



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, May 11, 2022

Day 33

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Third Session

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Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
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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: 21

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 3

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Tanya Fir	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
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Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
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Kaycee Madu	Minister of Labour and Immigration
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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

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

## 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**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Milliken

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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.

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Division

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to calling the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, I would just like to draw the Assembly's attention. As I understand, there was some confusion this afternoon, and that is the last thing I would want here in the Assembly, confusion for anyone. Standing Order 32, I'm sure you're all very well aware, is the standing order that applies specifically to divisions. Standing Order 32(4): "When Members have been called in for a division there shall be no further debate, and despite Standing Order 13(7), a Member must remain at the Member's seat during the division." I know that during committee there was some to and fro about possibly voting from other locations. It is important that all members remain in their seat for the division.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### 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 10: Ms Phillips]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I concluded my remarks yesterday talking a little bit about the parks pieces of this legislation that I think are broadly not supported by the public certainly given what we know from public opinion polling, from just the very presence of thousands of lawn signs still on people's lawns, particularly in Calgary, and the level of trust this government enjoys, that is to say zero.

Having said that, there are other pieces that are also problematic for managing public lands. There is no question that expanding the power of the minister to set out standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines, objectives, or other rules on public land can certainly lead to situations where in that delicate balance of managing public land, there is a thumb put on the scale by a minister's personal proclivities. Certainly, we have seen over the years a certain amount of distrust with the PCs around this, which is what led to quite a bit of lightning in the sky, Mr. Speaker, around the development of the South Saskatchewan regional plan.

Certainly, there was a great deal of worry among, you know, grazing lease holders and others in terms of the balance between access to public land for leaseholders – that is to say, in particular the grazing leases – and access for guide outfitters, for various hunting enterprises,

and indeed even for the heretofore third rail in wildlife management and fish and wildlife policy, which is, of course, paid hunting.

There is no question that when the minister can only set standards for an existing regulation under Bill 21, the minister can use those tools for anything the minister can set regulations for. That expands their powers in public lands, and you know not only will I say that this is problematic from a consultation perspective given, as I referenced, the very delicate balance. In particular, the biggest balances are usually having to be struck between grazing lease holder access – certainly, road allowance access is always an issue. Access for hunting is always an issue, and then access to public Crown leases for gravel pits and how that interacts with grazing lease holders and others is almost always – there are almost always three or four files burning that are of a great deal of concern to rural MDs, municipal districts, or even towns. Oftentimes smaller towns will have concerns about how these issues are being handled as well.

I want to issue a caution here for the House that if a minister was to take this too far, as certainly it was back in the day the Wildrose's perception of the PCs taking some of these powers too far with the development of the South Saskatchewan regional plan and elsewhere, it can cause quite a bit of a public firestorm and public debate. It can also interfere in a very delicate balance of people trying to make a living – right? – with recreational pursuits. In my mind, the right to make a living and that lease have to take precedence. You know, if there are too many folks calling you up to get access to your land for hunting, then the right to graze your animals has to come first. So it's for that reason that I would issue a caution on this Bill 21, Mr. Speaker.

I mean, the other pieces of this bill are, you know, so anodyne as to be soporific, quite frankly. We have some changing of language around the Railway (Alberta) Act and some of the fairly straightforward changes for the Rural Utilities Act in terms of how rural electrification associations can purchase other REAs, which my only question on that would be: what was the scale and scope of the negotiations with the REAs? But I suspect this was something that they do not mind.

With that, I will conclude my comments.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on amendment REF1 are there others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak to this bill. I believe it's my first time even though it may have been in the House for a while. Of course, we are speaking to the referral. You know, I would like to support this amendment in the sense that once again we see a piece of legislation that has been introduced into the House that makes changes, substantial changes, to a variety of different pieces of legislation without what I would say is appropriate consultation with many of the stakeholders that are being impacted by these pieces.

Obviously, there are some major concerns that I see even just quickly looking at these pieces of legislation and specifically to the changes that are being made through the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. Now, any changes that are done within the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act really should not be done segregated from the act itself. To do this in a piece of legislation that speaks to a variety of other pieces of legislation and not specifically to this act I think is a concern, especially when we look at the fact that there are significant changes being made in removing the maximum licensing requirements when it comes to our residential group homes and foster homes.

Now, again, coming from the fact that I've worked in this field – and, in fact, I used to do licensing – I am concerned with a watering down of what I see as being a legislative requirement when it comes to the services and supports that are provided to children intervention services. There's a reason why there's a one-year maximum on

licences. The reason that those are done is because, of course, we want to ensure that whenever a child is placed in a placement, whether it be a group home or a foster home or even a kinship home, those licences, that are being reviewed on an annual basis, are being done to ensure the most safety for and utmost safety of the children that are in those facilities. To see that there is now going to be a change that would put that in regulation removes the accountability of the director, who, ultimately, is the government, in ensuring that those legislative requirements are being followed.

Now, this has been a very scary year for children in care in the fact that we have seen an increase in the amount of children that have passed away in care, that have died in care. When we see such an increase at a time when the government is watering down the requirements of safety and the basics, I guess, of providing care to children that are in intervention services, I think that there is a serious disconnect, that this government doesn't seem to understand that the very reason that these licences are legislated, that there is a one-year renewal requirement is because of the very fact that we have to ensure that every foster home and every group home that a child is placed in is safe and that every staff that works in those group homes is certified to work in those facilities, that their training is up to date, that medication is locked away appropriately, that all of the safety pieces are put in place, that we don't have too many children in a group home when there shouldn't be more than the licensed requirement.

7:40

Even when we try to place siblings in many of these licensed facilities and they have, let's say, already three children in their home and they're only licensed for four, the director has to approve an additional child to come into that foster home because of the fact that they may have to share a bedroom. They need to ensure that there's appropriate space, that there are enough bathrooms, that the backyard is fenced in. All of those things need to be in place to keep our children safe. It's pretty simple.

When I see section 2 of the act being amended to remove the one-year maximum requirement, it's concerning. I haven't heard from the government how they're going to ensure the safety of these children that are in these placements if they're not going to ensure that this is a legislative requirement. Ultimately, it holds the government to account to ensure that they're doing what they're supposed to do to make sure kids are safe. That's why it's legislated.

To see this put into a piece of legislation that encompasses – I think we're looking at something like 16 different sections and 16 different acts, so 16 other pieces of legislation are being amended while the government is trying to sneak in an amendment to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, a pretty serious piece of legislation. I have a really hard time believing that somehow ensuring children are safe in group home facilities, in services like PSECA – they have to abide by these – looking at specialized foster homes where we have medically fragile children is somehow cutting red tape.

Keeping children safe, making sure that foster parents and staff are trained appropriately to understand the medical needs of a child who may have specialized needs is not red tape, yet it's being stuck in a piece of legislation that has 16 other pieces of legislation in it, pieces of legislation that are dealing with things like parks and looking at pieces of legislation that are dealing with public transportation, pieces of legislation that are looking at whether or not people should report whether or not an animal has an infection. How does that even correlate to the very, very important piece of legislation that keeps our kids safe? Why would the government choose to slide this into a bill that's hundreds of pages? It doesn't make any sense.

The other part about this, too, is that it also adds in that a foster parent as a person can appeal a decision on a renewal or alter a residential facility licence. I'm not sure I understand where this is coming from. I would love the government to explain to me why we would be making sure that foster parents have the ability to appeal a decision on a licence. There is a process that already exists within Children's Services, but I can tell you that through the licensing process it's pretty clear when someone doesn't pass their licensing, and there are pretty serious reasons as to why that would happen. To be able to enable somehow now within this legislation a foster parent to be able to have an appeal process: I'm curious who the government spoke to that made that decision a priority for the government.

The one thing that we do know is that when children are with temporary guardians and they have been in foster homes for a very, very long time, they go to permanent guardianship orders, and if foster parents want to adopt and for some reason they can't – there is a reason as to why they're not being approved for adoption – children's ability to be adopted gets held up for a long time when foster parents have the ability to appeal. I have stories where this has happened. Yes, there's a court process and, yes, there are things that can be done, but sometimes foster parents may not like a decision and will do this to hold up the permanency plan for a child because they want to be that permanency plan. For some reason, the government has decided that that is not in the best interest of the child. This is a very, very dangerous thing to have.

There are ways that this can happen without it being legislated that will support foster parents in going through the appeal process, through a clear and already established process that has existed for a very long time, but does not allow them to somehow start influencing the residential facility licensing process. There are some pretty significant and serious concerns not only around the safety of children in care but also the long-term permanency planning when it comes to whether or not children can be adopted by these two simple changes that are being made within this piece of legislation, this piece of legislation that isn't even talking to the whole act.

I can tell you, given my experience working with the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, that the minute you start moving one piece of that act, it creates a waterfall of effects throughout whole pieces of legislation. Like I've said, it will have on-the-ground, real, practical impacts about the ability to keep our kids safe. The government needs to take this seriously, and if they're not going to take it seriously, let's refer it to a committee. Let the committee evaluate what the outcomes are going to be, whether or not this is actually in the best interest of the child or if someone just happened to have the ear of somebody in the government and decided: hey, I had a really bad situation, and I'd like you to change this. I'm curious. I've never heard this before, I've never seen this before, and I don't understand why the government would even do this.

Like, this government needs to take the safety of our children seriously. I cannot believe – and, I mean, I just looked at this – that the government would even consider removing the one-year maximum on licences. What is it going to be, then? It's going to be stuffed in regulation, that the government can just arbitrarily change their mind and decide? You get a three-month licence? You can have a two-year licence? It can be whatever you want it to be? That doesn't make any sense. There are different levels of licensing.

You know what I do know about licensing, Mr. Speaker? It is that licensing also relates back to the support that is provided to foster parents and residential service providers. What I mean by that is that the more experience you have as a foster parent, the more ability you have to, let's say, take on a child with medical needs, the more financial assistance the government will give you to provide that. You need to have that expertise, you need to have that

understanding to be able to do that. You need to be able to pay for classes and to be able to go do those things. You could be a level 1 foster parent, a level 2 foster parent, a level 3 foster parent, and a specialized foster parent, and where you are on the scale is how much support you get from the government. That's based on your licence.

