



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 10, 2022

Day 32

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Third Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UC)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,

Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)

Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),
Official Opposition Whip

Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Frey, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader

Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC),
Government Whip

Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UC)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, ECA, Calgary-Lougheed (UC),
Premier

LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (Ind)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, QC, Edmonton-South West (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)

Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UC)
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre
(UC), Government House Leader

Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UC)
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),
Deputy Government Whip

Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, Calgary-North West (UC)
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, ECA, QC, Calgary-Elbow (UC)
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, QC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 61

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 3

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, QC, Clerk
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and
Director of House Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and
Committees
Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary
Programs
Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Chris Caughell, Sergeant-at-Arms
Tom Bell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Terry Langley, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Mike Ellis	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Tanya Fir	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
Whitney Issik	Associate Minister of Status of Women
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Minister of Community and Social Services
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Ric McIver	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Ronald Orr	Minister of Culture
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Transportation
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Muhammad Yaseen	Associate Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism

Parliamentary Secretaries

Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism
Jacqueline Lovely	Parliamentary Secretary to the Associate Minister of Status of Women
Nathan Neudorf	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Parks for Water Stewardship
Jeremy Nixon	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Community and Social Services for Civil Society
Searle Turton	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy
Dan Williams	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Culture and for la Francophonie

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Rowswell
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jones

Allard
Eggen
Gray
Hunter
Phillips
Rehn
Singh

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Neudorf
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Armstrong-Homeniuk
Barnes
Bilous
Frey
Irwin
Rosin
Rowswell
Sweet
van Dijken
Walker

Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply

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

Amery
Frey
Milliken
Rosin
Stephan
Yao
Vacant
Vacant
Vacant
Vacant

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Lovely
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery
Carson
Dang
Frey
Gotfried
Hunter
Loewen
Reid
Sabir
Smith

Select Special Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Walker
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Allard
Carson
Dreeshen
Ganley
Long
Sabir
Stephan

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Rutherford
Deputy Chair: Mr. Milliken

Allard
Ceci
Dach
Long
Loyola
Rosin
Shepherd
Smith
van Dijken

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Allard
Deol
Goehring
Gray
Long
Neudorf
Sabir
Sigurdson, R.J.
Williams

Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Chair: Mr. Rutherford
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon

Amery
Irwin
Long
Nielsen
Rehn
Rosin
Sigurdson, L.
Singh
Sweet

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Smith
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Aheer
Armstrong-Homeniuk
Deol
Ganley
Gotfried
Loyola
Neudorf
Renaud
Stephan
Williams

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Ms Phillips
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Armstrong-Homeniuk
Lovely
Pancholi
Renaud
Rowswell
Schmidt
Singh
Toor
Turton
Walker

Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights

Chair: Mr. Sigurdson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rutherford

Frey
Ganley
Hanson
Milliken
Nielsen
Rowswell
Schmidt
Sweet
van Dijken
Yao

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Hanson
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach
Feehan
Ganley
Getson
Guthrie
Lovely
Rehn
Singh
Turton
Yao

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 10, 2022

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 20 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

[Adjourned debate May 4: Mr. Singh]

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. Are there any members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in regard to the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. You know, once again it's one of those bills where we see on first blush that it's a housekeeping bill – and indeed the Justice minister was asserting that so emphatically – but when we started looking at it, we realized that, of course, the main issue is not being dealt with, right? That's the circumstances around the victims of crime fund. Again, this really speaks to a fundamental, foundational problem with so many of the bills that we see here in this session, which is that the government asserts that it's just some housekeeping thing but underneath – like an iceberg, you only see the little tip on the top, but there's this big honking piece of ice underneath that really needs to be dealt with and is not being dealt with, and that is this whole issue around the victims of crime fund and moving that money into a different place.

You know, when you build something like the victims of crime fund, Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is designed to be a self-sustaining mechanism that uses assets that maybe have been seized from other criminal activity. Let's say that someone is busted, and they're seizing the assets of drug dealers or a drug house, and they sell the house, and they sell the vehicles and all that stuff. Then that money goes to the victims of crime fund. From the beginning it was built as a purpose-built, specialized way by which we could have that money from criminal activity moving over to help people who have been victimized by crime in some other location, or it could be the same location but probably not.

To mess with that very fine sort of logical balance – right? – is a serious problem, Mr. Speaker, and any of the changes to how people can access services for victims of crime: again, it's not just going against common sense, but it's going after a sense of balance and compassion, that is what we are meant to provide in justice, Alberta Justice, and the safety and the security that goes with that as well. For people that have been traumatized by being part of a crime, somehow witnessing a crime or being assaulted or so forth, to restrict the benefits that we can give, like psychological services or other benefits for individuals like that, is unconscionable, quite frankly.

We know very well that quite often people will be traumatized by criminal activity, and that trauma will manifest itself sometimes months or even years later. I was listening to, again, the fountain of all my anecdotal stories, the CBC Radio, just last night, I guess. It was a repeat of an investigative report where there was a teacher that was sexually molesting high school students, like, a band teacher, and some of the people who finally came out to bust this guy had the trauma associated with that manifesting itself many

years later, when they were adults. The one woman went from high school and had a very successful career in the public service – I think she was an assistant deputy minister in the federal government – and then suddenly, you know, after all of those years she melted down and needed significant support, lost everything with the traumatic effects of this sustained sort of sexual assault that she had endured when she was a high school student, right?

I guess my point is that, number one, that's a terrible story, but I think it's instructive that people who have been victims of crime in the broadest possible way can have those traumatic effects manifest in their lives months or years later, so for us to put any limitation on that is irresponsible. We must always in this Legislature defer to professionals, right? We can't just be amateur psychologists and say: okay; well, you've got 30 days to apply for the psychological services, and after that, that's it. I mean, who are we to set those kinds of limits as legislators, generalists that we are? The whole premise of this bill is the – by omission the things it doesn't do: that's the problem that I have with it. You know, I think we could really do better, and it's just an obvious place to improve on with Bill 20.

As far as I can see, this bill does amend five different acts, right? It goes for the Corrections Act, Justice of the Peace Act, Missing Persons Act, Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act, and then the Youth Justice Act as well. In many of those other acts, you know, Mr. Speaker, again we definitely need to focus our attention always on a constant, vigilant basis but also as these things come forward.

For example, we just saw in the last few days talk about the corrections circumstances and the health services that were being provided in corrections facilities, specifically the remand centre, somehow changing or putting into question the integrity of access to health care in that facility. Again, always it's a solemn responsibility to ensure the safety and security of all people and even people who are incarcerated, too, right? We know that if we learned anything with so many things we could learn from this pandemic, it's that, of course, the health and the collective security of all of us are intertwined, quite frankly. If you have a big outbreak in a place like the remand centre, then that could be the locus of a very large and destructive outbreak that can spread into the general population, not to mention the people that are incarcerated. They're not being incarcerated and remanded because part of their punishment is to be in a confined place where they can catch communicable diseases, right? I mean, that's not part of the system. Again, seeing any change or compromise, as we did in the last – I don't know – 48 hours or 72 hours, in regard to the level of health services that are available to persons at the remand centre: I think that's a Corrections Act issue that we need to deal with as well.

But, again, the heart, Mr. Speaker, of our concern around the changes to the victims of crime fund – we saw in 2020 the UCP introducing Bill 16, which changed the victims of crime fund to the victims of crime prevention fund, again, in direct defiance of what the whole thing was set up for in the first place, right? It was a way to deal with reacting to people that had experienced criminal trauma due to criminal activity.

You know, the whole idea that you can move one piece of money over to another reminded me, Mr. Speaker, of someone. They instructed the Premier's office, each department to go through their budgets and somehow move money around in different ledgers so that you could look like you could be reducing the deficits somehow. Taking something that was a dedicated fund, that generated its own money from criminal activities and so forth, and then somehow moving that ledger over into general revenues: I mean, that's what it appeared to be, really. Again, just, like, really bad, bad choices, right? To presume that (a) you could even touch

that victims of crime fund and try to put it into a different ledger box somehow: again, I just found that to be very poor choices.

7:40

Mr. Speaker, we know that the balance of the fund for victims of crime – you know, the money is collected as part of section 737 of the Criminal Code, directed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to be paid into the fund, right? Money collected from surcharges under this act, money received by the Crown for the purpose of assisting victims, money received pursuant to the victims restitution acts: none of these things are to do with prevention, right? I mean, we should of course have prevention. Prevention is the key to building a safer, more secure society, but taking it from the victims of crime fund to pursue that defies logic and gravity, quite frankly. I think that explaining it to anyone in a common-sense sort of way, you'd get a head nod from that as well.

Again, you know, building legislation and sort of having a grab bag of so-called housekeeping pieces is fraught with peril, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, because if you're trying to clean up some bits of five different acts but then you're obviously missing the elephant in the room in regard to not reforming the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act for the obvious omission of not allowing those things to move forward to do the job that they need to do, then, I mean, that's quite simply wrong, right? As I said before, people will manifest the effects of being a victim of crime in various ways and sometimes over a long period of time. It's not just like cutting a cheque to say: hey, sorry you witnessed a murder; here's some money. I mean, it's all about building support and a support system so that people can somehow rebuild their lives and receive the psychological and maybe medical attention that they require. Really, I mean, I think we could do a lot better in regard to Bill 20. I implore both the minister and this government caucus to reconsider their approach to this bill.

