance companies in Alberta had a profit, but they netted \$11.59 per vehicle insured in this province. That is an independent statistical agency. I think that's helpful for members in the House. That's why we brought in Bill 41. That's why we looked to deal with the systemic issues that were driving up costs. We do have a competitive market in this province, and this data point would demonstrate that. We need to maintain the competitive market and drive down costs.

Member Loyola: Well, I appreciate that, Minister, but it's not working. What Albertans are actually seeing are their premiums going higher and higher and higher under this UCP government. I mean, I can appreciate that you have data and that you're presenting that in the House, but it's . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Just direct your comments through the chair, please.

Member Loyola: Of course, Madam Speaker.

Through you to the minister, the outcome is what's important. That has been the primary focus of my intervention here today, that Albertans are spending way too much on insurance, not to mention all the other costs that they have related to the family budget. That is the main concern, and that is what we should be addressing as a Legislature, making sure that we're making life for Albertans easier and not harder.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity just to address this bill for a few moments at the end of this day. In general, of course, this bill will get the support of myself and, I believe, my colleagues as we move forward. We certainly appreciate the need to keep refining the insurance industry

in this province for the benefit of Albertans. I'm happy to see the government redo their bills when they've made mistakes in the past, as this one does and as we've seen a number of times in this particular session of the Legislature, having to go over bills that failed to do what they were supposed to do in the first place. But, you know, credit where credit is due: good second try.

I want to take a few moments just to speak about some of the concerns I have about what we have just heard from the Minister of Finance in response to the member who was just previously speaking, Edmonton-Ellerslie. That is that we have had deep concerns on this side of the House with average Albertans' experiences over the last number of years, particularly in response to the direct action of this government to remove a limit on increasing insurance rates that were clearly going up in this province and clearly putting people in dire straits.

3:10

Businesses were telling us that they were seriously going to think about closing their doors because of dramatically increased business insurance rates. People were parking their cars in spite of often needing them for work purposes because of increasing insurance rates, and people were concerned about being able to maintain their own homes. So a very serious hit on people and their lives. Of course, people do their best to try to adapt. They cut back where they can. Unfortunately, some people ended up suffering serious consequences because they simply couldn't make it all work, just living too close to the line, which is unfortunate. But, of course, we know a significant number of people at any time are in the position of actually doing that.

I'm concerned because, you know, the Minister of Finance has stood up in this House a number of times and listed companies who have reduced their rates this year, but he does not give you the full facts when he does that. That's what I'm very concerned about. What we saw were some increases in insurance rates that were upwards of 30 per cent for people in the province of Alberta and basically across the board. It almost didn't matter which insurance company you were with, with some minor exceptions, I'm going to admit, we saw this dramatic increase.

Then we see only a small portion of the 45 insurance companies in this province – I think there were seven listed by the Finance minister – who had applied in the second year to actually reduce their rates, but reducing their rates by approximately 5 per cent. So what they're not telling you is that your rates went up 30 per cent and down by 5, and they're equating it to as if they're the same, and they're not. They're not the same when 100 per cent, or close to 100 per cent, of the businesses go up, but only a small proportion, some, you know, approximately 15 to 20 per cent, go down. There are not equivalencies. My concern here is that what we have is the government really not admitting to the set of facts that Albertans are experiencing and not addressing the consequences.

Now, what we have heard the Finance minister say is that we need to leave this to the market, and the market will, you know, deal with this. There will be competition in the market, more companies will join, and we'll see the rates go down. But this is not a normal open market, and I think we have to be really clear about that. There are only approximately 45 companies in the province of Alberta, and I know the minister is hoping more will join, but what is he hoping? That two, three, four, five more will join? He hasn't actually stood up and said to this House that when we reach a thousand insurance companies then we will have true market competition, because he knows that will never happen.