If you remove the licensing requirement, is that going to remove the financial assistance that is provided to our foster parents? Is that going to arbitrarily change the supports that this government decides to give foster parents because they will just arbitrarily change the licensing requirements? There is a direct financial correlation to this. I'd love the government to help me understand that piece.

I know they're great about their fiscal management and cutting supports when they possibly can in any way they possibly can. And you know what? A really sneaky way of being able to do that would be to mess around with the licensing requirements in foster care, right? Just make everyone a level 1 foster parent, then. You don't need to be specialized. You don't need to understand medical needs. We're not going to compensate you for your expertise and for the fact that these children need extra support. We're going to pay you all the same so that you can't access the education that you need, so that you can't get the medical support you need, pay for maybe the diapers that you need or all the medical formula that you need. Let's be honest; most foster parents pay out of pocket for most of the stuff that they provide to the children that live in their homes. They're not making money off being foster parents. But they deserve to have the support in place.

If you're a level 3 foster parent or a specialized foster parent that takes children in that need that extra support, you need that financial assistance to pay for their needs. So why change it? If it's in regulation, can't you just change the financial formula as well? Will the supports being provided to children in care change with this piece? I can see that happening. I mean, we've seen it happen everywhere else. People with developmental disabilities, people who are on AISH, seniors, all of the people that rely on this government to ensure that they have some financial support have been impacted by the decisions made by this government, and this change can do that. It can take away the ability for licensing and the level of licensing that these foster parents have. It's a real concern.

7:50

I'll be honest. I don't trust this government, so I could see them doing this as a really easy, quiet way of messing around with the licensing requirements, which then would be the financial supports to kids in care, without anybody noticing because, of course, now it won't be legislated. It will just be slid in through regulation. People should be concerned. I want skilled, educated foster parents supporting children in care. I want people working in group homes to have that knowledge and that expertise, and I want to know that every child that is placed is placed in a licensed facility that has met the requirements that the government has set and is accountable to holding in place. This government needs to ensure that happens, and if they're not, they better explain why it's not happening.

**The Speaker:** On amendment REF1 are there others?

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on second reading of Bill 21. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Let me just double-check my debate sheet. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has the call.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for double-checking. I appreciate that. You know, I imagine that you hear me speak so many times in this House that you were doubting there for a second: oh, I thought he already spoke to this. But, of course, I have not, so thank you very much for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to now speak to Bill 21, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, on the main bill.

One of the things that I left off saying while I was commenting on the bill during referral was that the associate minister of red tape and the Minister of Education seem to be at odds on what this particular bill was actually doing. It was quite interesting. It's like the left hand didn't know what the right hand was doing, and they were quite confused. On the one hand, the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction was claiming that private schools will no longer have to produce financial data on what it collects in tuition fees, for example. The Minister of Education was claiming loudly that this wasn't at all true, that audited statements, including tuition fees, would still be required. It was confusing for a lot of people and all the more confusing for all Albertans.

Then the government produced a media handout stating that tuition fee data would not be collected, but the amendments through this omnibus legislation and the associated private school regulation make it quite clear that financial data will be reported. We need to really know what's going on here when it comes to this. How does the minister responsible for the legislation not know what is in it, right? It is precisely this diametrically opposed message from the government that causes Albertans to lose trust in the UCP.

Fundamentally, this bill makes two changes to the Education Act. As opposed to broad enabling regulatory powers on private schools, it lays out extensive details on how private schools can be regulated. Because the list of areas covered here is so extensive, there is no real net impact on the private schools. Their confusion arises because the government told the media in a handout something that turned out to be completely untrue when you read the legislation. It extends the timeline that school boards can spend noncapital reserves with ministerial approval from September 1, 2022, to September 1, 2023. This allows more time to hit the government's noncapital reserve balance limits.

This was one of the issues that, as far as I know, we still don't have clarity on. We have had the Minister of Education get up and say, "Well, no, it's not going to do that," but we still don't know in terms of the media handout that was given out and what the Minister of Education was saying. I have yet to hear concrete information on which way it is, one or the other.

Of course, the bill amends a number of pieces of legislation. As I was stating during the debate on referral, it's 16 different sections of 16 different acts. One of those is section 5 in the Health Statutes Amendment Act. It makes a small amendment to the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2021, to include "and standards" after "regulations" in one section of the act. This is yet another example, Mr. Speaker, of how this government is taking legislation, moving it into regulation, where they will not be held accountable for that inside of this Legislature. That was one of the main issues, I think, that a number of us on this side of the House have. But as I was explaining last night, even, in debate on referral, to me it's perplexing. To me, it's perplexing because this is a way that we weaken our democracy instead of strengthening it.

I can understand that there need to be regulations on certain pieces of legislation. That is not the issue; that's not the debate here. The issue is that so many pieces of legislation that we've had presented in this House by the UCP have this dominant trait, I would say, that most of what actually needs to be decided, most of how it will impact Albertans' lives, most of the decision-making that will actually end up not only impacting people now but well

into the future, for generations to come, is being put into regulation, and it's not even being debated inside of this House. That's the real issue.

I mean, the reason why we have this entity, this body, is so that these issues can be debated. Again, this is yet another example of this type of situation, where this government puts more and more into regulation so that it can't be debated in the House, and with a simple stroke of a pen they can simply just make regulations on certain pieces of legislation as they move forward.

Another example of what is being changed is section 6 of the Highways Development and Protection Act. Of course, there's no particular issue with this. But while these changes are exceedingly minor, if they save a few minutes of cabinet time and, in the view of the government, it makes the system more efficient, then we can support that kind of change. But, again, it gives power to the minister instead of cabinet to designate new freeways and the approval of freeway access locations. So it's not even going to be a cabinet decision; it's going to be simply left up to the minister.

It begs the question, you know: how does the minister actually see this power being used? What measures will be in place to ensure that approvals will still go through a proper process? Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, that there are processes for these.

I understand that what the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction is trying to do is save time, for the most part. There are, like I said, some of the changes that we agree with, and we find them to be, you know, quite reasonable. But then others, as has been debated by members on this side of this House, are quite substantial and that we just don't agree with. To be quite honest, I think that it's characteristic of this type of omnibus piece of legislation, that they would do that.

8:00

I remember that, you know, private members of the government caucus, when they were on this side, would be pulling their hair out or setting their hair on fire, whichever they would prefer, when it came to this type of thing when we were in government, yet now that those same members are on that side of the House, they're perfectly fine with the associate minister of red tape bringing forward this omnibus piece of legislation. Of course, as I was stating last night in debate as well, Mr. Speaker, a lot of those same members were, I would say, staunch advocates of accountability while they were on this side of the House.

You know, I made the argument last night, but I'll make it again, Mr. Speaker. With moving more and more decision-making power into regulations and giving all of that power to the minister, you're creating less accountability. You're creating less accountability to this Legislature and, especially, creating less accountability to the people of Alberta. That is quite concerning. Again, I find it quite hypocritical that while members were on this side of the House, they were screaming so much about accountability, and now that they're on that side of the House, private members of the government caucus don't seem to be quite as concerned about this issue of accountability at all and more and more power going into the hands of ministers and therefore the front bench and the cabinet.

The Municipal Government Act: in section 9 there are a number of positive amendments to the Municipal Government Act, which we support. We support the administrative changes and tweaks to the bill. There's the – while the changes to the MGA make a nontrivial portion of the red tape reduction, they are mostly administrative; for example, specifying how electronic records can be used or how public meetings are called or how many councillors a municipality must have or that the minister may approve changes to CRL bylaws, which would have to be approved by the city as opposed to cabinet.

As a practical matter the most substantive matter here takes up the least amount of legislative space. Amendments would enable municipalities to co-operate and establish one business licence for multiple municipalities. This is actually a really good change. I've heard from a number of business owners that this is an issue that, for them, they found concerning, so I'm glad that the government was actually able to make that change.

Another section is section 10, changes to the Pharmacy and Drug Act. Subsection (4) gives the Alberta College of Pharmacy the power to develop their own standards and enforce them on matters related to pharmacies instead of being addressed through government regulation. Some of these matters include the storage of drugs and blood products, health care products, and devices in pharmacies as well as information management systems and records. Subsection (3) downgrades regulation-making authority ability from cabinet to the minister on matters relating to regulations and bylaws created by the council. Subsections (5) and (6) proclaim sections of previous health statutes amendment acts which dealt with pharmacies.

Section 11: this is where we get into the Provincial Parks Act, Mr. Speaker. This is perhaps one of the most concerning issues that we have within this bill. We agree that there are some things that, hey, are pretty self-explanatory. There are no problems. We have no problems supporting them. But when it comes to parks, the power that the minister of environment has been given is quite substantial. Just to be clear, I'm going to quote directly from the bill, under minister's directives and codes. It says that "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." Any matter. And that is standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines or other rules to any matter. One could easily interpret this as, basically, the minister can do anything that the minister wants to do when it comes to this particular piece of legislation, and that's a lot of power to put into the hands of just one individual, I would say. Is there going to be a check and balance for this in any way?

Now, especially when it comes to the environment and parks, this government has had a horrible track record when it comes to coal mining in the eastern slopes, and the Alberta public – the Alberta public – had an incredible outcry when it came to what this government wanted to do. It was quite astonishing, because essentially the government wanted to open up the parks to coal mining.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to this omnibus bill . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, my apologies. You actually moved amendment REF1, which means that you have already spoken once at second reading.

Are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. I don't think I've had, actually, an opportunity to speak to Bill 21 in any of the readings, so I'm excited to stand up and speak about what, again, as I was earlier saying to the referral amendment, seems to be a bill that just keeps going and going and going on a variety of different things.

The one thing that I – and I'm sure my colleagues have mentioned this in the past through this debate. Even on page 1 of this bill, when it comes to the Animal Health Act, there are some changes that are being made when it comes to the reporting of potential diseases in livestock. Now, I'm not quite sure – and maybe I missed this.



Maybe the minister did speak to this at some point. Why is it moving into regulation? I think that when we look at animal welfare, we want to ensure that there is confidence in our food supply and that there is an ability to react quickly when it comes to potential infections or diseases in livestock, and you would want to make sure that it's in legislation.