With that, I will take my chair. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in regard to Bill 20.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

I'm so surprised. I actually see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie now has risen to join debate. Please, sir.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to get up and speak to Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. As was being elaborated on by the Member for Edmonton-North...

Mr. Eggen: North West.

Member Loyola: North West. I knew there was a north in there somewhere. I knew it was in Edmonton. Yeah.

I think that this bill is characteristic of what we see before us in a number of pieces of proposed legislation that have been brought in by the government during this particular session, Mr. Speaker, and that is that they totally miss the mark on the important issues that are before us and that Albertans seem to care about so deeply.

Of course, nothing can be further from the truth on that aspect when it comes to the victims of crime fund. I have a very good friend that, actually, I used to work with in this particular department. She no longer works there, unfortunately. She's moved on to other works, but I remember that when the government actually decided to come in with the previous bill, Bill 16, we had an extensive discussion on the fact that this was really alarming, the fact that victims of crime weren't going to be able to have access to important monies that actually would help them deal with the situation. You know, the victims of crime fund wasn't just for meeting the immediate material needs that the individual may have

encountered because of the crime that they experienced, but it also helped with therapy.

A lot of the times when someone goes through something as traumatic as going through a crime, depending to what degree – every individual is different. That's something that she explained to me. You know, she had seen examples of people that had seen horrendous acts happen. According to the individuals they didn't need any therapy or support because of it whereas others may have gone through something that some individuals might consider minor, yet that individual did need to go to therapy. It's not about how horrendous the crime is; it's about how the individual has been impacted.

I think that this is something that a lot of Albertans are concerned about when it comes to the issue. They would like to see it rectified, or they would like to see, you know, the alternatives that are going to be put in place. How are individuals who experience crime going to be able to access money for things like therapy when it comes to these particular issues?

Now, of course, what we do have before us is a bill that actually amends five different acts, which are the Corrections Act, the Justice of the Peace Act, the Missing Persons Act, the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act, and the Youth Justice Act. And as was being shared by the Member for Edmonton-North West, it's really kind of like an administrative bill. You know, I can see the reasons for these things. However, as I was saying before, it doesn't address the most important aspect that most Albertans are concerned with.

For example, under the Corrections Act it deals with compensation rates for the Alberta Parole Board members, which can now be set by order in council instead of a regulation, and this brings it in line with other agencies, boards, and commissions.

Under the Justice of the Peace Act it gives the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Alberta the discretion to designate a justice of the peace as either part-time or full-time. This also means that the Chief Judge can change a designation between full- and part-time if the term is not expired and other conditions are met, similar to the process for judges. Before that, the government had a process through regulations.

As you can see, a lot of these are quite administrative. I would even delve into the ground that, you know, it doesn't even have to be done in a regulation. It's now being pushed into orders in council, which, of course, puts more power in the hands of the minister and cabinet.

Under the Missing Persons Act it adds a definition of medical information. Now, the act already had provisions that allowed access to health information, but of course that will change. It allows now TV footage or other video recordings to be used in a missing person's case, and it adds a section that a justice of the peace can seal court records relating to a missing-person case if it interferes with an investigation or endangers people. It also changes the timeline for a review by a special committee of the Legislative Assembly. It will go from five years after the act coming into force to no later than 2027 and every five years after.

Of course, some of these changes are a result of a previous review. It added regulation-making powers that give the government the ability to define any term not defined in the act. I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that, of course, you wouldn't need to do this if you had proper legislation, right? It's important that we call that out.

7:50

Under the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act the changes, largely, that the UCP have made permanent are that it replaces all references to the death benefit with "funeral expense reimbursement." According to the government this does not change

any benefit Albertans may be eligible for, but it is a change to reflect that the advocate felt that the term “death benefit” was inadequate as there isn’t a benefit from a death. The definition in the act stays the same, but the name of the benefit reimbursement has changed. It disestablishes the Criminal Injuries Review Board. The board was already disestablished in transitional section 22 of the act, and it strikes out the transitional sections of 19 to 23. This makes a number of the controversial changes that the UCP made permanent. Most of the transitional sections were in place to deal with a class-action lawsuit, in fact.

Under the Youth Justice Act the changes are to align the act with changes from the federal Criminal Code, changes that a notification to parents can be given by any peace officer rather than solely the officer in charge. It updates sections on forfeiture, and according to the government the changes won’t be a change in policy. As you see, these are quite slight administrative changes that the government is making.

As I was saying before, it doesn’t actually go into the victims of crime fund. Now, in 2020 the UCP introduced their Bill 16, which did change the victims of crime fund to the victims of crime and crime prevention fund. Now, I just wanted to highlight some of the changes that were made there. The fund has always been 100 per cent supported by a surcharge on fines issued by the police or the courts. Previous to the change the fund supported a wide range of community- and police-based services, and the funding was available to individual victims of violent crimes to help deal with injuries, assist them with funerals, and with supplemental benefits for people with severe injuries. Bill 16 added in emergency accommodation or protective measures, access to counselling for sexual assault victims and families of homicide victims, and court support to victims and witnesses.

According to the help for victims of crime page in order to qualify for emergency assistance or counselling through the victims of crime and public safety fund, the victim must apply within 45 days of the crime occurring. This is resulting in victims being unable to access these services, and many victims, particularly those experiencing domestic violence or sexual crimes, do not even report the crime within that window. This is leaving victims with fewer resources, and for victims of domestic violence it could result in them staying in a dangerous situation. That right there is probably one of the most important factors in this particular bill, I would say.

As we all know, it’s very difficult for those who experience domestic violence to come forward as it is. In fact, I believe that sometimes it takes a victim of domestic violence up to, like, four times to actually make the decision to finally leave the situation in which they are perpetually being the victim of. We’d think that we would want legislation to actually help people in order to make that decision rather than to make it harder for them to actually come forward. I think that that’s something that the members opposite need to take into serious consideration when it comes to providing legislation or bringing new legislation into the House.

I think that there are a lot of issues that could be dealt with, Mr. Speaker, and domestic abuse, domestic crime, domestic violence is one of those things that we need to do better at as a Legislature. Of course, you know, I often say that there’s a difference between making something law and changing the culture, but what we find is that once you establish it in law, then the culture slowly starts to change after that. I mean, in this particular instance I would think that we would want it to move as quickly as possible, and therefore we desperately need legislation that gives – and, of course, I completely understand that there are some men, but the majority of those who experience domestic violence in the home are women. We need to create the circumstances whereby it’s easier for them to actually come forward and report what’s going on. That’s why we

desperately need pieces of legislation that actually will help women do that so that we can truly change the culture.

I know this is not an issue of just Alberta. It happens all over Canada. It happens all over the world. But it’s something that, you know, if we were leaders on that, Mr. Speaker, would definitely make all members on both sides of this House proud that we actually moved forward on something like that. So for me, it’s imperative that we deal with this as an important issue, that we keep moving forward on the issue of domestic violence, and this is something that this government could bring forward as a result of the changes that they actually made to the victims of crime fund, because this is where the impact is actually on Albertans.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to be able to provide my thoughts.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to join debate on Bill 20, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. Like has happened several times before, the UCP has put forward a bill that is an omnibus bill with several acts being impacted. Of course, when many acts are opened in one bill, you know, sometimes it’s seen as not really a fair way to put forward legislation, that the acts should be dealt with individually, and there is concern. Certainly, I remember hearing much concern expressed by the UCP when we were in government if we did that on the rare occasion, but it seems to be absolutely something that is done quite regularly by this government.

Most of the changes, frankly, are more administrative, so there are not huge differences that are of concern. But there is one aspect that we, the NDP caucus, have already talked extensively about that continues to be a concern. Actually, Bill 20 was an opportunity for the UCP government. If they indeed had the political will, they could have fixed it, and that, of course, is the victims of crime fund. We know that earlier they brought in Bill 16, which really made it much more difficult for victims of crime to access the fund. You know, we spoke extensively at that time about our concerns. Bill 20, which is another justice statutes amendment act, opens up the Justice of the Peace Act and the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act, so there would have been a great opportunity.

8:00

I’m so sorry that the members of the UCP government are not taking advantage of it, because all across this province survivors of sexual assault have been impacted in a negative way by Bill 16 and continue to be by Bill 20. Of course, this is a hill to die on. This is why, certainly, I will oppose this bill, and I know that my colleagues join me in opposition to this bill. We know that Bill 16 allowed the UCP to use the victims of crime fund not only to support survivors but actually to channel or move money to police initiatives, so that meant that there’s less funding for victims of crime. That certainly is not the direction that we want to go with, and we’re concerned that the UCP is doing that. Certainly, the association of sexual assault services’ CEO, Deb Tomlinson, who’s someone I know from previous to being elected, and is a social worker who has been a strong advocate in this area for many, many years, has spoken certainly very clearly in opposition to both Bill 16 and also this bill.

Previously, before Bill 16, there was sort of a time limit on when survivors could report sexual assault, but it was changed to only 45 days in Bill 16, which is, frankly, ridiculous. When people have experienced an assault, they’ve experienced a tremendous trauma.

For them to have the wherewithal, to have the courage to actually speak up and actually go to police regarding this is asking far too much. There should not be any moratorium. Two years was too short; 45 days is absolutely, you know, ridiculous. It's obviously not meant to support survivors at all and certainly doesn't have any understanding of their lived experience, because when you experience some assaults such as this, it has significant impacts on your life, and in order to be able to face that trauma, sometimes it can take, indeed, years.