He also knows that in a market the size of 45 you actually don't have fulsome competition. You don't have fulsome competition because the companies are quite able to work together. I'm not talking about collusion. I'm not talking about a dishonest, you know, sort of under-the-table kind of working together. I mean that they just

understand each other and understand how things work. So they all raise the rates knowing that it will be supported across the board because there is no real competition. There is no one standout company, for example, in the last year who said: "Has your insurance gone up 30 per cent? Well, we're going to give you not only an insurance rate that doesn't go up 30 per cent, but we're going to drop it by 5 or 10 per cent." Not one company made that advertisement, so that tells you that they all rose with the market.

What happens in these situations, that the Conservatives do not speak to, is the fact that the lives of individual Albertans are driven into chaos. Even if they are right and eventually somewhere down in this magical future competition will result in some reduction of the bills, in the meantime the people of the province of Alberta have experienced extreme distress. Some, as I say, have had to make really critical decisions in terms of their personal finances or their small-business finances. Unfortunately, the Conservatives' answer is always, "Don't worry; this will resolve itself in due time," this being the in-due-time government. I think what that says is: "Well, you know what? Those of us who have wealth will ride through this because it really won't make a huge difference in our lives, and those of you who don't have wealth can just suffer the consequences because in due time it'll be okay again." Two years of trauma in terms of being unable to pay your bills is really unacceptable, yet it doesn't matter to this Conservative government.

I certainly would like to see this Conservative government make a decision that is about everyday Albertans in their everyday lived experience and not just sort of cast them to the winds, hoping that somehow they will land in good conditions. You know, we simply cannot be the farmer who casts the grain across the fields, allowing some of it to fall on rugged land and some of it to fall on fertile land, because those that fall on rugged land will not thrive and survive. We have a responsibility to make sure that they do not fall on that land and that they only end up in fertile land.

This government is refusing to do that because they believe that in due course things will resolve, which is an easy thing to say when you have the money. It's an easy thing to say when you're sitting in this House and you're earning \$120,000 a year or more in cabinet, almost \$200,000 a year in cabinet, and those increases of 30 per cent are, at worst, inconveniences, but when you are a small-business owner and your insurance goes up to the point that you have to consider whether or not you're closing your shop, when you're a family that has to look at maybe taking the kids out of hockey this year because you just simply can't afford it, that's a very different kind of question. I really would like, for once, this government to stand up on the side of those average Albertans and not always on the side of corporations, who are ultimately the beneficiaries.

We can see that they are the beneficiaries because we've seen the report that was hidden by this government for months, a report that

had been issued in this province for over 107 years. When did they release that report? On Holy Thursday, just while everybody is distracted, while people are not in the House. They hid that report and then released it at a time when nobody would be paying attention. Fortunately, on this side of the House we are always paying attention, and we saw that report, and we found that insurance companies were not in a desperate strait. They did not need to increase the fees for their services by 30 per cent. In fact, they were making record profits.

What we have is a government making a decision: whose side am I going to be on, the insurance companies who are making record profits or the average, everyday Albertans who are going to have to say to the kids, "No hockey this year"? I can tell you that on this side of the House we're on the side of hockey.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate?

Seeing none, would the minister like to close us out?

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to close this out, just make a couple of comments around Bill 16, the Insurance Amendment Act. This bill is about taking action. This bill is, in fact, about creating more capacity for Alberta consumers. This bill is about creating innovative solutions for not only industry, key industry elements within the province, but much more broadly for consumers throughout the province.

I just want to close with this. You know, we hear from the members opposite that we're not taking action on issues of affordability. Madam Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We have taken action time and time again, and we will continue to take action to ensure that Alberta consumers have the maximum number of product offerings available. Madam Speaker, that's what Bill 16 is about.