Again, when we've heard this government speak to red tape reduction, they've always implied it as a mechanism or a tool that this government is using to make life simpler. And I don't know why, when we're talking about the notification of diseases, we want to make it simpler. It seems pretty important, I would think, to the whole agricultural industry that the notification of diseases happens within legislation and happens within those 24 hours. We've had examples with bovine infections. We have a current issue in Alberta right now with the avian flu, and we see how quickly it's spreading across Alberta. To not have something within the Animal Health Act that has a legislated requirement with a specific length of time in legislation is a real concern.

8:10

I wouldn't know of anybody in the agriculture industry that would have looked at this and thought: yeah, I mean, we should remove that out of the legislation. It gives certainty to our producers so that they know, when there is a potential disease within whether it be a flock or a livestock area, that that notification is happening immediately, CFIA is being deployed as soon as it needs to happen, and there is a protection in place not only for the producers but for the community as a whole. I mean, we know that when we hear about potential diseases, the best thing that Alberta does well is respond quickly so that we can continue to have that certainty and so that people who are looking at importing and exporting our products know that we have everything in place in legislation to ensure that we're responding the way that we need to respond.

I think that by removing this out of legislation and turning it into a regulation, it could give an opportunity for individuals that don't want to import our product to use it as an excuse to say that we're not actually protecting our agriculture industry the way that we should be. We're weakening the protection. Now, I don't think the government would ever want to do that. We know that we are a primary exporter of pork, beef, chicken, all the things, and to have any opportunity to weaken that, I just wouldn't understand why the government would make that choice.

I'm curious, again, hoping that at some point the minister will stand up and explain why we would remove something that's so clearly in legislation, that's so easy to point to our trading partners and say: "No. This is in legislation. This is a requirement. Notification must happen within 24 hours, and these are the steps that are followed if anything were to ever happen. You can trust our food safety." Pretty simple.

I think that's the question, and I won't dwell on it too much because I do think that, I mean, I've said what I have to say. I don't know if I'm going to get a response to any of the questions that I've asked this evening, so I'll put it on the record, and hopefully at another point we can have those conversations. Again, I think that this just speaks to – I'm not totally sure that the government, really, looking at the red tape reduction, has a clear understanding of what the intention of red tape reduction is. My understanding is that it was supposed to make things easier and better, yet this has an opportunity to create some uncertainty.

Again, going back to: when you change one piece, there tends to be a waterfall effect in other areas. I think this might be an example where, if this ever has to be tested and people want to be able to speak to our partners in our trading industries, there might be some

explaining to do, that would have been quite easy to do had we just kept it in legislation.

With that, I think I will close my remarks and sit back down.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a second time]

## Bill 23

### Professional Governance Act

[Debate adjourned May 11: Ms Renaud speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before the Assembly is Bill 23. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill, my first chance to do so. I must say that on review of this bill I'm concerned that the bill has even arrived at the House. I don't think it was ready for prime time, and I think that I'm very concerned about what I'm seeing here.

The first thing that I will mention sort of briefly before I go on to my major concern about the bill is the fact that the bill doesn't seem to completely understand the rest of the legislation that is going to be implicated in this bill. I guess my primary example is that there are a number of different pieces of legislation that will affect these PROs, the professional regulatory organizations, and each of those pieces of legislation has different requirements around reporting of disciplinary or other kinds of decisions that are made within the organization with regard to their own members. This bill just complicates the issue and does not provide clarity to the PROs, those organizations, to know what they have to do in the end because the bill doesn't explicitly say it.

It is eliminating rules from some of the other regulations. For example, in this particular bill it indicates that for decisions that are made by the organizations with regard to their members, there are 120 days for the decision to be made and for the participants to be informed of the decision, which is, you know, fine, I guess. I might want to go back and talk to the organizations to find out if that is an appropriate amount of time, because I understand that the government did not go back to those organizations to have that conversation.

But it also is problematic because many of these organizations will be responsible to other acts. For example, the Labour Mobility Act, which we just passed in this House not that long ago, had in it a number of very explicit rules around some of the decisions that are made, and I remember talking about that in the House at that time, about whether or not the length of time for these decisions was appropriate.

In the Labour Mobility Act, for example, it indicates that the organization has 10 days to acknowledge an application. That already is one that is not explicitly mentioned in this act but, I guess, could fit within that act without a conflict at that point. However, the second piece is that a decision needs to be made 20 days after that fact. That is in direct contradiction to the 120 days that's in this act. So we know right away that a PRO, professional regulatory organization, will be responsible under two different acts to make a reporting decision on two different dates, one of them being on 120 days, the other one being on 20 days, a huge difference of more than three months.

I just really don't think that we can pass this, in all fairness. It provides complications and is impossible for an organization to meet both. You know, I guess they'll have to make the decision to meet the limits put in under the Labour Mobility Act and just ignore

the section in this act as being irrelevant to the actual decisions. But that's ridiculous. Why are we passing a bill that actually has a section we know now to be irrelevant? That's not a good way to move forward.

As well, under the Labour Mobility Act, besides the 10 days for the acknowledgement of the application, 20 days for a decision, then there are another 10 days for a written decision, so at maximum the whole thing is 40 days long as opposed to this bill, which is 120 days. I guess reading that kind of thing just makes me very concerned that the kind of discussions have not been held with the organizations and there's not been the time taken to compare this act to the other acts that will also be governing the decisions of various organizations, and it's unfair to put them in these kinds of positions.

8:20

Just one other example, just to put the polish on my point, and that is that the Fair Registration Practices Act actually says that an interim decision can be made in six months, but the final decision is at some reasonable time thereafter. So automatically we have a contradiction, because under the Fair Registration Practices Act we have what is actually an almost unlimited amount of time, just something that's supposed to be reasonable, with an interim decision in six months, yet this bill comes in at about three months, at 120 days. I just really don't think we should be moving forward on a bill that has that kind of glaring contradiction or has not appropriately had the work done to ensure that the contents of this bill are appropriate.

I'm concerned because what this also reveals is that the government has failed to go to the organizations involved, that will be governed by this act, and failed to have those kinds of explicit and deep, detailed conversations about the particulars of the act that will allow the government to ensure that they're not actually creating complications and difficulties for members of the public. I certainly think that we should not be moving a bill forward that has not had substantive consultation. In fact, it appears that they've had almost zero consultation on this one.

Most of the people that we spoke to in the various organizations, the PROs, here are suggesting that they really had no idea that this was moving forward and have not had a chance to voice their concerns. I think this is a problem, and I'm not sure why the government is making a decision to move ahead without the appropriate consultation. There are a number of very significant organizations on our list; I think we have 16, 17 organizations, and they govern literally thousands of Albertans in very significant professions. I think that we should be taking the time, so I'm very disappointed to see the government has brought this one forward.

Using the rest of my time now, I want to speak about the fact that there is a very big problem in this bill and one that I think that we really need to go back and have a conversation about. As with many of the UCP bills that have been brought into this House, we see a pulling in of power – and I've had this conversation before in this House – from the citizens of the province of Alberta back into the minister's office and decisions being made behind closed doors, where we do not have a record of conversation and the advice that happens in cabinet. So we have literally a situation where instead of being governed by your peers in these various organizations, you're being governed with no transparency by somebody with no accountability to the decisions that they're making. I think that that's really problematic.

We've seen this time and time again with this government, and I don't know why they would want to put all this power in the minister's hands every single time. We had this conversation about the environment minister earlier today, getting powers to just make

decisions that previously were made in a more transparent, public-oriented way. You know, again we have the same thing happening. It isn't like the powers that the minister is making are sort of somehow supportive powers or powers that would be minimal or related only to legislative aspects; they're actually to the very details of the running of the everyday functioning of these organizations.

In fact, this bill allows the minister the power to determine everything, from the scope of the organization to the explicit details of the bylaws of how this organization will function and how it will govern and influence the behaviours and practices of the members of the organization. In fact, this bill will allow the minister, without due transparency, without consultation with the members, to actually either create or dissolve these organizations. Why the government would want the minister to have that explicit power without any kind of conversation about why and how this should be happening in a public forum is very disconcerting to me. I'm not sure what has happened in the past that has made the government feel that this is a necessary stealing of power from the citizens of this province and moving it into the hands of one single individual in the government.

Now, many of these organizations have been around in this province for dozens of years and decades and have functioned extremely well and have governed their organizations and have been supported by their members with elected members to the boards, who then vote on bylaws, that are then brought back to the membership and get the yea or nay from the membership before they move forward, and if they don't like the bylaws that are made, then the membership can choose to not elect those members to the board again. So there was a democratic process in place for the construction of all of the aspects of these organizations, these PROs, and that democratic process is one that we know in our society is the best way for us to move forward. We certainly in this House believe in a democratic process and believe that we should be moving forward in that manner, yet this government has just subverted that kind of democracy.

It worries me when a government is so willing to subvert democracy for its own power. I am very concerned that that is the direction that they're going. We literally have it written into this bill, the ability of the government to determine the bylaws, and that is therefore the functioning and the scope – that is, the purpose – of these organizations. And I think that's dangerous, to put that in the hands of one person instead of in the hands of the profession that is being governed. You know, I can't imagine that the accountants in this province are thrilled to have no voice now in how their organization will run and who will sit on the board to make these kinds of decisions, or at least have the potential to have the minister make those kinds of decisions, at all. [interjection] Oh, I'm sorry. Are you wishing to intervene? Sure. I'll take it.

**Mr. Schow:** Yes, please. I appreciate the comments made by the member. I do disagree, specifically on those based around consultation. I can throw out Bill 6 immediately, and farmers will agree with me that there was very little consultation there.

But sticking to this bill specifically, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford just mentioned the accountants, and Rachel Miller, the chief executive officer of Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta, said that “based on [her] understanding of the bill, CPA Alberta is confident the new legislation will provide a robust and transparent regulatory framework for the affected professions.” Mr. Speaker, consultation was done on this bill. I keep hearing this talking point from members opposite as if there was no consultation done. It's here in black and white. It's on the Alberta government website. If they care to have a look at that beyond the talking points

sitting in front of them, they might recognize that this bill did have robust consultation, and I take issue with the fact that that member would stand up here and use information that's incorrect.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The existence of one individual speaking to a bill, regardless of their position, does not speak to whether or not there was robust consultation. It's a ridiculous argument. You know, we certainly have one person who is willing to line up with the Conservatives for various reasons. Who knows why? But the point is that when we talk to these organizations, we certainly see that there has not been a substantive use of consultation. And the main point here is that the minister is being given powers that really should not be in the hands of the minister because it subverts democracy, and I notice that the intervention did not speak to that point because, I gather, they concede that point, that that is, in fact, true, that the subversion of democracy occurs.