Women in our society know that even if they did report, oftentimes justice is not done. They're retraumatized by that whole experience, so they often are very hesitant to even report. Like, it's really significantly so minimal, the number of survivors that actually report crimes to the police, because what's the point? They feel like there is not justice being done. This, again, is just another way that justice will not be done going forward because it expects people to be able to do something after a very difficult situation, and people are not ready.

We know, very sadly, that sexual assault is, you know, a crime of power, largely against women although, as my colleague previous to me said, men also experience it, but it is about power. It's a power differential in our society. We know that here in Alberta we have some of the highest rates in the country of sexual assault, so this should be top of mind for this government because they should be doing everything they can to make sure that survivors feel supported and safe, yet the UCP is doing absolutely the opposite. It just shows once again that Albertans cannot trust the UCP government.

Indeed, it seems like the more vulnerable you are, the more likely you are to have programs taken away by the UCP. We can see that in so many areas, you know, certainly the critic area that I'm responsible for, Seniors and Housing, oftentimes dealing with people on fixed incomes who have very limited resources – it's difficult oftentimes to get work at an elderly age, so they don't have a lot of options in that, and guess what this government did. These are extremely low-income seniors. They deindexed their benefits. We're experiencing tremendous inflation. There's an affordability crisis. I mean, why is it that the UCP thinks they should be picking on the most vulnerable in our society? This is just another example of that, and that is quite disturbing to me, of course, and should be to the UCP.

Bill 20 is an opportunity to actually right some wrongs that they did through Bill 16, and the fund, the victims of crime fund, shouldn't be used, you know, for whatever police initiatives they feel they should undertake. We want to make sure that the fund stays focused so survivors can access that. Certainly, we have been extremely concerned because of Bill 16 and now, again, Bill 20, that continues this sort of continued assault, almost like a systemic assault on survivors of sexual assault. Certainly, we would like the UCP to release the report completed by the working group to examine the benefits of the funds for victims. We'd like to hear more about that. We still haven't seen that.

We want the 45-day limit for the application deadline to be removed. You know, as I said previously, the two years was too short, and 45 days is certainly much too short. As I said, because of the trauma survivors have experienced, it's asking an extraordinary amount of courage and wherewithal to report, and that should be absolutely lifted.

Remove financial barriers to survivors and agencies supporting survivors. Increase the cap on counselling services from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Certainly, we know that even one session, like, a one-hour session seeing a registered psychologist or social worker, MSW, could be \$250, so it's not very many sessions and that \$1,000 is gone. We want to make sure that the survivors have the support they

need, so certainly we're recommending that it be increased significantly, up to \$3,000. We want to reinstate financial benefits for survivors and remove the moratorium on new grant applications from agencies serving survivors, including new programs.

I mean, those are some concrete examples of things that I think the UCP should be moving forward on, and if they are interested in increasing their level of support from Albertans and feeling like they actually are doing something for, certainly, this very vulnerable population, those are important things that the UCP should move on.

You know, there are so many levels of sort of discrimination against survivors. Certainly, many, many years ago, when I was a social worker in child welfare, I would go to court, and oftentimes I had cases where there was some kind of situation where there were issues with sexual assault. In one particular case there was a father who wanted unsupervised visits, but we knew from reports from the police that he was a pimp on the street. He was grooming his own young children for the sex trade, so of course we didn't want him to have the right to unsupervised visits with his children because we felt they were in danger.

8:10

But there were so many levels that we had to fight to make sure that the case was heard and understood. I have my master's in social work. I'm a regulated professional. I have experience. I have understanding. I wasn't anyone who experienced any kind of trauma or sexual assault or anything, yet for me that whole system was overwhelming, and the barriers were tremendous. If you can just imagine what someone who doesn't have that kind of educational background, you know, already experiencing tremendous trauma, who knows other characteristics of that particular individual – the court system isn't welcoming, frankly, Mr. Speaker, so we need to make sure that people are supported.

I mean, in this particular case that I'm talking about – I was the supervisor in the case – my staff member who was the caseworker was intimidated by the system, so I went with her to the court case, and even our legal aid lawyer wasn't very co-operative with us. They didn't even want to, you know, present some of the issues that we had, so I confronted this lawyer, and she just kind of ignored me and walked away. What happened – and I'm grateful this all happened, but I can see it also not going this way – is that we sat in the front row, right behind the lawyer. We were concerned about the safety of these children having unsupervised visits with their father, and the lawyer on our side, the legal aid lawyer, was supposed to be defending our concerns and standing up, and she sat there. She didn't do anything.

When the judge said, "Okay; well, there doesn't seem to be any problem with unsupervised visits," I started to shake my head just sort of involuntarily. Of course, we know that in court you're not supposed to even move. You know, you sit there very stoically. But I started shaking my head because I was so appalled at what happened, and the judge looked at me and pointed at me, and she said, "Who are you, and why are you shaking your head?" I told her, "I'm the supervisor in this case, and these children are at risk, and we're concerned about their safety." And she said, "Okay; let's hear some evidence." Then the lawyer stepped up, and we won that case.

So I'm very grateful that I went and supported my staff, and we were able to make sure that those kids didn't have unsupervised visits with their father, who we knew to be a danger to them, quite frankly. We did what we did, but as I said, how many people would be able to do that? I think it's expecting a lot of some folks.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I do see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen to join debate.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide some comments at this stage of debate, the second reading stage, for Bill 20, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. This bill is making a few changes to a few different acts: the Corrections Act, justice of the peace, missing persons, victims of crime and public safety, and Youth Justice Act. Now, a number of these changes rise just ever so barely over the level of miscellaneous statutes, so I shall leave them aside, because the Official Opposition, having examined them, have no real quarrel with what is being done here.

The exception, of course, Mr. Speaker, is the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act changes, because essentially what happens through this bill is that the changes the government made previously, in the summer of 2020, I believe – it makes them permanent. It replaces some of the language around death benefits with funeral expense reimbursement. The definition in the act stays the same, but the name of the benefit reimbursement has changed. And there are a number of other changes. Essentially, it solidifies the changes that we saw in the summer of 2020.

Now, at the time those changes – the bill was numbered 16 in 2020. It changed the victims of crime fund to the victims of crime and crime prevention fund. Now, that fund had always been 100 per cent supported by a surcharge on fines issued by the police and the courts. Previous to the change the fund supported a wide range of community and police-based services, and funding was available to individual victims of violent crimes to deal with injuries, assistance with funerals, and supplemental benefits for people with severe injuries. There is no question that, however small, there were definitely a number of different counselling opportunities and lump-sum payments for victims of crime.

In particular, I'm going to focus my comments on sexual assault survivors because I have heard the most from various organizations on this matter. Now, the rationale at the time was that there was \$74 million sitting in the victims of crime fund. The government wanted to take that money, and rather than ensuring an appropriate balance within the government's operating funds, it would take that money and use it to pay for Crown prosecutors, this, of course, after a massive multibillion-dollar corporate income tax cut that did nothing to create jobs, diversify the economy, attract investment. You know, there was a massive hole blown in the budget, so raid the victims of crime fund, I guess, to fund the prosecutors. They brought in legislation in order to do that, and this solidifies that.

What's particularly ghoulish about it at this point, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a multibillion-dollar surplus. The price of WTI today was \$99. The '21-22 fiscal year is going to be a surplus numbering in a couple of billions owing to the spike in the price of oil – certainly, we will see some of that at the fiscal year-end, on June 30 – and then, of course, there's what's happening with the '22-23 budget. Again, due to a number of different geopolitical and other instabilities we are looking at a period of at least a few months of prolonged higher prices of WTI but also a pretty narrow differential – I noticed today that it was about \$13 – and that improves the overall fiscal position even if the government just sits back and collects the money.

What is so galling here is that we are now cementing these changes to raid this money. The province indicated that they were going to review victims of crime and blah, blah, blah and tra-la-la. Well, what they did was that they suspended a number of the counselling sessions, they suspended a number of the lump-sum payments, and they have narrowed the reporting time to 45 days from two years. Now, two years was even not long enough in terms

of reporting of a sexual assault – there's no question – but 45 days: well, I mean, it's designed to fail. It's designed not to provide victims of serious crime with what they are entitled to after there have been surcharges on fines by people who were found guilty of various things. Those fines were paid. That money was supposed to go to victims of crime. Now it's going heaven knows where, but it is certainly not going to victims of crime.

There's been all of this noise that the government made about: oh, we're going to have this, you know, travelling panel or these people to admire the problem. But nothing has actually been done, and meanwhile victims' services groups are left with fewer counselling resources, fewer resources for before court and after, and victims themselves are left with far fewer options for rebuilding their lives.

Now, the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services has been pretty clear with the government about what needs to happen here for victims of sexual assault, and the government has not listened. Recommendation 1, that the approval of applications and adjudication of appeals must take into consideration the unique characteristics of sexual assault trauma and the barriers and challenges victims face: not done. They haven't done anything. They have not lifted a finger on recommendation 1.

Recommendation 2, that all victims of sexual offences be eligible to apply for benefits with no timeline restrictions based on when the crime occurred and be excluded from application timelines that may apply to other offence categories: that is the recommendation from the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. The government has not done it.