I appreciate the debate, and I appreciate that the members opposite have indicated they're going to support the bill. I very much appreciate that. I encourage all members to support Bill 16.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

3:20

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think a lot of great work has been done this week, but at this moment I think it's time that – I'd like to move that we adjourn the Assembly . . . [interjections] Do you want me to adjourn or not? I would like to move that we adjourn the Assembly until Monday, May 9 at 1:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Just a reminder: we don't bang on desks anymore as per the standing orders.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:21 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 3rd Session (2022)

Activity to Thursday, May 5, 2022

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Recognition Act (\$) (Kenney)

First Reading — 4 (*Feb. 22, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 94-97 (*Mar. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 140-44 (*Mar. 10, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 230-34 (*Mar. 17, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 24, 2022 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2022 cQ-0.7]

Bill 2 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 110 (*Mar. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 312-19 (*Mar. 22, 2022 aft.*), 391-95 (*Mar. 23, 2022 eve.*), 484-90 (*Mar. 29, 2022 aft.*), 565-71 (*Mar. 30, 2022 eve.*), 599-604 (*Apr. 19, 2022 morn.*), 661 (*Apr. 19, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 699-707 (*Apr. 20, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 715-24 (*Apr. 20, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 767 (*Apr. 21, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2022 c4]

Bill 3 — Special Days Act (Orr)

First Reading — 124 (*Mar. 9, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 327 (*Mar. 22, 2022 eve., adjourned*), 343-45 (*Mar. 22, 2022 eve., adjourned*), 346 (*Mar. 22, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 375-78 (*Mar. 23, 2022 aft.*), 379 (*Mar. 23, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 389-91 (*Mar. 23, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 24, 2022 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force March 24, 2022; SA 2022 cS-16.3]

Bill 4 — Municipal Government (Face Mask and Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination Bylaws) Amendment Act, 2022 (McIver)

First Reading — 110 (*Mar. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 163-77 (*Mar. 14, 2022 aft.*), 360-66 (*Mar. 23, 2022 aft.*), 396 (*Mar. 23, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 519-23 (*Mar. 29, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 571-79 (*Mar. 30, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — 767 (*Apr. 21, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force April 21, 2022; SA 2022 c5]

Bill 5 — Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2022 (Sawhney)

First Reading — 202 (*Mar. 16, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 319-26 (*Mar. 22, 2022 aft.*), 469-71 (*Mar. 28, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 523-24 (*Mar. 29, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 537-43 (*Mar. 30, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 767 (*Apr. 21, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2022 c6]

Bill 6 — Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2022 (Orr)

First Reading — 228 (*Mar. 17, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 502-505 (*Mar. 29, 2022 aft.*), 513-14 (*Mar. 29, 2022 eve., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 562-65 (*Mar. 30, 2022 eve., passed*)
Third Reading — 594-98 (*Mar. 31, 2022 aft., passed*)
Royal Assent — 767 (*Apr. 21, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force April 21, 2022; SA 2022 c3]

Bill 7 — Appropriation Act, 2022 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 272-73 (*Mar. 21, 2022 eve., passed*)
Second Reading — 310-11 (*Mar. 22, 2022 aft., adjourned*), 327-36 (*Mar. 22, 2022 eve., adjourned*), 345 (*Mar. 22, 2022 eve., passed on division*)
Committee of the Whole — 366-75 (*Mar. 23, 2022 aft.*), (*Mar. 23, 2022 eve.*), 395 (*Mar. 23, 2022 eve., passed on division*)
Third Reading — 411-14 (*Mar. 24, 2022 aft.*), 419 (*Mar. 24, 2022 aft., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Mar. 24, 2022 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force March 24, 2022; c1]

Bill 8 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2022 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 297 (*Mar. 21, 2022 eve., passed*)
Second Reading — 311-12 (*Mar. 22, 2022 aft., adjourned*), 336-43 (*Mar. 22, 2022 eve., adjourned*), 345-46 (*Mar. 22, 2022 eve., passed on division*)
Committee of the Whole — 379-89 (*Mar. 23, 2022 eve.*), 395 (*Mar. 23, 2022 eve., passed on division*)
Third Reading — 414-19 (*Mar. 24, 2022 aft.*), 419 (*Mar. 24, 2022 aft., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Mar. 24, 2022 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force March 24, 2022; c2]

Bill 9 — Public's Right to Know Act (Shandro)

First Reading — 309 (*Mar. 22, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 447-54 (*Mar. 28, 2022 aft.*), 455-63 (*Mar. 28, 2022 eve.*), 643-51 (*Apr. 19, 2022 eve., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 707-13 (*Apr. 20, 2022 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 745-49 (*Apr. 21, 2022 morn., passed*)
Royal Assent — 767 (*Apr. 21, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2022 cP-47]