I think one of the things, in my brief time that I have left, which I think is only a minute or so – two minutes; thank you. I want to point out one piece which I will speak to later on, and that is that the minister is actually being given the power to make decisions about the regulatory model being used by these organizations. Field Law identifies that there are five different areas of possible regulatory models, but for my short time I only want to speak to two, and that is that there is a choice between whether it's a voluntary registration or a mandatory registration for these organizations.

Right now if you are a member of some of these organizations, you must be registered if you are practising in that area. I know that when I was a member of the social work association, if as a trained social worker I was practising in an area that is deemed to be a social work practice, I must be a member or must be registered, so therefore it gave the association the ability to oversee the practice of people in the profession who are using the title and who have the appropriate training. If, however, you moved that to voluntary, then, of course, what happens is that you lose a significant number of your participants because they no longer are required to participate. That can be a very concerning thing.

8:30

We are now in this bill actually giving the minister the ability to undermine the power of these organizations to go from being mandatory to being voluntary. I can tell you that I'm sure I know the reason for that, because when it is mandatory, more people participate, more money in the organizations, they have more power to influence civic democracy, and they speak to the issues of government. If you move an organization from mandatory registration to voluntary registration, you are taking power away from them and the power to speak to government.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise this evening and speak to Bill 23, the Professional Governance Act. I appreciated the comments from the member before me, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and likely will have some similar comments on this legislation. As I'm trying to think back on my time in this House with the particular member, I'm not sure if I've ever voted differently than that member has, so I'm not necessarily seeing that to be the case this time around either. A very insightful and passionate and knowledgeable member.

A few things that I want to touch on. First of all, it's interesting, the – I would say lack of consultation – consultation process that

this government undertook. From what I can tell, even when the technical discussions happened between the department and the opposition caucus, there was an acknowledgement that there wasn't a broad consultation process that took place to have discussions about this legislation regarding PROs. It's interesting that the member across the aisle, you know, stood for an intervention and said that that wasn't the case considering their own department said that it was indeed.

I'm looking back at a document that was e-mailed out to all the members of the Alberta institute of agrology back on February 28. It tells a different story, and it's very interesting. I'm hopeful that the government can maybe provide clarity to the process that took place from the beginning of this proposed legislation to where we are now, because at that time they sent out an e-mail to their hundreds if not thousands of members. Just a few quotes from what they sent out: "This legislation has been drafted in secret without any consultation. No PRO knows how it will affect their operations. The Minister has advised the AIA to prepare to manage major changes while continuing to operate under the current law until the new law is in force."

Now, as you may know, Mr. Speaker, obviously, something changed through that process, and I would appreciate clarification, because when the government announced and likely threw a press release, the AIA was actually one of their stakeholders that was willing to come forward and support this. Great. At some point they went from having no consultation and drafting this legislation without them to showing them the legislation and them being very concerned. There are other comments that I may or may not get to from that document that was e-mailed out to all the members of the AIA.

I would be interested to find out what took place, what consultation or conversations happened to get them from saying that this legislation was drafted in secret without any consultation to, from what I remember, being a validator for this government. Good on the government, I suppose, for getting one of these PROs to go from "There was no consultation process; this was done in secret" to potentially being a validator. But, again, I would like to know the process that took place, exactly how they came so far from their initial comments, because I think it's an important question. Again, is it the case that the only people or, in this instance, the only PROs that get to have a voice at the table are ones that are willing to come out and attack the government? I don't think that is a fair consultation by any means.

You know, I spoke to this on previous bills this week, the lack of clarity from this government and the lack of transparency when they are providing opportunities, or lack thereof, for consultation and how organizations have to be as loud as they can to actually have their voices heard. It's unfortunate, because I think that whenever we are drafting legislation, there should be equal opportunity for everyone. No organization or president of an association or other example should have to necessarily put their name on the line or put their organizations out in the firing line, I guess for lack of better terms, just to have their voice heard, but that seems far too often what happens under this government.

I hear that again and again from organizations that are affected by legislation that this government puts forward, that either there are multiple changes that this government is proposing and potentially they don't have time to necessarily identify all of the problems with one issue or one piece of legislation because they have bigger problems with another piece of legislation, or they're simply afraid to come out against this government because they have seen a pattern of vindictiveness from this government.

It's truly unfortunate because, whether it's on the changes that we're seeing here in Bill 23, the Professional Governance Act, or

any other piece of legislation, every Albertan and every organization that is being affected by legislative changes that are being proposed by the government and by this House should have equal opportunity. It shouldn't matter necessarily how much money their organization has or how close of a friendship they have with the Premier or how many memberships they were able to help the Premier sell; it should be that everyone has an equal voice in the consultation when we're talking about proposing changes to legislation.

That is one of my biggest concerns with this legislation. It is quite clear from organizations that we've consulted with, from organizations that have reached out to their members that there is a pattern and a lack of consultation, and at the end of the day not only does it leave people feeling like they weren't heard or weren't consulted; it also doesn't give them adequate time to prepare for the changes that are being proposed, which is another huge issue with what is being offered in Bill 23 not only with the timeline changes but the absolute power that the minister is proposing be given to themselves and to the government to make changes to, as the previous member said, just a few of the things, bylaws, being able to create or dissolve these organizations, being able to amalgamate them potentially arbitrarily.

We truly don't know. I guess it just depends how the minister is feeling that day and maybe what kind of relationship the minister has with one of these PROs or another. That is truly not how we should be governing. I said that on Bill 21, where the environment minister is proposing that they give themselves massive powers to be able to designate and change essentially any law that pertains to parks. That is deeply unfortunate, and we see this pattern.

I would be interested to find out how many pieces of legislation this government has brought forward that have given such increased powers to the minister, because I remember it truly didn't happen nearly as much under our government. It was for different circumstances, no doubt, but any time that we had put forward changes to legislation where even there was a tiny bit of power being given to the minister from previously, the at that time Wildrose opposition would be incredibly upset. Yet now we have a government who has members from the then Wildrose opposition and many other members in this government that would identify, I'm sure, as closer to Wildrose than they are to UCP – and we'll see how that plays out – but they have been absolutely silent on the many changes that this government has proposed to give ministers more power. That's fine. Well, it's not fine, Mr. Speaker. It's fine for those members now as they sit in government, but I imagine that in the future, if the government changes, they are going to be concerned with the amount of power that they have given ministers under their own watch, because we are allowing those ministers to make changes without coming to this Legislature.

8:40

I raised the point, and I will raise it again, regarding Bill 10 and the changes that the Health minister, I believe, at the time, a minister, was proposing to give the government the ability to change laws without coming before this House. They came back to the Legislature and changed those laws because there was such an outcry from the public, but they haven't seemed to learn anything at all, Mr. Speaker. Here we are again this evening debating Bill 23, Professional Governance Act, and they are proposing the exact same thing, to give the minister absolute power over these PROs, who for so long have, as far as I can tell, done a reasonable, done a good job at self-governance and adhering to the laws that had previously been put in place.

As the previous member asked, I would also ask: why are we here? Are there certain organizations that we are considering

putting under this umbrella legislation that the government or the associations are having issues with? You know, we see 22 professions here that are listed, just a few – for instance, the Alberta Association of Architects is quite different from the Alberta Institute of Agrologists, quite different from the Alberta Society of Professional Biologists. I mean, there are a lot of associations that are going to be affected by this legislation, and again we have a government and a minister that are talking about potentially giving themselves the power to amalgamate some of these associations. I imagine that's the last thing that these organizations want to see. They have quite different roles within the industry, so I'm sure they are concerned about that.

I again would ask: what is the minister trying to address here? What issues have arisen in terms of potentially lack of adherence to bylaws, concerns around timelines for reporting, some of the other changes that are being proposed here around board governance and membership? I mean, there is so much being changed and proposed in this legislation that it's hard to understand what the issue is that the government is trying to tackle and potentially what has taken place within these PROs that has the government so concerned. I would appreciate if a minister or a member that might have some insight into that was willing to stand up.

Again, from the letter that the AIA sent out back on February 28, this legislation was drafted in secret. You know, this isn't a direct quote, but it's quite clear that there are major concerns about the lack of inclusion during the consultation process, the lack of clarity around what the bylaws might look like after the fact. We see this again and again from this government, that they put forward sweeping changes to legislation and not only are they providing information that the minister is going to have so much more power through the legislation, but they're also asking Albertans and asking these associations and organizations to trust them that they are going to get the regulations right.

I would also ask, I suppose, at this point, what consultation process – hopefully, a formal one that is going to be open to the public or at least open to the stakeholders. First of all, who is going to be involved in those consultation processes? Have they already taken place? And is it going to be made available to the general public to have their say on that? Hopefully, we can get some answers on that.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, if I might ask how much time I have left.

**The Speaker:** A minute and 52 seconds.

**Mr. Carson:** Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The idea of mandatory versus voluntary registration, which the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford brought up, is another important issue, specifically around the idea of the money that these organizations receive from these registration processes. Do we expect to see a complete and fundamental change to how much money is being provided to these organizations from these registrations, from these memberships? How is that going to affect them and affect their ability to effectively advocate for their associations, effectively ensure that they have the bandwidth to provide bylaws and reporting requirements that are going to meet the standards that are being put forward by Bill 23? There are so many questions. It seems that the government is putting a lot of pressure on these organizations to adhere to regulations that they haven't even seen and at the same time potentially clawing back thousands and thousands of dollars from these organizations, so I think that they might expect to have answers about how they are going to afford the changes that they are being asked to make.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I have major concerns with Bill 23. I think that this needs to go back to the drawing board because it's

quite clear that this government has not done the proper amount of consultation and that very likely many of these organizations are going to be concerned about the amount of power that this minister and this government are trying to give themselves through this legislation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 23. Well, we support consistency, we support transparency, we support accountability for the professional bodies, for the professional statutory organizations, and, in fact, in all areas of the government, but this bill goes far beyond that. If the government was really serious about transparency and accountability, they would not get the code of silence award from the Canadian Association of Journalists in 2020. The reason for that was that this government is not transparent. This government refuses to be accountable.