8:20

Number 3, that the new program be a hybrid system that allows victims to access funded and community-based programs and services directly and also provides lump-sum monetary payments to victims of sexual assault and sexual abuse: have they done it? No, they have not. They actually have made changes – and this bill solidifies them – to take that away from victims of sexual assault and sexual abuse.

Recommendation 4, that the fund categories be expanded to include financial support during and after court proceedings: are they doing this? They are not. Sexual assault victims do not have access to those funds for those services. This is a moral outrage.

Recommendation 5, that the fund categories include support that specifically addresses the long-term impacts of sexual assault and sexual abuse: totally not done.

Recommendation 6, that the fund categories include a formula or a multiplier to ensure equitable access to services for those victims of sexual assault and abuse living in rural and remote communities: nothing has been done on that for their own constituents. The UCP MLAs that are voting in favour of this should have some very serious questions for their Justice minister, how they can justify taking this money away from their own constituents, Mr. Speaker.

No. I think the position of the Official Opposition is that we will not be supporting this piece of legislation. You know, the fact of the matter is that, absent the changes to the victims of crime fund, this is a perfectly fine, serviceable piece of legislation, but those pieces certainly make it such that we cannot support it in its current form.

Now, if the government was to do the following things, we might consider it. For example, we should ensure that 75 per cent of the victims of crime fund would be reserved for victims and victim-serving agencies. How difficult is this? Three-quarters of the fine revenue that comes in from people who have committed offences – three-quarters of it – goes out to the victims of serious crime. Why is that a problem? Who would vote against that? Money is not the

problem these days, but apparently the principle of supporting victims is the problem, and that's why it's not in this bill.

Now, we also proposed an amendment to Bill 16 in 2020 to ensure that accessibility to justice and financial aid is not limited to victims of crime due to reporting time frames and that minors who have witnessed acts of violence are also eligible to receive financial supports. If that was in this bill, we would vote for it, but it is not because minors who have witnessed acts of violence are not supported by these UCP MLAs and their approach to victims of crime. They're just not. They're just not. There's nothing for them here.

Now, if this bill included a restoration of financial benefits for victims who may have lasting impacts, including physical or psychological trauma, we may be able to support it, but it does not because this government is not supporting people who have lasting impacts, including physical or psychological trauma. If this bill opened up allowing for benefits beyond a severe neurological injury, we may be inclined to support it. It does not.

Now, as I described, Mr. Speaker, this is no longer about money for this government. This is about principles and values and a moral compass, and that is why the Official Opposition will not be supporting this bill. To my mind, it should be very simple at this point, when you are awash in oil revenues, you know, something that is absolutely not of the government's own making. It is true that they are certainly at the whims of fortune. The surplus as it is right now . . .

Mr. Schow: You couldn't balance the budget in these terms.

Ms Phillips: I'm being heckled, Mr. Speaker, by the Member for Cardston-Siksika, but I really actually think that he should spend his time explaining to the victims' services organizations in his riding and throughout southern Alberta why they don't have the money to do their jobs anymore. Maybe he can write a letter back to the Alberta association of sexual assault centres in response to all of those recommendations that remain unacted upon by this government. I would suggest that opening up his laptop and spending his time that way is a better use of his time than heckling me while I'm trying to speak to a bill.

Anyway, moving on, the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that we have a multibillion-dollar surplus, so it should be reinvested in three ways, not the least of which is to start to repair some of the damage of health care, education, and other services. We should be looking at the role of savings and certainly lowering our debt-servicing costs through improving our overall fiscal position and investing in the heritage fund. We should be having a look at how we restore respect for disability services workers, for victims of crime. Clearly, certain members of the government bench would rather spend their time heckling than actually advocating on behalf of them. Certainly, we should be restoring respect for disability service workers. We should be restoring respect for teachers and, of course, restoring respect for health care, both the patients and the people who work in it.

Those should be our priorities in addition to making life more affordable, but I'll tell you what doesn't make life more affordable: having to pay out of pocket for extremely expensive counselling sessions after being a rape victim, which is what this government's changes to victims of crime have left people with, extremely expensive counselling sessions, extremely tight timelines to report that crime and to get any kind of help or assistance. I think it's five counselling sessions now. Wow. That should be the priority right now, restoring respect for our public services and the supports that we have out there in the community, the organizations that are working hard to support people, and building a province that we can

be proud of, where victims of crime are given the supports they need to rebuild their lives.

It's with that concluding thought, Mr. Speaker, that I will conclude my comments on Bill 20. I look forward to the comments from the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika and him tabling letters to Alberta association of sexual assault centres in his response to their recommendations.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate on Bill 20?

Otherwise, I am prepared to ask the question and offer the opportunity to the hon. Member for Grande Prairie, I believe, to close debate should she so choose to take it. That is waived.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a second time]

Bill 21

Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

Mr. Sabir moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 21, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 21, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 9: Mr. Bilous]

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. We are on REF1. I believe the hon. member still has some time should he so choose to take it, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. However, you only have less than a minute to talk, just so you know.

Mr. Bilous: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a problem, as every member in this Chamber knows. If I could trade some time with other members, I'd greatly appreciate that.

Mr. Eggen: No.

Mr. Bilous: I know. That's not permitted. I was just being witty.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've spoken at length to this bill, and I have a sinking feeling that I will speak to it again. But part of the challenge that we've outlined in this bill, less so about the fact that this is an omnibus bill – I recognize that there are some good pieces to this bill, which I highlighted when I spoke earlier. As well, there are, you know, things, well, like making it easier for businesses to license across multiple municipalities. I think that's a great move, and I support that because I know that many companies operate amongst many different municipalities, and that's a challenge. That piece I like.

There are a lot of pieces that I have a challenge with, which I will highlight at the next opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to thank my friend from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for having spoken for only a minute. That was probably my favourite speech of his that he's ever given. Honestly, if the Government House Leader or any of his team is listening, I think we should give serious consideration to amending the standing orders to limit speaking time to a minute for each member.

You know, we are talking about reducing red tape and promoting efficiency in government. Just imagine how much more efficient this Legislature would be if we could only speak for a minute at every stage for every bill. We could pass hundreds and hundreds of pieces of legislation every session. I think the people of Alberta would at least have a much more interesting government if that were to be allowed.

8:30

You know, the subject of red tape is one that this government has spent a lot of time on over the last three years. First of all, I want to offer some comments to one particular member, my friend from Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, who has done such an excellent job on the Public Accounts Committee, questioning every ministry that has come before that committee for the last three years, asking it to talk about the actions that it's taken to cut red tape. Now, I will admit that I was a little bit disappointed, Mr. Speaker, because, for those who aren't familiar with how Public Accounts works, there are blocks of time where you can go back and forth with ministry officials; you ask some questions; they provide answers at the table. And then at the end of the meeting there is a three-minute block where we can submit written questions, that the ministry officials follow up on 30 days after they're answered, unless you're the Ministry of Education, in which case you take as much sweet time as you want, apparently, and disregard the authority of the Legislature. But that's an aside.

[Mrs. Frey in the chair]

The Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain generally asks questions about red tape in those question-and-answer blocks, which I look forward to. That's probably my favourite part of Public Accounts. But today he left us hanging, Madam Speaker. He refused to get to the questions on red tape for the culture and tourism ministry, no less, until the three-minute read-in section of Public Accounts. So the poor members of Public Accounts will have to wait at least 30 days until we get answers to the vital question of what the culture and tourism ministry has done in the last fiscal year to cut red tape. That is not fair.

Mr. Schow: How about that one minute?

Mr. Schmidt: Madam Speaker, I hear the Member for Cardston-Siksika asking if it's only been – it seems like it's only been a minute since I started speaking, not even. [interjections] I don't know. Maybe time is moving differently depending on the location in the Legislature, but it feels like I'm just getting started.

Anyway, I hope my friend from Spruce Grove-Stony Plain takes my helpful comments into consideration and moves those red tape reduction questions up in the questioning order at the next Public Accounts Committee.

But, you know, one of the things that I've noticed in the entire time that we've been talking about red tape is that this entire exercise has been completely meaningless. In fact, I would challenge the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain to even stand up and tell us one particular thing that this government has done as part of its red tape reduction initiative that has made a significant impact on the lives of the people of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain or anybody else in Alberta. I bet that even though he has asked that question at every single Public Accounts meeting for the last three years, he would be hard pressed, without going back to the *Hansard* and reading the transcripts, to stand up and tell us any meaningful change that has been made to benefit his constituents or anybody else here in the province of Alberta.

There have been a number of changes that have caused significant concern through previous red tape reduction initiatives, those things that have impacted landowners' rights, particularly with respect to natural resource development issues. And I sincerely hope that we will have a full discussion about the impact that those changes have made in the real property rights committee, Madam Speaker, because I know that that committee is conducting its work and will be deliberating on its recommendations in the very near future. We have certainly heard from a number of landowners across the province about concerning changes that this government has made under the guise of red tape reduction that have significantly negatively impacted landowners' rights. Fortunately, there isn't a whole lot in here that seems to fall under that category, but I do think that it would be wise to . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members – sorry, Member; I hesitate to interrupt – I rarely have trouble hearing the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I'm having trouble hearing him right now, so if we could please take our conversations to the lounge, that would be very helpful.

Go ahead. Sorry.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Madam Speaker, I know you didn't say it, but it was the subtext that you wanted to hear the things that I said, so I'm really grateful for that. Thank you very much.