Bill 10 — Health Professions (Protecting Women and Girls) Amendment Act, 2022 (Aheer)

First Reading — 408 (*Mar. 24, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 463-69 (*Mar. 28, 2022 eve.*), 543-50 (*Mar. 30, 2022 aft.*), 604-10 (*Apr. 19, 2022 morn.*), 661 (*Apr. 19, 2022 eve., passed*)

Bill 11 — Continuing Care Act (Copping)

First Reading — 432 (*Mar. 28, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 550-56 (*Mar. 30, 2022 aft.*), 634-42 (*Apr. 19, 2022 aft.*), 663-72 (*Apr. 20, 2022 morn.*), 865-71 (*Apr. 26, 2022 aft.*), 873-79 (*Apr. 26, 2022 eve.*), 891-97 (*Apr. 27, 2022 morn.*), 936-42 (*Apr. 27, 2022 aft.*), 1027-34 (*May 2, 2022 eve.*), 1074-82 (*May 3, 2022 aft.*), 1140-43 (*May 4, 2022 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 12 — Trustee Act (Shandro)

First Reading — 483 (*Mar. 29, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 651-61 (*Apr. 19, 2022 eve.*), 749-54 (*Apr. 21, 2022 morn., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 858-65 (*Apr. 26, 2022 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 903-09 (*Apr. 27, 2022 morn.*), 988-90 (*Apr. 28, 2022 aft., passed*)
Royal Assent — (*Apr. 29, 2022 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2022 cT-8.1]

Bill 13 — Financial Innovation Act (Toews)

First Reading — 535 (*Mar. 30, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 624-33 (*Apr. 19, 2022 aft.*), 724-27 (*Apr. 20, 2022 eve.*), 807 (*Apr. 25, 2022 eve.*), 850-58 (*Apr. 26, 2022 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 925-36 (*Apr. 27, 2022 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 943-48 (*Apr. 27, 2022 eve., passed*)
Royal Assent — (*Apr. 29, 2022 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2022 cF-13.2]

Bill 14* — Provincial Court (Sexual Assault Awareness Training) Amendment Act, 2022 (Issik)

First Reading — 535-36 (*Mar. 30, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 672-81 (*Apr. 20, 2022 morn.*), 727-33 (*Apr. 20, 2022 eve., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 1159-66 (*May 4, 2022 eve., passed with amendments*)
Third Reading — 1167-72 (*May 5, 2022 Morn., passed*)

Bill 15* — Education (Reforming Teacher Profession Discipline) Amendment Act, 2022 (LaGrange)

First Reading — 592 (*Mar. 31, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 767-76 (*Apr. 21, 2022 aft.*), 825-32 (*Apr. 26, 2022 morn.*), 884-89 (*Apr. 26, 2022 eve.*), 923-25 (*Apr. 27, 2022 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 1065-67 (*May 3, 2022 aft.*), 1090-95 (*May 3, 2022 eve., passed with amendments*)
Third Reading — 1125-28 (*May 4, 2022 aft., passed*)

Bill 16 — Insurance Amendment Act, 2022 (Toews)

First Reading — 622 (*Apr. 19, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 807-808 (*Apr. 25, 2022 eve.*), 832-37 (*Apr. 26, 2022 morn.*), 879-84 (*Apr. 26, 2022 eve.*), 897-903 (*Apr. 27, 2022 morn.*), 1034-37 (*May 2, 2022 eve., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 1067-74 (*May 3, 2022 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 1196-99 (*May 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Bill 17 — Labour Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Madu)

First Reading — 766 (*Apr. 21, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 968-75 (*Apr. 28, 2022 morn.*), 1128-40 (*May 4, 2022 aft., passed*)

Bill 18 — Utility Commodity Rebate Act (Nally)