For example, they set up an entity, the war room, a \$120 million entity, and they exempted it from FOIP. What that means: the public will pay for that entity, for them stealing logos and doing all kinds of things, but the public will be shut down. The public will not be able to access their records, the details, how they are spending public money. So if the government is really serious about accountability, that's where they will start. For instance, then there was an inquiry, the Allan inquiry, that was delayed or given multiple extensions in terms of time, in terms of money, and the public was not given access to the details. No transparency again.

And it's the same with accountability. This government doesn't want to be accountable to the people of Alberta. What they are doing in the name of transparency and accountability in this piece of legislation goes far beyond that. If we agree to these changes, then self-regulatory organizations will be self-regulatory in name only. This bill is giving the minister power to determine the scope, their bylaws, and even their existence. Knowing the history of the current minister, what could go wrong? If the minister is allowed to determine the scope, their bylaws, and even their existence, I do not believe that the minister will have or the minister's department will have the kind of expertise that a self-governing profession will have, those professionals will have.

8:50

For instance, I'm a lawyer, and it's governed by the Law Society of Alberta. It's a self-governing organization, and I do not believe for a second that any minister in this government or, for that matter, any government will know more about the legal profession or its governance than the professionals themselves, than the law society. There is a democratic process. They elect benchers. They are in regular contact with lawyers that provide them support, that provide them guidance, and they regulate the profession in a way where it maintains public trust and confidence and it remains arm's length from the government.

Similarly, social work. I do know a lot of social workers. I do have a background in that as well. Again, it's a self-governing body. Not for a second would I trust that any minister will have more expertise or is more qualified to govern the profession than social workers themselves.

As my colleague earlier mentioned, we are seeing a trend with this government, that they are trying to strip citizens of their powers and consolidate that power in government so that they can decide whatever they think suits their political needs. That's unacceptable. That is unacceptable. For instance, in this case the minister of labour, previously the Minister of Justice, was caught interfering in

the administration of justice. Why should Albertans trust this minister in particular, that he has any credibility or has more expertise to manage any of these self-governing professions, their bylaws, their scope, or even their existence? I do not believe that Albertans will trust this government, this minister to do any of those functions.

This legislation is unnecessarily confusing and leaves many substantial details to the regulations. We know that when details are within the legislation, then any changes that need to be made have to come through this Legislature. But, no, that's not what this government is doing. Like with every other bill, they're bringing forward a piece of skeleton legislation and giving themselves power to regulate through regulations, schedules, and orders. Mr. Speaker, this is a government which is the least trusted across Canada. The least trusted government. They shouldn't be even asking for more powers. Albertans can't wait to strip them of the power they already have.

Here the government is asking for powers to manage and regulate self-regulating professions. For instance, one of the requirements contained here is that these organizations will now have three timelines to adhere to in approving applications for registration. Why on earth does this government think that they are better positioned to determine the timeline for registration than the professionals? These are the kinds of arbitrary powers, arbitrary measures that they're putting in this legislation, and it's completely unacceptable.

They talk about reducing red tape, and now this bill is piling red tape onto self-governing professions, creating more work without thinking through what the unintended consequences could be.

They did not consult all the professions that are impacted by this piece of legislation. They did not consult them. They can read one quote, but they did not consult all the professions and professionals who are impacted by that. They're just using their majority to ram through these changes so that they can exert control on these self-governing professions. They can control the membership. They can have a hammer to get their way when they need these organizations onside. This is undemocratic, this is unnecessary, and that's why Albertans don't trust this government.

Also, as I said, the government is giving wide powers to the minister with respect to the minister determining the scope of some governing body. I think it would be nice if the minister would get up, list all the organizations that are impacted, and talk about the consultation that the minister or this government had with every single one of the organizations that are impacted by this piece of legislation. It would be nice to know if government has reached out to any of these professions who are impacted by these changes.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Clearly, the government did not consult on this legislation. Reading one quote from a validator does not amount to consultation. It does not give the government authority to dismantle all of these self-governing organizations, to determine their scope, to determine their bylaws, to determine their existence. That's way too broad. That's not something that government is doing to make them accountable, and we do know government's record on accountability.

9:00

So this bill, one, is overreaching into areas where government should not. Two, I do not believe that government has expertise, capacity to determine the scope, bylaws, and existence of these self-governing organizations. Three, government did not consult with these organizations and members of these organizations or Albertans at large. As drafted, this bill is unacceptable.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 23?

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 22

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity it is my honour to rise today to move that Bill 22, Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta's Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022, be read a third time.

I want to start by acknowledging the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity. I know that he and his office went to great lengths to receive input on the best path forward for this legislation. I thank him and his office for their efforts.

Seeing how the current minister has received input from stakeholders has caused me to reflect on what has happened previously. You see, Madam Speaker, I'm a power engineer; I have been for a number of years. Prior to being elected to represent West Yellowhead, I had the opportunity to run a power plant and also run one of the largest industrial consumers of electricity in the province. For me, through this lived experience I've been afforded an opportunity that few people have. I have personally witnessed both how the generation side and the industrial consumer side of the electricity market work. I've learned how decisions around the electricity market can impact people personally, impact industry, lead to whether companies move forward with investment decisions, and even lead to job gains or losses in our communities.

After I became the candidate for the UCP, I was at an event one evening in a community and met an organization travelling the province to talk about electricity. I asked about their organization, and they told me they were part of a, quote, unquote, think tank that was going into communities telling them why the path forward with the electricity market made sense. Madam Speaker, this was before the election in 2019. It was during a time where, as someone working in industry, I was painfully aware of the changes that were happening under the previous government. I was very much aware of the devastation that was being caused, that would lead to job losses, higher electricity prices, and the electricity grid being subjected to massive instability, you know, like we hear about in certain states that are subjected to brownouts and blackouts.

My response to the young lady who told me that the path forward made sense was simply: oh, you get paid to go around the province and lie to people. We then did have a great discussion about electricity and the market and what the best path forward would and should be, including the need for industry to succeed so they can help other consumers pay for the infrastructure necessary, electricity storage for renewable energies, and an open, competitive market that is driven by investor confidence rather than massive subsidies to companies who otherwise wouldn't be viable. Our discussion also covered the importance of electricity to be reliable and affordable. In fact, I believe that we got to a point where we both agreed that an ideologically driven electricity market was less important than a reliable and affordable market.

After the election I took a keen interest in what our path forward for the electricity market would be. Along with consumers and

industries around the province I was relieved that we stayed with an energy-only market. I was thankful that we started having conversations about the massive costs for consumers relative to building infrastructure to transmit electricity from one side of the province to the other. I was grateful that the minister was focused on weighing out all decisions to ensure that the potential impacts are realized, weighed out, and mitigated prior to making massive changes. If only that approach had been taken previously, perhaps our ratepayers wouldn't be on the hook for 7 and a half billion dollars of transmission line, over a billion dollars of repayment to the Balancing Pool, hundreds of millions of dollars of subsidies and corporate welfare for coal-fired plants to retrofit to natural gas based on an ideological agenda rather than advancing technology around carbon capture and fly ash mitigation.

Oddly enough, the same government that was creating such a mess of the electricity market came to a realization that their decisions were having a massive negative impact, with great instability and drastically increasing costs, and decided to, rather than stopping their agenda or actually stopping to ask for advice or even listen to concerns, slap a price cap on electricity.

Now, I know we have heard from the opposition members that this price cap was the right thing to do, but I want to highlight a couple of things about the price cap. First and foremost, the price cap was not indefinite. It was set to expire at the end of December 2022. That's right, Madam Speaker. They set the cap to expire as Alberta entered an election year. They didn't reverse course on horrible, uneducated, ideological decisions that they knew would increase costs exponentially for Alberta households and industries. No, they decided to instead cap the price and then try to use it for political gain down the road.

Secondly, the price cap wasn't real. You see, even after the price cap was instituted in the first year, the price was above the cap, so the former government stole money out of the taxpayer pocket to pay corporations for the price above the cap. This sort of magic trick to fool the ratepayer and increase taxation for the taxpayer, for me, Madam Speaker, is not only disingenuous; it's downright disgusting. All they had to do was change course.

Nevertheless, Madam Speaker, I'm thankful that our government and our associate minister of electricity have chosen to engage with the public, to engage with industry, to engage with the groups that run our electricity market. I'm grateful that the government is considering the impact of decisions being made now on how it impacts the province now and for the future. I can go on and on about the benefits of modernizing Alberta's electricity grid, but at the end of the day the fact remains that our government listened to what Albertans wanted and is now implementing initiatives to meet the growing needs of consumers, create a low-carbon future through investment from industry, and reduce the harm done by costly subsidies from Alberta taxpayers.

Given recent events this was not a decision that came lightly. This legislation was developed with input from a wide range of stakeholders and consumer groups. It builds off legislation tabled last year. Bill 22 will enable electricity generation for unlimited self-supply with export, an incentive for new investment in the province. It will establish a distribution planning framework. This framework will help Alberta plan for the growing and changing consumer demands of tomorrow, including electric vehicles, renewable power sources, emerging technologies, and other distributed energy resources. We need to act now to make long-term changes central to our province's prosperous future.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'm proud to support this legislation and look forward to continuing to hear how the associate minister will move our province forward to correct the damage that was done

previously and make Alberta a place where affordable, reliable energy is expected for households, communities, and industries moving forward.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others that want to join the debate on Bill 22? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and provide some additional comments at this stage of debate on Bill 22. I think it's fair to say that we've had a chance to review this legislation because we had a chance to review it last fall as well, when it was initially introduced. To the previous number of points that my hon. colleagues, anyway, made around consultations with professional organizations in the area of labour relations, in the area of regulations governing child and youth care, in just simply a number of areas, consultation just simply was not done.