Yes, as I was saying, I think it would be wise for the members of the Legislature to vote for this amendment referring this bill to committee for further examination, because there is enough here in this bill to cause concern that I think we would be wise to spend the time in committee to dig into the issues that this bill presents and seeks to address.

First and foremost, of course, for me as the environment critic are the changes to the Provincial Parks Act and the Public Lands Act, which, if I quote from the bill, allow the minister to "set standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines . . . or other rules relating to any matter in respect of which a regulation may be made under this Act." In layman's terms, this means that the minister can do anything he wants with respect to regulating provincial parks and public lands, and that's a problem because nobody trusts this government with provincial parks. We've seen already its attempt to close down and sell off hundreds of parks in 2020, and the government was stopped in its tracks in that attempt.

My fear is that this is an attempt at getting at that through other means, Madam Speaker, because we don't have any clarity on what this power that the minister is giving himself will mean. Will it mean that he'll be able to partially privatize parks? Will it mean that he'll have the power to prohibit access to parks? We don't know because it's unclear from the text of the legislation, and the minister certainly hasn't given us any clarity in any of his remarks around this bill either in the media or in debate in this Chamber. So I think that we would be wise to vote to send this bill to committee just for this section alone, just to really dig into what it means and whether or not it is actually a good idea to pass this amendment once we understand the full implications of those changes.

Now, of course, this bill doesn't just amend the Provincial Parks Act and the Public Lands Act. We have 16 acts in total, so 14 other acts that are being amended, the first, of course, being the Animal Health Act. It's particularly concerning to me, Madam Speaker, that the amendment to the Animal Health Act moves the need to report the presence of notifiable diseases in animals within 24 hours from legislation to the regulation and that now there is no specified length of time for reporting these diseases in the legislation.

I mean, I wasn't here when the original act was passed or whichever bill legislated these timelines in the first place, but I assume that there was some reason for doing it, and I assume that at the time those timelines were supported by agricultural producers. Once it's moved to regulation, Madam Speaker, of course, as you know, then cabinet can make the changes that it sees fit to the regulations behind closed doors. So my fear is that these reporting timelines may be changed without notice or any kind of consultation, and of course we can't have access to the cabinet discussions. We won't even know the reasonings behind cabinet making the changes to those reporting timelines. I think the timing of this change is particularly unfortunate given the significant impact that avian flu is having on the chicken population for our agricultural producers.

8:40

You know, again, Madam Speaker, it's really concerning to me that at a time when our agricultural producers are being hit hard by the avian flu, the minister is fiddling around with disease reporting timelines but not actually taking meaningful action to prevent the spread of avian flu. I recall an exchange in question period between my friend from Edmonton-Manning and the minister of agriculture on this very topic. I was astounded to hear the minister of agriculture say that we had heard that avian flu was going to be a problem two years ago when it started hitting flocks of chickens in other parts of the world and that they monitored the situation until it became a problem here.

Now, we are all familiar with the government's fondness of monitoring the spread of infectious diseases without doing anything about it, but it boggles the mind, Madam Speaker, to listen to the minister say that they had a two-year window in which they knew that this was going to be a problem, yet they failed to do anything to address it. Now that it's a problem that's growing, you would think that we would have some kind of policy solution coming from the ministry of agriculture, yet all we have, at least in the form of legislation here in this session, is a bill that amends the Animal Health Act so that disease reporting timelines are moved from the legislation to the regulations.

Member Loyola: The feds are taking care of it. Don't worry about it.

Mr. Schmidt: And the federal government is taking care of it. That's one of the things, that my friend from Edmonton-Ellerslie raises, that is a common theme with this government. We get bailed out time and time again by the federal government and then turn around and complain about them intruding into matters of provincial jurisdiction. You would think that a government that is, in words, anyway, so opposed to the actions of the federal government would at least follow up those words with action, stand on principle, refuse to allow the feds to intervene in our responsibilities, and do the work of looking after our agricultural producers ourselves. So it's really concerning to me, Madam Speaker, that here we are again in a dire situation where a problem is spreading out of control and we rely on the federal government to step in and save us from ourselves when we have the capacity to do this work and look after our agricultural producers on our own.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

There are a whole host of other amendments here that are causing some concern. The next piece in the legislation that's being amended is the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. Now, these changes remove the one-year maximum on all licences for residential facilities in the child intervention system, including

group homes and foster homes, and move those time limits to the regulations as well.

You know, like the Animal Health Act, the province of Alberta is in the grips of a crisis when it comes to children in care dying. We've had record numbers of children in care die in the year 2021, and I want to thank my friend from Edmonton-Whitemud for being such an effective advocate for children in care and holding the government's feet to the fire on its failure to protect those children in care. We have yet to hear any adequate explanation from members of the government as to why this time limit on licences is being moved from the legislation to the regulation. So I think that for this piece alone it's worth voting in favour of this referral amendment and getting into the details about this change and what that would mean.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, in the brief amount of time that I've had, I've only been able to touch on a few acts, but already I think I've laid out the case for voting yes to this referral. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to join debate? I do see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen to join on REF1.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, for those who are actually following along at home, I just wanted to give them a sense of, like, how many bills this particular proposed piece of legislation would be impacting. There are 16 acts that are going to be modified according to this bill, and they are the Animal Health Act, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, the Cooperatives Act, the Education Act, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, the Highways Development and Protection Act, the Local Authorities Election Act, the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act, the Municipal Government Act, the Pharmacy and Drug Act, the Provincial Parks Act, the Public Lands Act, the Railway (Alberta) Act, the Residential Tenancies Act, the Rural Utilities Act, and the Surveys Act.

Just to give people that are listening in a sense of what is happening here, with the vast majority of the changes that are actually taking place, things are being moved out of legislation and into regulation. Of course, for those who don't know, when you place the majority of decision-making or changes on the regulation, well, the government can just choose to change those at any time that it wishes. Any time that it wants, it can just change a regulation. It doesn't actually have to come into the Legislature. It doesn't need to be debated at all, and the government can essentially just make a change whenever it likes. Of course, this is a concerning issue because then the government cannot be held to account on a lot of these things when they take place.

You know, for a government that claims that it's doing all it can to be as transparent as it possibly can, you'd think that, well, this is something that it would be trying to curb rather than instigate and bring forward. For this particular reason – and I believe that this government has given us enough examples and enough concerns to demonstrate that they just can't be trusted. Bill after bill after bill that actually comes into this House tends to be quite administrative, especially this session. What I've seen in the last three years in this Legislature from this government is that they move a lot of it to regulation, and then not only that; in the proposed pieces of legislation that they do bring into the House, Mr. Speaker, they actually put more and more power in the hands of ministers.

Now, I've gone on at length prior to today on the issue that, you know, the agencies, boards, and commissions of Alberta actually help in the democratic decision-making and in the governance here in the province of Alberta, and we count on Albertans to participate on these agencies, boards, and commissions. Actually, they do an

incredible job of bringing in perspectives from stakeholders and different interested parties. It's important that we continue to carry on with that approach. However, what we've seen from this government is that not only are they taking power away from agencies or decision-making from agencies, boards, and commissions, but then they're actually taking that and giving it to the minister. That is what's concerning, because when you start adding up all of these factors, you start seeing that the government can't be held to account and that it can make sweeping changes whenever it likes. This is exactly what goes against the idea of strengthening our democracy.

8:50

You know, the members on the other side like to get up and talk about how they're strengthening democracy, but their actions are actually demonstrating that they're making it worse. This is what I find so perplexing, because we have members on the other side of the House that prior to 2019 were members of the Wildrose caucus. And I admit that the Wildrose – we may not see eye to eye on particular aspects, but accountability was part of their narrative, and keeping the government accountable was part of their narrative.

Now those same members that used to be on this side prior to 2019, who would get up and talk about strengthening democracy and that there needs to be government accountability, are the same members that are on that side of the House. You know, they're private members of the government caucus, not involved in the actual decision-making, and now they're actually supporting legislation which takes power away from agencies, boards, and commissions and gives it to the minister and then not only that; putting more and more of the decision-making process into regulation, which therefore goes against accountability, what they used to be firmly for when they were on this side of the House. That's what I find incredibly perplexing by members on that side. You know, although I don't agree with them ideologically, on strengthening our democracy and accountability I do.

So it just demonstrates for me why this government can't be trusted. It can't be trusted by these particular actions that it's taking. What's it trying to hide? Why does it need to go in – why do certain decisions have to go into regulation when before they were in legislation? I think that that's what this whole body was set up to do, bring in legislation and review the legislation. Let's debate the legislation so that then we can make the legislation better and more practical for the people of Alberta so that they can do the business that they need to do, whatever that may be. But here's a perfect example of how this government is making moves to be less accountable to the public, less accountable to this Legislature, less accountable overall, and that's why they cannot be trusted.

Now, I don't disagree. There are some parts of this proposed legislation that I see are very practical and that are indeed needed and I agree with, but there are some that I don't. That's what's concerning about this, because if they would have been brought separately, then we could have potentially voted those certain things in, and the ones that we don't we would have left out.

I think that one of the most concerning parts of the bill is actually when it comes to the decision-making of the Minister of Environment and Parks, or the minister of environment, over our provincial parks. Just to be clear, I'm going to quote from the bill. It says under minister's directives and codes that "the Minister may set standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines . . . or other rules relating to any matter." I'll stress that: "any matter in respect of which a regulation may be made under this Act." It leaves one to interpret that the minister can basically just do anything that the minister wants.