First Reading — 693-94 (*Apr. 20, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 735-45 (*Apr. 21, 2022 morn.*), 807 (*Apr. 25, 2022 eve., passed on division*)
Committee of the Whole — 808-22 (*Apr. 25, 2022 eve., passed*)
Third Reading — 822-23 (*Apr. 25, 2022 eve., passed*)
Royal Assent — (*Apr. 29, 2022 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force April 29, 2022; SA 2022 cU-3.5]

Bill 19 — Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2022 (Glubish)

First Reading — 766 (*Apr. 21, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 948-58 (*Apr. 27, 2022 eve.*), 959-68 (*Apr. 28, 2022 morn.*), 1021-27 (*May 2, 2022 eve.*), 1083-87 (*May 3, 2022 eve.*), 1180-83 (*May 5, 2022 morn., adjourned on amendment*)
Third Reading — (*May 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Bill 20 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Shandro)

First Reading — 766 (*Apr. 21, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 1087-90 (*May 3, 2022 eve.*), 1097-1105 (*May 4, 2022 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 21 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Fir)

First Reading — 788 (*Apr. 25, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 1045-52 (*May 3, 2022 morn.*), 1152-58 (*May 4, 2022 eve.*), 1176-80 (*May 5, 2022 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 22 — Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta's Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022 (Nally)

First Reading — 922 (*Apr. 27, 2022 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 1039-45 (*May 3, 2022 morn.*), 1105-14 (*May 4, 2022 morn.*), 1145-52 (*May 4, 2022 eve.*), 1172-76 (*May 5, 2022 morn., passed*)

Bill 23 — Professional Governance Act (Madu)

First Reading — 1002 (*May 2, 2022 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Eastern Slopes Protection Act (Notley)

First Reading — 156 (*Mar. 14, 2022 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), 432 (*Mar. 28, 2022 aft., committee recommendation that Bill not proceed reported to Assembly*), 789-95 (*Apr. 25, 2022 aft., debate on concurrence motion; not proceeded with*)

Bill 202 — Public Health (Transparency and Accountability) Amendment Act, 2022 (Loewen)

First Reading — 110 (Mar. 8, 2022 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 309 (Mar. 22, 2022 aft., committee recommendation that Bill proceed reported to Assembly), 433-40 (Mar. 28, 2022 aft., debate on concurrence motion; proceeded with)

Bill 203 — Technology Innovation and Alberta Venture Fund Act (Bilous)

First Reading — 228 (Mar. 17, 2022 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 693 (Apr. 20, 2022 aft., committee recommendation that Bill not proceed reported to Assembly), 796-801 (Apr. 25, 2022 aft., debate on concurrence motion; not proceeded with)

Bill 204 — Anti-Racism Act (Shepherd)

First Reading — 408 (Mar. 24, 2022 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 788 (Apr. 25, 2022 aft., committee recommendation that Bill not proceed reported to Assembly), 1002-1008 (May 2, 2022 aft., debate on concurrence motion; not proceeded with on division)

Bill 205 — Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Mandatory Referral) Amendment Act, 2022 (Sigurdson, RJ)

First Reading — 592 (Mar. 31, 2022 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 922 (Apr. 27, 2022 aft., committee recommendation that Bill proceed reported to Assembly), 1008-14 (May 2, 2022 aft., debate on concurrence motion; proceeded with on division)

Bill 206 — Prohibiting Ownership of Agricultural Lands (Pension Plans and Trust Corporations) Act (van Dijken)

First Reading — 988 (Apr. 28, 2022 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills)

Bill 207 — Traffic Safety (Tow Truck Warning Lamps) Amendment Act, 2022 (Rutherford)

First Reading — 988 (Apr. 28, 2022 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills)

Bill Pr1 — Calgary Young Men's Christian Association Amendment Act, 2022 (Jones)

First Reading — 309 (Mar. 22, 2022 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 1001 (May 2, 2022 aft., reported to Assembly; proceeded with)

Bill Pr2 — Calgary Heritage Authority Amendment Act, 2022 (Nixon, JP)

First Reading — 309 (Mar. 22, 2022 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 1001 (May 2, 2022 aft., reported to Assembly; proceeded with with amendments)

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