9:10

I think, pointing to the fact that the government has been seized with other priorities – that is to say, focusing on themselves and not the rather boring work of focusing on Albertans – it's almost as if we are not important enough, that this matter of making good legislation for Albertans and talking to them and making sure that, you know, the legislation is solving problems that Albertans understand that they have is not as interesting to the governing party as the palace intrigue that seems to grip much of their attention. So we came to a spot where the consultation was not completed, and the government, rightfully, understood that last fall, when this bill was first introduced. We are glad to see that that piece of work finally has, albeit late, been completed, and here we are at third stage.

Now, I think it's fair to say that based on the fact that this bill is designed, is a specific response to the electrification that comes as a result of decarbonization – that is real and is required. It is urgent, as I have noted in my comments on this bill, because climate change is real. Now, these are not words that the province says very often. In fact, it is that avoidance that oftentimes does create a climate of investor uncertainty. Certainly, oftentimes, as I have my conversations with renewables developers, power market participants of various kinds, and investors of various kinds, both institutional and not, it certainly is increasingly seen as something that does hold back investor certainty and investor confidence given that there seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding of the coal phase-out, the fact that 12 of the 18 plants were phased out by Mr. Harper. The Premier was at the table at that time, in fact, a couple of members of caucus now, the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche as well.

There seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding about what a contract for difference is. Characterizing it as a subsidy I don't think inspires confidence in anyone given that it's not, and it just makes people look ridiculous in the House.

Given the failure to commit to transparency on the industrial price, as is mandated by section 2 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, that certainly is – that failure of, essentially, courage to stand up to, you know, a climate-denying base within the party just doesn't inspire investor confidence or investor certainty given that the industrial price is so intimately linked to the value of the offsets and the appropriate governing of the offsets market.

It also does not inspire confidence or certainty when there still seem to be elements within the party – we just had it last week, a set of questions around, essentially, what the government was going to do to tell private landowners what to do with their land with respect to solar and wind projects, which was an extraordinary

position for a UCP MLA to take, you know, saying that private property owners don't have the right to execute agreements with those companies or shouldn't have the right, and then there should be all kinds of other regulatory red tape and delays within the AUC process and a frivolous blocking of the AUC regulatory process, frustrating new investment for developers and others.

Certainly, it does not help in terms of investor certainty and investor confidence when a government won't even say the words "climate change," such that industry folks will then observe out loud to me that these folks have no idea what they're leaving on the table when they do that. These are folks that just want to have a regularized, predictable climate for certainty so they can confidently make investments in now, thankfully, electricity storage that can complement in a number of different ways other forms of generation, whether it's in the hydro space or in some of the wind and solar spaces.

Certainly, we do see that even thermal generation, you know, goes down for maintenance and so on quite often. This is the time of year when that happens. There is no such thing as an always-on system of generation, so this piece helps, I think. I think there's no question that it also may work in really interesting ways in our energy-only market, and that's a good thing.

I think that there's also no question that this bill is at least a tacit understanding by some elements of the cabinet that we do need to grapple with the fact that climate change is real even though I understand that that causes a great deal of consternation and division within the caucus. I suppose the folks who are on the other side of that debate are just going to have to come to terms with that, that we're in the 21st century. At least there's the odd person on the front bench and maybe in the policy co-ordination office and elsewhere that actually understands that to be a real thing.

You know, I think there's no question that the Official Opposition will support this bill, and we're glad that the extra consultation happened, but it's really important to point out here that this is the very bare minimum of the job description. Going further to make this legislation and other legislation that we've had before us on the topic of utilities more relevant would be to do something about the extraordinarily high prices that people are paying right now, and there are any number of ways that that can be accomplished.

There's no question that there can be more funding available to and resources available to the Utilities Consumer Advocate to help people navigate contracts and so on to insulate them from some of these price spikes. There's no question about that. There's no question that a cap or some other form of rebate to consumers could and should have been made real, and that policy work should have been done last fall, when anyone who was looking at the electricity futures could tell. Even last summer, when the heat wave came, it was very clear to me that we were going to be having this conversation around affordability by this time, and indeed we were, but the government was just happy to whistle past the graveyard and just, you know, do absolutely nothing to help people.

There's no question that overhauling some of the more, I guess, intricate yet not exactly top-of-mind regulatory aspects of the electricity system is a really important drumbeat of government work. You know, a gold star for showing up in the morning, I guess. But this is the absolute bare minimum, both on the climate change file but also on the overall ensuring that utilities remain affordable. And the energy-only market, which does deliver a number of advantages for welcoming new investment, whether it's foreign direct investment or Canadian investors – there's no question that it does that, but it also subjects the consumer to volatility, and that's where the government's regulatory function has to come in.

The final piece I will say on this is that it has come to my attention more recently that the AUC is quite backed up in many of its processes, in some part due to some of the sort of vexatious and frivolous activity around trying to frustrate development of projects in some municipalities who don't want people to do what they're going to do with their private land and make those choices in a free-market economy. Apparently, that's not a real thing for Conservatives anymore. They're not really interested. You know, I guess it's left to me to make a spirited defence of the free market.

You know, I think that there's a lot of stuff that needs to be cleaned up at the AUC, because you can't have these thousands and thousands of megawatts sitting in a regulatory queue and having just, like, vexatious nonsense getting in the way of new investment, new generation, new jobs, and, ultimately, new economic activity in the province. There is no question as well that landowners benefit tremendously from these projects if they are appropriately sited and if they negotiate a good deal with the developer. There's no question, too, that municipalities also benefit in the form of tax revenues.

9:20

One of the biggest things that happens, especially for rural landowners when they choose to develop their private land in this way, is that it can oftentimes provide, again, a counterweight to the volatility of another commodity, which is whatever they happen to be growing or raising on their farm, but also it can mean that there is succession planning on farms so that communities remain places where people can raise families. That income is really, really important, and it should not be discounted, and it should not be sacrificed at the altar of some kind of Facebook rant that masquerades as a question period question on the relative value of frustrating private land development of wind and solar, as I heard one of the questions come from a government backbencher last week.

I will conclude my comments there. I am pleased to support this legislation, Madam Speaker. You know, it's possible that some observers might think I took a roundabout way to get there, but it is not in my DNA to be overly complimentary to a Conservative, so I will not be in this instance. However, this is an important step forward for the overall management and regulatory framework for Alberta's electricity system.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer a few comments as well on Bill 22, the Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta's Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022, at third reading. I want to thank my friend from Lethbridge-West for her comments. I just want to say that I know that she is not particularly complimentary about Conservatives. I have yet to see the group of people about whom she is particularly complimentary. We live in hope, and I'm sure that one day we'll see some compliments come from the Member for Lethbridge-West. I suspect that I won't be receiving any from her any time soon, though.

You know, I do want to thank her for raising some particularly important issues about what has driven the cost of electricity here in the province of Alberta, because I think she has given a much more honest analysis of what has driven the cost of electricity than the previous speaker, the Member for West Yellowhead. I was shocked listening to the Member for West Yellowhead stand up,

start off his comments about saying that he was a power engineer and that he had all of this lived experience working in the electricity industry, and then he continued to spout all of the misinformation that the associate minister for electricity has been giving about the cost of electricity and what has driven that up over the last couple of years.

As my friend from Lethbridge-West has pointed out, all of those things that the Member for West Yellowhead raised as issues are minor in comparison to what is really driving the cost of electricity right now, and that is market power being exercised by the few electricity generators who are in the market. That's not me saying that; that is the result of an independent analysis done by respected electricity grid policy experts at the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy, particularly Blake Shaffer. The market power that is being exercised right now by the few electricity generators is what is causing the bulk of the increase in electricity prices.

What's incredibly frustrating, Madam Speaker, is that this exercise of market power, or economic withholding, as we used to call it in the good old days, is legal. Our government made an attempt through the Alberta Utilities Commission to crack down on the use of economic withholding to try to make sure that generators couldn't just raise the price of power because they had the power to do so, that they had to demonstrate clearly to the utility regulator that they had a financial need to raise electricity prices. This government has scrapped that. The AUC has walked away from this crackdown on economic withholding. It's now perfectly legal, the way it was before our government was elected. And what is the government doing about it? Nothing.

My friend from Lethbridge-West raises the point about the fact that the Alberta Utilities Commission is overwhelmed with work because we know that an important role that they play is to make sure that the market is functioning properly and fairly and in the interests of electricity consumers. They have the mandate and the power, if they choose to use it, to investigate the behaviour of electricity generators to see if they're charging fair prices, and they don't have the capacity to do that right now even though they should be doing it.

You know, I watched with great interest earlier this year the proceedings of the Alberta Utilities Commission with respect to ATCO generation and their dirty tricks trying to hide inflated costs to contractors and subcontractors by shifting that onto ratepayers. They ended up paying – what? – I think it was a \$30 million fine to the Alberta Utilities Commission for their shenanigans. The only reason we know that that happened, Madam Speaker, was because a whistle-blower at ATCO came forward with all of the information, laid out the case, had all of the e-mails. The paper trail was there, as easy to follow as anything else, so it was an open-and-shut case. When the Alberta Utilities Commission looked at it, it was quite clear that ATCO was up to no good. They issued them a fine, and hopefully that will repair some of the costs that were illegally transferred onto ratepayers because of what went on there.

My question is: what other things are these electricity generators getting away with that we don't know about? The Alberta Utilities Commission should be conducting much more in the way of proactive investigations to understand whether or not the rate increases that electricity generators are foisting upon the people of Alberta are actually legal and warranted. That's what's going on here.

Moreover, let's entertain the hypothetical world where the excuses that the associate minister of natural gas continues to trot out when it comes to the cost of raising electricity – well, he has the power to fix it. He refuses to do so, saying that we spent a billion dollars on power purchase arrangements and 7 and a half billion dollars on upgrading the transmission system. Well, that doesn't



actually reduce the cost of electricity for people today. It's very easy to lay blame for what's going on. Trust me. I know; we've been doing that for the last three years. It's the easiest thing I've ever done in my life. Coming up with solutions that will make a positive difference in the lives of Albertans is much harder, and this government is completely unwilling to engage in that work. They can't even get a simple \$50 cheque out the door.