Like, let me read that again to you, especially to those members who used to be on this side of the House and used to talk so much about accountability. "The Minister may set standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines . . . or other rules relating to any matter in respect of which a regulation may be made under this Act." That is widespread, sweeping power that – and for any private member of the government caucus, regardless of which caucus they used to be part of prior to 2019, I think that would be concerning.

It has been made evident that Albertans do not trust this government with our cherished provincial parks. Many of my colleagues on this side of the House have actually gone into the reasons why. When it comes to coal mining in the eastern slopes, we saw how Albertans were actually enraged by what was being proposed by this government. Now, we actually vote this piece of legislation through, and the minister of environment will just run roughshod over all of that, because it clearly states here that, basically, the minister can do anything that the minister wants to do. Absolutely no accountability to this Legislature, never mind to the people of Alberta, and that is quite concerning. Why members from the other side of the House, private members of the government caucus, would actually agree to something like this I have no idea. I have no idea.

It could give the minister the power to partially privatize a park, perhaps powers to restrict access to a park. Of course, these are just guesses. These are just assumptions I'm making, of course, because we don't know – we don't know – because now it's no longer in legislation, and the minister will be able to bring anything that he wants into regulation through this proposed piece of legislation. You have to wonder.

You know, it seems that in any omnibus piece of legislation most of what's being proposed is, essentially, good. I mean, of course, it's debatable. But this government always tries to slide one huge piece in with its omnibus bill that is, I would say, quite controversial. None is more controversial than the one that we have before us right now with this particular proposed piece of legislation that, of course, gives such widespread and sweeping powers to the minister of the environment.

The other aspect of this is, of course, the confusion that was made between the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the Minister of Education. One was saying that the bill would do one thing while the other was saying that, no, it wouldn't do that. There wasn't even agreement among the front bench on what this piece of legislation would actually be doing.

So there are a number of reasons why we would need to refer this to committee, Mr. Speaker. I think that it would be wise for us to do so, considering what I've brought up in debate just now. I would highly encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this referral amendment.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

We are on REF1. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to join debate.

9:00

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this legislation. Time in this House is coming to a close, and I don't want to miss an opportunity to say a few things before that inevitability occurs. I think that in this particular case I certainly hope the government takes seriously the concerns that we have been expressing although it is quite evident that the government is not generally willing to heed any kind of comment or consideration that has been presented to them by anyone in this House, and in fact I think that on average that's been true of anyone in the province of

Alberta, once they've made a decision. I guess my comments will be really directed toward people who are listening in and paying attention to the political process here in the province of Alberta.

The first thing I want to comment on is that we have here in front of us yet again an omnibus bill. I think that that's problematic in its own right. I know when the many members of the government were on the opposition side, if we ever put two pieces of legislation together, they complained about it being omnibus when it really wasn't.

But now we indeed have omnibus bills that come in that have involved a very wide range of unrelated legislation that should not be in the same bill because they have no purpose in being there. You know, this is another example of this government adopting the tactics of the Republican Party in the United States and copying their very antidemocratic process, something we saw when the Premier was, of course, a member of the Harper government in Ottawa, who did very similar kinds of things, purposely piling things together in order to bury certain aspects of the bill amongst the other pieces.

I can go through the bill and certainly I can find things that I think are quite reasonable and things I would like to support; for example, the change to the Municipal Government Act where it's easier to do licensing across boundaries so that people can have one business licence across many boundaries. Something like that is fine and quite appropriate, but there have been many other municipal-oriented bills that have been in this House where that piece could have been introduced into. The question is always, you know: why is it suddenly appearing here now? Why wasn't it done at the time it could have been done?

[The Speaker in the chair]

We have heard this evening a number of the speakers commenting on various aspects of the bill and presenting some very salient reasons why this bill should not proceed. Of course, I would like to add to that given that this is a referral amendment, and I can go through many different parts. Some of them, of course, are going to be supportive of comments already given by other members of the opposition.

I want to start with one piece that I have not heard a lot of conversation about so far but one that is close to my heart, and that is the change to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, section 2. This seems to be sort of a small, you know, just sort of record-keeping kind of change, one that would be consistent with red tape reduction in the sense that it is a change just in terms of licensing procedures.

But I'm very concerned about the choice that is being made here. We are at a time when the crisis in children's services is the highest it has been in the history of the province of Alberta, essentially. We've had more deaths of children that have been in care or just recently left care this year than any other previous year, and we have to ask ourselves why that's happening. We should be spending some time doing a very deep examination of the causes of that and a real repair of the child welfare system in this province. Yet here we see in this bill not an attempt to improve situations but actually to reduce the supervision of care in the child welfare system by taking a rule which was that people needed to renew a licence on a yearly basis and extending it to three years.

Now, for many people they would say, "Well, that's not much difference," because, of course, they'd be coming from a position of perhaps, you know, a business licence for doing something like perhaps pouring sidewalks or something of that nature. You say: "Really, I mean, how much changes from one year to the next? Once somebody has got their business licence, why can't we just

allow them to continue to practise for a reasonable period of time?" And in a situation of pouring sidewalks, I might support that, but in this situation I don't think that this is something that should be considered lightly, because we are not talking about pouring sidewalks. We're talking about human lives, and we know that in this day and age we are not doing a very good job of protecting those human lives. We have lost so many of them in the last year, in fact, record numbers of them in the last year.

So you have to ask: well, why would you want to extend licences from one year to three years, and why would you not want to go back and ensure every single year that the care being provided to children in the custody of the department is actually at the highest possible level of care? Why would you want to let that drift? Three years is a long time. Can you imagine being a 12-year-old child and something goes wrong in the first year that you were there, and it's not until you're 15 until somebody comes to investigate whether or not the house that you're residing in continues to meet the standards that are necessary? That's an incredible period of time between the ages of 12 and 15. I would hope this government would not allow a negative situation to continue for that period of time, and if they are extending licensing, they are essentially saying that they are going to decrease the amount of transparency and responsibility to the system from the care providers.

I'm very concerned about this, and I know that the government has said, "Oh, don't worry; this will only be used for renewables," but it doesn't actually say that in the legislation. They don't articulate that in a very clear and direct way, so I can't imagine that, in fact, is a valid argument. And even if it were, I wouldn't be supporting it. I just don't think that we should be doing anything to lessen our attempts to bring the highest level of care to children who come under the supervision of the Department of Children's Services in this province, and I wish the government would reconsider on that basis alone in this particular bill.

But moving on, I guess I have other concerns, so I will address them as well. For example, the section on co-ops and the decision to reduce the percentage of Canadian ownership for the co-ops from 50 per cent to 25 per cent. Again I'm very concerned about: why would they want to do this? Why would they want to lessen Canadian involvement in co-operatives for any particular reason? I'm just, you know, concerned that this is again something that the government is doing that appears on the surface to be a minimal administrative change but may actually have very significant consequences for people who are involved.

You know, if we continually make the decisions that we do not need to have significant local representation – and we are only asking for 50 per cent. We were only asking for half of the ownership to be Canadian before, so there's plenty of room for foreign investment. Now we are making a decision that we're going to shift it to less than 50 per cent, which means, ultimately, that foreign ownership becomes the majority on any decision that is made.

9:10

So we are ultimately taking the power for decisions to be made in the local constituency and moving it to an international constituency. Why would we do that? Why would we take the power to make decisions on very important mechanisms here in the province of Alberta and shift it to a foreign power?

Again, this is another time when the government is given a choice, and the choice is between average Albertans, who are trying to make a good living and trying to make Alberta a better place to be, and international corporations, who really don't have any interest in Alberta per se but are interested in their own growth and will be making decisions not based on what's good for Albertans

but making decisions based on their own desire to expand their international well-being. So it means, ultimately, that someone who has an interest in another country will make decisions here that are not good for Albertans but are good for their services and the products that they own and they sell and the businesses they own and manufacturing and so on in other countries.

Why we would want to give that power away is beyond me except for, again, it speaks to the influence on the UCP from, you know, foreign interests that we've seen repeatedly in terms of energy and manufacturing and so on in this province. It's very concerning to me that they would make that kind of decision. Any time you give away your democratic power, you are making a mistake, and you shouldn't find yourself in a place to do that.

But then, of course, we have seen this government make many, many decisions that are essentially reducing democratic power. We've seen them, for example, create a whole new process for bills brought forward by opposition – well, brought forward by noncabinet members – into this House, that go to a committee. And, lo and behold, somehow a hundred per cent of the bills brought forward by the opposition had been killed before they arrived in the House, but that hasn't been true of any of the bills on the government side. So we can look at this and sort of say: is this a fair process? I can tell you, as an instructor of statistics at the university before I came here, that the chances of that happening are almost zero without prejudice.

Therefore, we would say that indeed there is, in fact, reason to believe statistically that this government is intentionally preventing democratic processes in this House. It introduced a process that has never existed in this Legislature up to this time. Why would they be reducing democracy? Why would they be reducing the voice of people who voted anything other than UCP in the last election? That's essentially what they've done.

This is the move of a government that is taking power and centralizing power and ensuring that there is a minimal chance that opposition will be able to speak to legislation or be able to introduce ideas into the House. We've also seen this government deny witnesses to committees and prevent them from attending these committees. We've seen this government invoke closure more than any government has done in the history of the province of Alberta to prevent opposition from speaking in this House.

In this bill we see the government handing extreme amounts of power to ministers and moving decision-making away from public transparency into the cabinet room, where we will never know what decisions have been made. That's been well articulated by the members from Edmonton-Gold Bar and Edmonton-Ellerslie.

So, you know, I think the concern that we have here is that this government is acting in a very undemocratic way, is subverting the Westminster process whenever they get a chance, and it is really unacceptable in this time. It's time for this government to stop this bill and bring it back into committee.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide some comments on Bill 21. As I understand it, we are on a referral at the moment, meaning that what we are looking for is a broader public conversation on this bill. There is no question that, given its omninature, it requires more study, I think, and a little bit more light and transparency. Certainly, Albertans are watching the government very closely. They're watching, of course, the outcome

of the internal party process as of whenever it is, May 18. As a result, they're really interested in the leadership of the province and where the province is going.

When you have a bill that affects Education, Municipal Affairs, agriculture, Children's Services, environment, Health, Service Alberta, Transportation, and Treasury Board and Finance, that's going to raise a lot of questions for Albertans. Just exactly what are we trying to spirit through the Legislature under the cover of an omnibus bill, particularly – particularly – when this bill affects some really, really important things that people have raised a lot of concerns about? I'm thinking here of the tremendous public conversations that have been precipitated by the government's mishandling of parks issues and education, in particular. There's no question that there should be a bit more public comment solicited and certainly some provision of the opportunity for Albertans to have a closer look at this bill.

For example, the bill gives enormous and widespread powers to the minister of environment over provincial parks. No one trusts this minister with parks. There are still, since, you know, the summer and fall of 2020, constituencies like mine littered on the front lawns with defend our parks signs in one of the most impressive upswells of support for our natural spaces and our wild areas and, really, I think, the canary in the coal mine for the government on the issue of trust. There was very clearly a surreptitious plan to disestablish a number of parks.

Very clearly, this was not supported by the vast majority of Albertans, and people said so using what ability they had to speak out and to engage the government in their active citizenship. Given that we were not in a position to be, you know, attending town halls as citizens or doing the other things that we might do given the pandemic, people used the tool that they had, which was to put up signs, in particular throughout the city of Calgary, where a number of cabinet represent seats, where people were not at all amused with the experimentation with the parks. Not at all. So there is no question that on those grounds alone the Official Opposition believes that there needs to be more public comment on this bill.

I would certainly like to hear from people who actually have experience, perhaps retired people and others, in the appropriate management of our parks. There's no question that parks staff have been cut tremendously, so park rangers, COs, and others' ability to actually make the changes that the minister has made representations to this House are so very benign and "nothing to see here" – first of all, this business of being able to, you know, change signage and so on was already something that folks could do. But there's no question that parks have been left with fewer people to do that job.

9:20

Certainly, I think for many people, when you go out and chat with folks who are working as parks volunteers or with various societies, they don't necessarily feel supported in their work by this government, and I don't think that this bill provides them any comfort in this regard; in fact, quite the opposite, Mr. Speaker. So it is certainly of concern, and I think Albertans deserve to know and have more conversation about the fact that the minister is now receiving legislative authority to do whatever he wants with our parks. The trust has been absolutely shredded.

Mr. Schow: You closed Alberta's backyard.

Ms Phillips: Again, you know, the Member for Cardston-Siksika has a lot of opinions that he would like to share with the House. I would invite him to – he could table a letter in this Legislature outlining how the Castle parks should be disestablished, then. His minister has so

far failed to do that, so if that's the position that he holds, he should be really clear about it, and maybe we can have an internal party division like we've already had on other issues on this issue.

You know, there's no question that the Member for Cardston-Siksika is also really worried about things like – well, he's not worried about his grazing lease associations, but he is worried about other activity on public land, and there's no question that he's got a lot of opinions about a lot of things. [interjection] He's chirping over there, and every time I get up to speak, he's got a lot of heckling to do. I feel like maybe he should focus less on me, because it's becoming a bit much, and focus on his constituents. I mean, he already dealt with his nomination race, but anyway.

The fact of the matter is that we have a trust gap on parks, and, you know, there's trust gap on a lot of things: public health care, for example, and certainly education and the curriculum and the management of overall finances, with billions of dollars in waste and giveaways and a government that ran the highest deficits in Alberta history. There's no question, too, that there's a trust gap that was created by a number of the southern Alberta MLAs, UCP MLAs, who couldn't give a straight answer about protection of the eastern slopes.

You know, there's absolutely no question that we need to protect our public lands. People want more oversight over the activities of the Minister of Environment and Parks, not less, and there's no question that allowing the minister to use tools for anything the minister wants is likely inappropriate. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. If hon. members want to have conversations, there are lots of places to do that. Across the aisle is certainly not one of them, particularly at this hour.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, there's no question that there are a number of consultation opportunities within the parks act even around changing parks management plans, which are public documents, and they go out for a public comment period. You know, if the minister wants these powers to do these things, he is absolutely already, without this bill, able to do it. He just has to talk to the public for a period of time before he changes a management intent or the various uses.

Now, within the Provincial Parks Act in particular, I mean, there are a number of different uses that are allowed within that parks designation, including the development of various infrastructure like roads and even interpretive lodges and all of that kind of thing. Again, all the minister would have to do is just put that within the parks management plan and then put it out for public comment and satisfy the Indigenous consultation periods, and it would be done. So, really, this is not necessary, and there's no question that that's what has bred the distrust, Mr. Speaker, for this section of the act.

Now, there are a number of other pieces in this act that, you know, I think maybe we want a little bit more conversation around. Certainly, the piece around Alberta land titles looks good on the face of it. I just have some concerns about the overall management of land titles, and I would prefer some clarification from the government that they're not going to proceed with that very ill-advised plan to privatize land titles, for example.

I've just picked out a couple of the pieces that I will speak to in my comments on Bill 21 today, Mr. Speaker, and with that, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 11 Continuing Care Act

Ms Gray moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 11, Continuing Care Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 11, Continuing Care Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government has not carried out sufficient consultations on the contents of the bill with families whose loved ones lost their lives from COVID-19 while in continuing care.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment May 4: Mr. Copping speaking]

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others on the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a few comments in regard to the amendment on Bill 11. Clearly, the issues that we have in continuing care are not being met by this bill. I think we've seen one of the most, you know, traumatic and difficult things in our health care system in a generation in regard to the pandemic response and how it manifested itself in continuing care systems. We literally lost more than 1,600 lives to COVID in continuing care facilities here in the province of Alberta.

You know, it's a reflection of what we have seen in other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, but if there ever was a time to learn a lesson that we can move forward to protect our seniors in a more fundamental way, it was the loss of more than 1,600 lives in continuing care here in the province of Alberta during this ongoing COVID pandemic. Anything that moves forward to protect those lives and those people in continuing care facilities: that's what we need to focus on right now.

We as a caucus are certainly willing to stay and to build legislation and to build supports and financial supports to build a continuing care system that can withstand something like we just saw over these last couple of years. I think it's imperative that we do that right now. You know, to expedite that very important work that we should be doing, we need to move past what Bill 11 is offering us and build something that is more substantial, considerably more substantial, Mr. Speaker, because while we do have a young population, we just have a larger population in this province. What we have a shortage of is affordable, high-quality continuing care facilities for that significant group of people that will be seniors in these coming years.

It can't be just something for a privileged few that can afford thousands of dollars a month for care, but it has to be something that is universal, an extension of our universal public health system. We need that at this moment, at this juncture. Bill 11 just simply doesn't meet that standard, and for the sake of looking after those who are most vulnerable and people who are moving into that position, it's an imperative that all of us must take as a grave responsibility. There are just so many loose ends with continuing care right now. The facility-based continuing care review, for example, you know, still hangs in the air.

9:30

This whole issue around staffing and staff moving to multiple locations: we know it has been a documented medical fact that that was what was spreading COVID between facilities. We had lockdown in the facilities, yet COVID continued to spread apace, killing, as we see, more than 1,600 people, because people were working in multiple facilities and carrying it from one place to another. That whole scenario just could have been dealt with so

much better. It's all about capacity, Mr. Speaker. Of course, people are working in multiple facilities because they're trying to make ends meet. They can only get part-time jobs, so they have to work at two or three different places in order to have a living wage. You know, all of these things add up together.

So even if we remain dispassionate and not look at it as a moral imperative to look after our seniors now and in the future, we can look at it scientifically to say that you literally are endangering a larger population by not doing anything about the continuing care situation. You know, we are still in a state of high COVID transmission, so it's not like we're out of that situation at all. What might come next? I mean, that's the thing, right? We can see that now, that there's a huge vulnerability around virus spread and the potential for that to occur again, and we just logically need to deal with that. If we have people in continuing care facilities that are vulnerable, then a version of that will just simply happen again, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't take rocket science to figure that out.

Bill 11, you know, I think could do much better. I certainly think that it needs to be not just amended but scrapped, and I think that my position is reflected not just in our caucus but amongst the general public as well.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to speak briefly to this motion regarding Bill 11. I think we do know that the UCP has failed the residents of continuing care throughout this pandemic. Albertans cannot trust the UCP with their health care, and we have evidence that over 1,600 continuing care residents in Alberta tragically passed away from COVID-19. Those outcomes could have been different, and we don't see anything in this piece of legislation that will help us fix that.