I was talking to some residents in Edmonton-Gold Bar earlier today. They're at risk of losing their home because they cannot afford the cost of utilities going up in addition to the cost of everything else that's going up: their rent is going up, the cost of groceries is going up, the cost of fuel is going up. Even though the government scrapped the gas tax, somehow gas companies found a way to charge us just as much for gas as the day that the government announced that they were scrapping the tax. The government promised people relief on their utility bills, and now we find out that we have to wait until December and people are giving up hope that they'll ever see any help at all. In one moment the Finance minister and the associate minister of electricity talk about the rebates that are coming, and in the next moment the Finance minister stands up and says: well, we can't give more money to people in this inflationary environment. People are left on their own, I guess, in the view of the Finance minister and the associate minister of electricity. They're certainly not getting the help that they were promised.

I just want to wrap up my comments here by saying that the opportunity for electrification is one of the greatest opportunities that faces the province of Alberta right now as we transition to a low-carbon economy. I believe that this bill starts the work, but there is much more that needs to be done much more quickly. What will happen if we rapidly move to electrify everything in Alberta, transfer everything that's powered by fossil fuels right now onto electrical appliances, electrical vehicles? The end result would be massive savings for consumers.

9:30

An analysis by an organization called Rewiring America found that if the average household switched all of its appliances, all of its machines to things powered by renewable electricity, the average consumer would save \$3,000 a year in utility costs and fuel costs. Those are big savings that people need right now. Moreover, it will create hundreds of thousands of jobs and not just in the electricity sector; in all of the spinoffs as well, the commercial sector – we need to manufacture more of these electric machines – in the transportation sector, even in sectors that you wouldn't think of as being traditionally associated with electrification, things like finance, right? People need to be able to pay for the transition to an electrified home. I think that there are some opportunities for some financial instruments that would be suitable to helping families do that.

**Mr. Hunter:** Why would we need to do that if it saves them so much money?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah. The Member for Taber-Warner just – I'll be happy to explain that to him if he doesn't understand the point that I'm making now afterwards.

**Mr. Hunter:** Well, you could do it now.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, we have an agenda to stick to, and I'd like to honour every member's time and stick to that agenda. Thank you very much.

Anyway, this is important work. People will save thousands of dollars. We'll put hundreds of thousands of people to work. We will

significantly reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions, which is urgently, urgently required. Let's get on with it.

So for that reason, Madam Speaker, I'm voting in favour of this bill. Thank you very much.

Oh, I'm sorry. No, no, no. Sorry. I still have some time left, Madam Speaker. With that time, I would like to move to adjourn debate on Bill 22.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 20

### Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

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

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening to move on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General third reading of Bill 20, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

This bill proposes a handful of housekeeping amendments meant to keep our province's legislation up to date for Albertans, nothing more. To repeat what was said when the bill was introduced originally, it's the government's responsibility to keep legislation relevant with the times to meet the needs of our province.

Before I continue, I'd like to summarize what was presented at Bill 20's second reading. If passed, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act would amend five pieces of legislation. The amendments would complete the following changes. First, it would change the Corrections Act to make Alberta Parole Board remuneration consistent with other government agencies, boards, and commissions. Secondly, it would alter the Justice of the Peace Act to streamline the process for making JPs part-time or full-time. Thirdly, it would update the Missing Persons Act so that police can complete associated tasks with minimal delay. Fourth, it would change the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act to clean up outdated wording and make language more sensitive to grieving families. Finally, it would update the Youth Justice Act to keep the wording of the legislation in line with changes that the federal government made to Canada's Criminal Code.

Madam Speaker, during debate a number of questions were raised about the victims of crime. As previously discussed, our government is committed to ensuring victims of crime have access to the help they need and when they need it. Bill 20 does not impact this commitment whatsoever. In our work to serve Albertans victimized by crime, we heard first-hand that the previous financial benefits program could take too long to access and didn't always provide enough urgent assistance for those coping with trauma. Albertans told us about gaps in services and supports for victims of crime, and that's why we are developing a new model to make sure victims are supported throughout their involvement in the justice system.

With the closure of the financial benefits program the Criminal Injuries Review Board, which reviewed decisions made under that program, is no longer needed. The changes proposed in Bill 20 align provincial legislation with the closure of this board, nothing more. To be clear, we are finalizing plans to improve programs and services to continue to support victims of crime well into the future. At this time the emergency-based programs have a 45-day limitation to apply, but a victim under extenuating circumstances may apply for an extension.

All victims of crime continue to have access to the many resources offered by local victim service units such as the following, Madam Speaker: information on the criminal justice process and court-related updates, assistance in understanding the

rights of victims of crime, and help accessing referrals for specialized supports and community resources. The minister expects to share more information on this new model that will enhance victims' services later this year.

Madam Speaker, with these points in mind and with no concerns noted on the other portions of this legislation, I would like to underscore that Bill 20 would help update and take care of the noteworthy details of several important pieces of provincial law. Part of providing Albertans with consistent, effective access to justice is looking after the small things, doing the housekeeping work that's necessary to keep things in good working order.

I hope that members on both sides of the House will join me in supporting this legislation. With that, Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 20.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there members to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to third reading of the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. I was listening to the hon. member while she was making her comments in regard to the government's perception of how this is just simply housekeeping. Now, I'm a little concerned that once again we see a piece of legislation that's being introduced in the House that the government just perceives as being housekeeping but, really, is finalizing the decisions that the government made under Bill 16, which was to, basically, abolish the current victims of crime fund and any types of supports that individuals across Alberta could access or need supports if they're ever in a situation where they are a victim of crime.

Now, the obvious issue with this is that we know that since Bill 16 was introduced in 2020, so two years ago, a big percentage of the funding that was allocated through fines and penalties that were leveraged by the courts – of those fines that were paid, that money was then transferred into a victims of crime fund. Now, that's long standing. We know that there's about – there was an expected \$40 million annually that was to be raised and put into that fund, and we know that in 2020, when this was changed, there was about \$74 million of surplus that was in that fund. We know that since that time, that money is now being used to pay for more prosecutors and police officers. That money that was allocated to provide supports to individuals that were victims of crime is no longer available.

Now, the member opposite mentioned that: you know, stay tuned. The government is finalizing a plan about what they're going to do to provide supports for people that have had to access the victims of crime fund. Well, I find that disappointing given that the legislation that was introduced, Bill 16, that made sweeping changes to the victims of crime fund was written and introduced into this House in 2020, two years ago. We still are in a: "Wait and see. We have an announcement coming soon at some point. There will be a new model that will be developed, and the government is finalizing the plans."

9:40

Well, why, then, do we have Bill 20? This current piece of legislation that we are debating this evening that is solidifying the changes that Bill 16 introduced two years ago is now being brought into this House with, once again, no finalized plan, no new model, no vision by this government about how they're going to support individuals that are victims of crime, but: "Hey, let's legislate everything. Let's change it all. Let's solidify the regulations and the changes that we've made under Bill 16 even though we know as a government that they're not ready." Clearly, you just said that. There's no plan yet. It's not ready to roll out, but let's introduce Bill

20. Let's solidify those changes. Let's impact individuals that are currently in need of supports. Let's use this fund to pay for prosecutors and police officers, not counselling services for the very people that need it. And, oh, on top of that, let's not have a plan to replace that so that the opposition can look at it and go: hey, maybe this makes some reasonable sense.

Again, you're putting the cart before the horse. It is an ongoing theme by this government to introduce legislation, to change red tape, as they so call it, to make sweeping changes to programs that support Albertans in their time of need and then have absolutely no vision or plan to fall back on: "We'll make the changes. We'll figure out the consequences later. We'll create a plan, and maybe before the next election there will be something in place." Why would the government introduce these pieces of legislation if they weren't ready? Why do Albertans continuously have to face the consequences of poor planning by this government? That's what it is. It's poor planning.

Someone drafted legislation and said, "Hey, it's ready to go." I'm sure somebody else in the background said: "Okay; but we don't actually have the tools in place yet. Hold on. We shouldn't do this." And cabinet looked at it and said: "No, no, no. It's on the agenda. We've got to push it forward, so we're just going to do it. It doesn't matter if it impacts Albertans. It doesn't matter if it's going to mess up the system. It doesn't matter if people aren't going to get the supports that they need. None of that matters because at some point we'll just keep telling Albertans we have a plan. There's a plan coming. Stay tuned. We're developing a new model. There's another plan. Stay tuned. At some point we'll let you know what it is." Instead of coming out and saying: "Here's our plan. Here's the new model. Oh, and by the way, Bill 20 is going to reinforce the changes that we're making."

That's what good governance is. That's how you make sure that Albertans have supports and the resources that they need when they need them. You don't liquidate a fund and use what is intended to support Albertans to access mental health supports and be able to address the trauma that they've experienced and then go back and go: well, because it's underfunded, we can't actually do that support. Well, no wonder. The money is being taken out to be used for purposes it was not intended for. People aren't being able to access the supports that they need, or they're giving limitations, or there aren't enough services around.

I appreciate that we're in third reading and the government is going to make the choices that they're going to make, but I will again remind the government that at some point it would be great for Albertans to actually have a plan before they legislate so that they know where this government is going, so that they feel confident that the choices that this government is making actually help Albertans, but it doesn't. This is a continuous theme, and this is why Albertans are continuously frustrated with the fact that this government doesn't have a vision, that they can't be trusted in making decisions because they never validate or demonstrate the work and where they're headed. They just expect Albertans to have blind faith: "Trust us. A plan is coming. We're developing a new model. Just trust us."

Well, the reality of it is that when people are in crisis, when they depend on supports, when they know there's a budget assigned, Albertans don't trust it because they know that the government will try to use that fund for something else; a prime example, prosecutors and police officers, not counselling services. Maybe we'll see some supports, but for now we won't.

So I will not be supporting this piece of legislation, because, once again, until I see a plan from this government, until the finalized plan can be presented to Albertans and I can do good consultation and talk to Albertans about whether or not they think that those

services are going to do what this government is implying is going to happen, this piece of legislation is not genuine in the support that needs to be provided to Albertans.

With that, I will close my remarks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 20? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to this Bill 20. As was mentioned by the mover of the bill, it changes five pieces of legislation. I want to say that out of those five, we take no issue with changes to four of them, absolutely no issue with those changes. They are housekeeping. They are positive changes, and we support these changes.

At the same time, as my colleague from Edmonton-Manning said, this bill is also legislating on the victims of crime fund, the dismantling of that victims of crime fund, that started under the previous, previous, previous Justice minister. So far no efforts have been made to fix those changes, and the reason that the government raided the victims of crime fund was that the government has been slashing the Justice department budget every single year. So far they have cut \$200 million from the Justice department budget, and now they are taking money away from the victims of crime to backfill their reckless cuts.

I think that with the corporate handout, \$4.7 billion, the government even expedited the rollout of that, and instead of over four years, they rolled out that money in two years. But now for victims it's the third year. They are still waiting for the new model. They're being denied support that they need to recover and heal. They've been waiting for over three years. The changes that the government made to the victims of crime fund: not only did they take money away from the victims of crime, diverted it to other initiatives to backfill their reckless cuts; they also reduced the existing supports while they're consulting. They also put in stringent timelines, reducing them from two years to 45 days for victims to get their stuff together and apply for the benefit. Otherwise, you're out of luck.

9:50

It's the third year now, and they are even solidifying the changes that they made to dismantle this fund, but they are still not able to come up with the replacement model. We are talking about victims of serious crimes: those who have been assaulted physically, sexually, those who have witnessed murders, those who have witnessed horrible crimes. Now they are getting less support because of this government's incompetence and this government's indifference. They think it's more important for them to solidify their changes, but victims can still wait. That is unfair. That is unconscionable. Victims should not have to wait for this government to get their act together to put together a replacement plan.

As was earlier mentioned, there is a kind of pattern of behaviour with this government where they are trying to strip citizens of their powers and consolidating power in government. Before the UCP became government, for decades there was a Criminal Injuries Review Board, that was an arm's-length board where victims of crime can go and seek redress. They could talk about the benefits they are getting, what else they can get. They could appeal those decisions and actually get the supports that they need to recover and heal. The government is now disestablishing the Criminal Injuries Review Board altogether. If anybody suggests that it's, say, housekeeping, please do talk to some victims of crime; do talk to organizations supporting victims of crime. Not one organization across this province is onside with the government.

The government did not consult anyone on these changes, and since then we have heard from many victims directly that they are being denied supports. We are hearing from the victims' service organizations how adversely and negatively these changes are impacting them, how adversely these changes are impacting those organizations' ability to help the victims of crime. Not one of them was consulted on these changes. Not one organization across this province stood with the government to support these changes, because these changes should not be supported.

These changes were not made in the best interests of those who benefit from this fund. These changes were made to backfill this government's reckless cuts. This fund was raided to provide for the cuts that this government made to the Justice department. These changes were not made keeping in mind the victims of crime. Instead of stripping the victims of crime of supports that they need to heal, there are many other things that this government could have done.

We have tens of thousands of cases in our court system that are being delayed, one, because of the Jordan decision; two, because of the pandemic; and, three, because of this government's incompetence. They're at risk of being thrown out because of the timeline set in the Jordan decision, thousands of those cases. Many victims of crime may not see a day in the court. They may see their alleged perpetrators walk free because the government did not prioritize issues facing our justice system. They were busy taking supports away from the victims of crime.

Those who were victimized: not only are they not getting supports from this government; they may now also have to cope with delays within the justice system that will further impact their recovery, that will further impact their healing, that will impact their mental health, that will shake their faith and trust in our justice system. They deserve justice in a timely fashion. Instead of taking supports away from them, I think the government should focus on and prioritize the processing of cases in our justice system. That should be the priority for the government instead of disestablishing the Criminal Injuries Review Board. That was an important board where a citizen could go to a fellow citizen and talk about their needs, talk about what they need for their recovery, talk about what they need for healing. They didn't have to come to this government, who doesn't listen.

Madam Speaker, I want to say categorically that the changes relating to the Corrections Act, the Justice of the Peace Act, the Missing Persons Act, the Youth Justice Act: we support these changes. But we cannot support the changes that are contained in this piece of legislation that relate to the victims of crime fund because these changes are adversely impacting the victims of crime. These changes are negatively impacting their recovery and healing, and victims of crime deserve far better from this government. Supports should not be taken away from them. They should be provided all the support they need for recovery and healing. This bill takes those supports away from victims of crime.

10:00

That's the part of the bill that we are opposed to, and we will certainly be opposing it. I will be voting against it, and I urge all members of this House to vote against these changes. Government should have . . . [Mr. Sabir's speaking time expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others?

**Mr. Sabir:** I want to adjourn the debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Perhaps there's another member that has time left that could move to adjourn debate. The hon. associate minister of mental health.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Private Bills Second Reading**

#### **Bill Pr. 2**

#### **Calgary Heritage Authority Amendment Act, 2022**

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise tonight to move second reading of Bill Pr. 2, the Calgary Heritage Authority Amendment Act, 2022.

For those unfamiliar with this organization, I just wanted to share a little bit about their mandate. Their role is to advise city council on all matters relating to Calgary heritage, evaluate potential historical sites, maintain Calgary's inventory of evaluated historic resources, and promote public awareness of shared heritage.

Madam Speaker, the greatest thing about preserving history is our ability to reflect and learn. Heritage Calgary has over 800 evaluated historic resources. The language that's in this bill reflects that term, an inventory of evaluated resources. Think about that for a second: over 800 evaluated resources.

I actually had the opportunity to explore a little bit on the map earlier today, and actually I had the privilege of working in a number of these heritage sites over my career and also grew up in one of these sites. First of all, First Baptist church, actually, which was built in 1911, was the location where the Mustard Seed was founded. It also happens to be the church I grew up in, was dedicated in, baptized in, and was eventually married in. That's one of the heritage sites they protect.

Then the Mustard Seed moved from the First Baptist church over, actually, to the Northern Electric Co. Warehouse, and there it continues to operate in that heritage site. At about 12 years old is when we moved into that building. I remember running around exploring the unique hallways and crevices at that unique building. After I left the Mustard Seed, I ended up at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary. They operate out of the Rutledge Hangar in Renfrew, which was built in 1929.

So for most of my career I've actually had the opportunity of working in heritage sites, so I can speak first-hand about the need to be able to preserve these great locations. I encourage all members, especially those from Calgary, to go and check out the website and take a look at it. Even in Calgary-Klein I was able to see a number of great heritage sites, including the Tuxedo Park school, which was built in 1920, and the Canadian Martyrs Catholic parish in Collingwood, which was built in 1967 and which is where my kids actually go to do all of their band and choir activities from their school.

Anyway, just a neat thing and an opportunity for us, I think, all members of this House, to go and explore Calgary's heritage and give a big thanks to Heritage Calgary for the work that they do to be able to preserve that. Obviously, that's a lot of sites to keep track of and to preserve for future generations. Heritage Calgary CEO, Josh Traptow, and his team and the board of directors all deserve our gratitude for their work in preserving our history and making these resources user friendly for all Albertans.

You can visit the organization's website and see a map of the over 800 historical resources I was mentioning. They are all plotted on a very user-friendly map, so check it out. Learning more about Calgary's heritage is right at your fingertips, Madam Speaker, so check it out.

Heritage Calgary also offers walking tours to some historic sites. It has annual awards and has a historian in residence program. Its work cannot be overstated. We also need to work to make sure that this not-for-profit organization is fully empowered to fulfill its mandate. I believe that's what this bill is doing. The language in this bill is updated so that Heritage Calgary can continue to run its organization to the best of its abilities.

The instrumental work of Heritage Calgary and the educational value of this organization is another part of its work that I need to highlight. Anyone who takes part in a tour or spends hours getting lost in Calgary's rich history will come away with a bigger appreciation for our beautiful city. If you're ever inclined, head to [www.heritagecalgary.ca](http://www.heritagecalgary.ca) and check out the interactive map and see which one of the 800 sites you want to learn more about. Take the walking tour and be sure to ask lots of questions.

That's why I support this bill and, more importantly, am a big supporter of Josh Traptow and his team and what they are doing in Calgary to preserve our history. It's my honour to be able to support this organization, and I would like to extend an invitation to this House, all members, anybody interested, to explore Heritage Calgary; a rich history, a storied history is waiting for you to explore. That's why, again, I'm supporting this bill. I encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this evening to speak to Bill Pr. 2, the Calgary Heritage Authority Amendment Act, 2022. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Klein for bringing this forward on behalf of Josh Traptow, on behalf of the Calgary Heritage Authority. I appreciate the passion that you bring forward when you talk about the heritage that Calgary has. I know that something as important as our history and our heritage needs to be talked about and supported. So I fully support this piece of legislation, and I would hope that all members of this Chamber do as well.

I know that it's something that was being asked for, and I'm happy to see a response and to show support for that. I know that over the years I have worked with Heritage Calgary – hopefully, when this bill is passed – and Edmonton Heritage Council in my role as the military liaison for the government. We did quite a few partnership things through the Edmonton Heritage Council, and I have to say that the work that's done through these organizations is absolutely incredible. They really want to continue to raise awareness and tell the story of Alberta. I think that having it in the hands of these organizations makes sense. To be able to show them respect and to provide support to them is something that is so important.

I really appreciate the member for outlining some of the great things that are happening in Calgary and some of the great ways that not just Calgarians but perhaps all Albertans can get involved and explore their city and really look at that storytelling.

The heritage councils, you know, really, really understand the diversity that's brought our province to where it is today, and they're able to tell that story. I would hope that investing in and supporting Heritage Calgary doesn't stop here. I know that there have been significant cuts over the years to our heritage within the budgets, and I think that in order to give it true support and meaning, we need to see continued support and resources. They're incredible storytellers for our province. They want to make sure that

our history is preserved and captured and then available for all to explore.

I think some of the great ideas that are coming out of Calgary and Edmonton really need to be looked at. I know when we talk about the government's vision for this province and being able to tell Alberta's story, I would say that we should look to those that talk about our heritage first. They carry that knowledge, and they share it.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would just say that I am fully in support of this piece of legislation, and I hope that all members of the Chamber are. With that, I will take my seat.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, would the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein like to close?

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 2 read a second time]

**10:10**

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. A wonderful evening of debate. I'm grateful for everyone's participation. But at this time I do move that the Assembly be adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

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



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For inquiries contact:

Editor

*Alberta Hansard*

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

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