More importantly, this bill doesn't even fulfill the UCP's own promise from a year ago: one, they will increase home care; two, the amount of hours of care that residents will receive will increase; and three, increase the proportion of full-time staff. They didn't even do that in this piece of legislation, and I think our residents in continuing care, seniors in this province, deserve far, far better than this from this government. That's why this bill should not get the support of this Legislature.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, but prior to taking my seat, can I move a motion to seek unanimous consent that we move to one-minute bells for the remainder of this evening?

The Speaker: I'm sorry, hon. member. Can you repeat that? I just want to make sure what you're asking for. It matters as we may go in or out of committee, so there's some difference in what you're asking for. Can you clarify what you're hoping for here?

Mr. Sabir: I am seeking unanimous consent that we move to one-minute bells for everything tonight.

The Speaker: For the remainder of the evening.

Hon. members, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has requested unanimous consent for the remainder of the evening to go to one-minute bells, which would include the first bell in Committee of the Whole.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Hon. members, on Bill 11, are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, on Bill 11, are there others wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question or ask for the Minister of Health to close debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:36 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Long	Schulz
Amery	Lovely	Singh
Fir	Nally	Smith
Frey	Nicolaides	Stephan
Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Hunter	Panda	Turton
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Jean	Savage	Yao
Jones	Schow	Yaseen

9:40

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Sabir
Carson	Loyola	Schmidt
Eggen	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.
Totals:	For – 27	Against – 9

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Amery in the chair]

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

The Acting Chair: Are there any members who wish to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise to speak to amendment A1. I have had the opportunity to speak to the main bill, Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta's Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022, and I continue to have the same concerns as previously provided. Obviously, I support the idea of expanding opportunities for energy storage and opportunities for investment in our province on that specific issue, but I think there are definitely more conversations that have to be had to ensure that we are strengthening this legislation to the best of our ability.

To go further, I think that there are important conversations that we need to have regarding the lack of support for Albertans on important issues like the rising cost of living mainly because of decisions from this UCP government. When it comes to increasing utility costs at the same time as we're seeing that process take place in the province, unfortunately this government has been unwilling to provide any reassurances, based on the conversations we've heard in this House so far. While the government has committed to providing relief for utility costs specifically on electricity...

[interjections] Excuse me. Sorry. It's just a little bit loud in here, Mr. Chair.

But specifically on electricity and natural gas, even when the minister is getting questions from his own bench – obviously, they've had time to prepare this exchange, and even when their own private members are asking when Albertans can expect to see relief, the minister doesn't have answers for them as well. So while I do see myself supporting the general direction and in principle what we're seeing in this legislation, I think there are opportunities to strengthen the legislation itself, much like we are seeing in the proposed amendment from the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. So I again rise this evening to support the changes that that member is proposing in the legislation.

With that, Mr. Chair, I think I'll take my seat. I think that there are more important conversations that we can have around this amendment, but I appreciate the opportunity.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other members who wish to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak again to Bill 22 and this amendment. I certainly like the fact that we are moving forward in terms of a new electrical grid system in the province of Alberta. Of course, that requires a variety of statute changes and so on. I find it quite interesting that repeatedly on the government side of the House they have complained that we overbuilt the electrical grid system in the province and have blamed us for it in spite of the fact that it was actually a build that was designated and paid for by a Conservative government prior to our coming in. But we've been told that we should have stopped it. Of course, as all reasonable people think, the NDP should stop just about anything that the Conservatives do, and sometimes they even agree with us themselves.

What is also interesting is that recently in question period the Minister of Finance stood up and said that there was hesitancy about moving forward on electrical cars because they weren't sure the grid could handle all that electricity, which is quite ironic given the fact that he said that we overbuilt it one day, and the next day he says that we might need a bigger grid; we might need to build more. So we can see that this government is quite confused about electricity, as they are about a number of other topics, and simply, you know, are in the habit of using talking points instead of actually answering the questions from the people of Alberta or taking responsibility for their behaviour.

But I welcome this bill because this bill is actually the government trying to correct one of their previous errors. I always want to support that. When they come into the House and realize that they've made mistakes, they should fix themselves, and I'm happy to see them doing that in this particular case. There are a number of aspects of this bill which I think are important and things that I think will move forward, but I also think that we need to take some time to pay attention to what they're doing and see if there might be some things that could be improved with the bill. As such, we're here to speak to the amendment.

I think it's important that we actually put this in the context of what's happening. Around the world governments, investors, and, you know, the vast majority of leading thinkers are suggesting that we should be moving in the direction of a significant electrical supply and the replacement of nonrenewable resources for energy production. Now, that's going to have significant consequences in the province of Alberta, and I know that the government is very concerned about that because they keep wanting to go back to the

1970s, when these kinds of questions were not so complicated. Life was simpler. So I can understand that they have some confusion over where we need to be going, but I can tell you that what we really want to have in this province is for Alberta to remain a major player in the energy world. The government, unfortunately, thinks that that's going to be by going backwards in time whereas we believe that there is a future, and that future will include, of course, oil and gas in a variety of ways.

We certainly presented many ideas for how we can help oil and gas move forward into the future and not go back to the past. You only have to go to albertasfuture.ca to see policies on things such as hydrogen or lithium or the conversion of well sites to geothermal or, you know, a variety of other things like that. But we also believe that we need to make sure that we get in front of the changes that are necessary for us to have an electrical system that is less reliant on oil and gas sources and more reliant on renewable sources.

9:50

Of course, when we were in government, we did some amazing things to make that happen. We had a renewable energy bid program that brought in some of the best prices for energy, guaranteeing the price of energy for many, many years to come and doing so not only by encouraging Alberta producers to produce more renewable energy for our electrical grid through, in this case, almost all, I think all, wind turbine energy development. But we also, in our second round of the REP bid, insisted that First Nations participation be in the actual ownership of the program, and we again got incredibly good results in terms of the price bid. We know that the NDP government was looking toward the future, was moving the province ahead, and was very successful in doing so, so we appreciate anything that this government does to attempt to try to catch up with that great modelling that we provided to them.

There are a number of things that I think are interesting in this bill and some things that we probably should spend a little bit of time examining here. I think that I want to start by saying that, as I've mentioned already, there are things I like about this bill. I do appreciate that there's a tariff that will be used to reduce transmission costs for the consumers. I think that's a good idea.

I am wondering about one particular piece that's kind of attached to that, and that is the ability for people who are doing self-supply to then sell or export any excess. There aren't any definitions around limitations or expectations around that. What we might have is somebody who is doing self-supply and then selling excess, but that excess apparently could be as high as 99 per cent of the energy produced.

Is that the intention of this government, that, in fact, people could actually become exporters of electrical energy in this province, which would require, of course, a very large, well-built grid running down the centre of the province toward the places that we might export to, even though the government has constantly complained about the existence of that? In this case, because they haven't put any definitions on it, what we are not sure about is whether or not people could ostensibly appear to be self-suppliers when really, because they're selling 99 per cent of it, they're actually exporters.

Is that the intention of this government? Is this an attempt to move into exporting by simply having people set up a small shop in the site, use a small piece of the electricity for perhaps running the lights in the building that they're using to export the energy from? Is that the intention? Is that where they're going? Is this really all about the continuation of the Klein-years desires to sell Alberta's

electricity into the States? This bill doesn't make it clear if that's where they're going or not.

I probably have said as much as I want to say this evening and have nothing more that I could possibly add to this and will just simply close my last three pages of comments at this time.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview. Thank you.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to speak to amendment A1, brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. It has to do with the Alberta utility advocate. Of course, this legislation, Bill 22, does say that the fee can be charged to Albertans for the Alberta utility advocate. Previously this was paid through the Balancing Pool. I guess this is just yet again another example of the UCP, you know, putting a burden on individual Albertans having to be responsible.

They've done so many things to increase costs out of pocket, you know, the affordability. We really are in an affordability crisis, and here yet again is something else where the UCP is reaching into the pockets of Albertans and asking them now that they must pay for this Alberta utility advocate office through a fee. That's why we brought forward this amendment. We are saying that, no, this should not be something that you're taking out of the pockets of Albertans. It's not fair. So we're helping the government out. I know that they want to make sure that Albertans aren't, you know, being asked to pay so much more.

I would commend all members of the House to please vote in favour of this amendment A1. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Is there any other member who wishes to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:56 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Amery in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Sabir
Carson	Loyola	Schmidt
Eggen	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.

10:00

Against the motion:

Allard	Lovely	Singh
Fir	Nally	Smith
Frey	Nicolaides	Stephan

Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Hunter	Panda	Turton
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Jean	Savage	Yao
Jones	Schow	Yaseen
Long	Schulz	

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 26
---------	---------	--------------

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Acting Chair: We are back on the main bill. Are there any other comments or questions or amendments to be offered?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 22 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

I recognize the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 22.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Amery in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills and would like to report Bill 22.

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we have to concur in the committee's report.

The Acting Speaker: My apologies. Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed? The motion is carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tonight has been filled with great debate, but the time has now come for us to head home, so I move that the Assembly adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:03 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 20	Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022	1289
Bill 21	Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.....	1294
Bill 11	Continuing Care Act.....	1300
	Division	1301

Committee of the Whole

Bill 22	Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta's Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022	1301
	Division	1303

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca