



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, May 24, 2022

Day 35

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 61

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 3

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Mike Ellis	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Tanya Fir	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
Whitney Issik	Associate Minister of Status of Women
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Minister of Community and Social Services
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Ric McIver	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Ronald Orr	Minister of Culture
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
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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

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

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Rosin  
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**Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply**

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Milliken  
Rosin  
Stephan  
Yao  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
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Carson  
Dang  
Frey  
Gotfried  
Hunter  
Loewen  
Reid  
Sabir  
Smith

**Select Special Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee**

Chair: Mr. Walker  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

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Carson  
Dreeshen  
Ganley  
Long  
Sabir  
Stephan

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deol  
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**Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee**

Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon  
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**Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Milliken  
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Rowswell  
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**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Singh  
Turton  
Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, hon. members.

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 21

#### Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

**The Chair:** This is the bill's first time in Committee of the Whole. Are there members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity. As we've discussed during second reading of this bill, there are a number of aspects of the bill that we are indeed in agreement with. You know, the majority of these changes that are being proposed in this bill are really administrative, and we agree with a lot of them.

However, there are some and, I would say, one in particular that we're a little bit, well, I would say a lot in disagreement with. Of course, that is the one aspect of the bill which basically gives the minister of environment such widespread powers over parks. Given the track record of this UCP government, it's very hard for us to just assume that everything will be all right with the kind of power that is being allotted to the minister of environment when it comes to this particular file.

What we've seen so far when it comes Environment and Parks here in the province of Alberta is this government trying to basically sell off parts of our provincial parks system. Of course, Albertans came out very strongly against the mining of the eastern slopes. I would say that it was quite the boondoggle for this UCP government. People from all over the province, no matter where, were in complete disagreement with this proposal by the UCP, which they didn't even bring into the Legislature for us to really debate.

There was no opportunity for feedback from the opposition as they moved in this particular direction, and we had no other choice but to then support the majority of Albertans, who were also saying that they did not want the mining of the eastern slopes for coal. I'm glad that they did, and I'm glad that they came out in such force to actually demonstrate that this was not their will and that they were against this particular proposal by this UCP government.

Therefore, when it comes to this particular issue, it leaves us all imagining the worst because of the track record already established by this UCP government. That demonstrates to us that they cannot be trusted. It's Albertans themselves that are saying that this UCP government can't be trusted when it comes to this particular file and many others, I would say.

Just to be absolutely clear, I'd actually like to quote from the bill. In the bill under Minister's Directives and Codes it says, "The Minister may set standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines . . . or other rules relating to any matter in respect of which a regulation may be made under this Act." That can only be interpreted as the minister being able to do absolutely anything the minister wants when it comes to this. Here we have an omnibus piece of legislation that is sneaking this one particular proposal in, and Albertans have already spoken widely against anything that this government would propose with the actual mining of the eastern slopes. I do believe that it's a point of contention. Basically, Albertans don't trust this government.

Essentially, what kind of powers are we talking about, Madam Chair, when it comes to the powers being allocated to the minister of environment on this particular file? It could be, for example, perhaps the power to partially privatize a park. Perhaps it's for restricting access to parks. We've already seen what this government has done with Kananaskis, you know, a very common summer destination for many families and, I would add, many low-income families. They don't have the opportunity to travel abroad. Kananaskis was a summer destination for so many people, one that they could just simply drive to, if they had access to a car, that is, and actually enjoy the mountains here in the province of Alberta. And now this government has decided that, well, if you're going to be able to enjoy these mountains, you're going to have to pay a fee to get in. We're seeing more and more of this government making decisions that are actually restricting Albertans, and we can't be certain that the minister won't do more of this if he's given these widespread powers that have been determined in this particular piece of legislation.

It leaves us on this side of the House very worried that the powers won't be used wisely or with all Albertans in mind. Frankly, I would say that I find it unfathomable that this government would actually do that, restrict access. Now, I understand, you know, that to some of the individuals on the other side of the House it's, like: oh, well, you just pay this small fee. Well, maybe the members on the other side of the House interact with individuals where, yeah, what to them is a small fee for others is not accessible. That's why it's important that all Albertans be considered when this actually takes place. And I think that it's imperative on this government, being elected into office to actually represent all Albertans, that they would actually consider this.

Now, first of all, it could be with Kananaskis, but then it could be with other provincial parks all throughout Alberta that they would begin starting to charge a fee. We've seen that in order to hold a campsite, for example, they're adding a fee. I understand that the intention behind it was so that people wouldn't hold a campsite and then later on not use it, but this also restricts access for people that may not have the financial ability to actually pay for it, right? They also want to be able to enjoy Alberta's parks. It's one of the few options that they do have when it comes to vacationing in the province of Alberta, so this, in fact, is an economic barrier. And I completely understand. You know, some members on the other side of the House or perhaps all of the members on the other side of the House see it as just a small fee, but as I was saying, Madam Chair, what some people consider a small fee is, to others, an economic barrier. They'll have to make another decision or go somewhere

else. When they're used to going to Kananaskis, they would then have to consider going somewhere else.

But I think what's most challenging about this particular aspect is that it just gives such an incredible amount of power to the minister of environment. Now, I've spoken at length, Madam Chair, about more power being put into the hands of ministers during this government. I couldn't put an exact number on it, but I would say, you know, that definitely more than half the bills that have been presented inside of this House during this government's tenure have been putting more power in the hands of ministers.

**10:10**

Like, if it was one bill, okay; perhaps understandable. But then when it becomes four, five, six, 10, 20 bills, all with particular changes made that actually put more power into the hands of ministers, you have to start asking yourself: why is this government so power hungry? A lot of these decisions were made by agencies, boards, and commissions prior to this government coming into power, where Albertans had an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process of different aspects of the business conducted by this government here in the province of Alberta. People were actually aiding. There were councils where debates were had, people had discussions on particular aspects, and together they would reach a decision, and then they would make a recommendation to the minister to actually make a particular change.

But now what we're seeing with this government is that they're taking away those powers from agencies, boards, and commissions, so taking power out of the hands of Albertans that are actually participating in the democratic process, and they're putting that power into the hands of the minister. For me, it just begs a question. You know, the members on the other side like to talk a lot about freedom. They like to talk a lot about small government, and this bill is a testament to their perspective on trying to curb red tape. Yet in the same bill, in which, according to them, they're proposing more freedoms, less regulation, less red tape, they go and they put the power in the hands of a minister, where there is no accountability, this coming from a political party that likes to yell about accountability all the time.

You know, for many of the members that are private members of the government caucus on the other side, when they were in opposition, members of the Wildrose would talk about accountability endlessly in this House, that the government had to be held accountable. Yet now those same members are on that side of the House supporting bills that actually create an environment of less accountability when it comes to the powers that this government wields through each of their ministers. It's highly questionable. You can't be speaking out of both sides of your mouth, Madam Chair. You're either for accountability or you're not. Like, there's no other word to describe that than "hypocritical" and flip-flopping on an issue.

I think that Albertans have demonstrated, as we've seen through last week, they're very much wanting to hold those in power accountable. I think that the members on the other side of the House have to listen carefully – listen very, very carefully – when it comes to the desire of Albertans and the fact that they want to hold their government accountable. This is a step in the wrong direction when it comes to this proposed piece of legislation. It's definitely a step in the wrong direction. You know, giving this amount of power over to a minister is not what Albertans have in mind when it comes to strengthening their democracy. Albertans want to have more say in the democratic decision-making process, not less.

The way that things stand right now is – like, we saw this happen a couple of weeks ago when the government decided to take way

insulin pumps from Albertans, and there were a number of examples where this government took away insulin pumps from children that depend on those insulin pumps to actually go to school. Yes, I understand that they were proposing an alternative, but that alternative had not been put in place yet, so these individuals felt that they were being left hanging, hung out to dry, Madam Chair.

A more appropriate and more effective way of moving forward would have been to move from one program to another if that is indeed what this government wanted to do, but it didn't have a solution to a problem. It was actually creating a problem for Albertans. I, for one, am so happy that those Albertans decided to come together. From my understanding I believe it was more than 13,000 e-mails and letters that were actually sent to the Minister of Health to demand that he not end this program of insulin pumps.

There have been multiple examples of this kind of decision-making by this government that actually negatively impacts Albertans, and by putting more power into the hands of ministers, you can bet that you're going to see that. Consulting with a handful of people is not the same thing as consulting on a broad scale with the people of Alberta. It's very easy to go out and be like: oh, well, I consulted with a handful of people. That's what is not being divulged. Yeah, you can go out and, like, ask a handful of people and be like, "Oh, yes, I consulted," but that's not the appropriate way to consult.

A lot of the people that wrote in those letters regarding the insulin pump stated that they were not consulted. Advocacy groups representing these individuals said that they weren't consulted. It begs the question, then: who did this government actually consult to make this decision? This is becoming more and more of a problem with this government, Madam Chair, where they say they've consulted with certain people, yet the decisions that they're making are having drastic and negative impacts on Albertans. I find it just incredible that they would take away a program that was actually helping children go to school. You take away their insulin pump, and what happens then? And not just children but a number of Albertans.

I can only imagine, Madam Chair, that by putting more and more power into the hands of ministers and not devising an appropriate way of actually consulting, then the government is going to end up running into more instances where they're going to have to backpedal on decisions that they're making, because there is no process where they're actually consulting with a wide group of Albertans when it comes to particular issues.

I can only imagine that the same thing that happened with strip mining of the eastern slopes that was being proposed by this government, that a minister having that much power, wielding that much power, making those kinds of decisions will actually end up in a similar type of situation, where a minister may think, "Okay; well, I consulted with a handful of people; I think this is a good idea," you know, and will actually propose a change in legislation, and because the government has a majority, they can come into this House and actually ram the piece of legislation through as quickly as they want, not taking into consideration any feedback from the opposition. Yet the real opposition, Madam Chair, are those Albertans out there that do not want these kinds of changes being made in their province, and the members on the other side of the House need to consider that.

**10:20**

It's important that the government be as transparent as possible when it comes to these kinds of decisions, but we're not seeing that. We're seeing a lack of transparency; we're seeing a lack of accountability from this government, making changes that perhaps

are beneficial for friends of theirs, for example the raising of insurance.

**The Chair:** Are there others that wish to join the debate on Bill 21? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning to you. Hopefully, you had a great long weekend and a rest through the constituency break. I know that I certainly did. It gave me a little bit more of an opportunity to explore Bill 21, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. As we know, we have a very thick piece of legislation here that is affecting 16 different acts around nine different ministries, which would be the very definition, of course, of an omnibus bill, something that members of the government caucus and members of the government bench, when they served very well in opposition, were extremely opposed to. Yet it seems okay now that we have this type of bill before us.

Nevertheless, here it is. We're seeing changes to some of the different acts: the Animal Health Act; Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act; Cooperatives Act; Education Act; health statutes act; Highways Development and Protection Act; Local Authorities Election Act; Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act; Municipal Government Act; Pharmacy and Drug Act; Provincial Parks Act; Public Lands Act; Railway (Alberta) Act; Residential Tenancies Act; Rural Utilities Act; and Surveys Act. Those certainly would not fall under one category.

Of course, I always have to mention this when I get the chance because my good friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods, when she was labour minister, brought forward some changes all within labour, one ministry, some great changes that I very highly supported, and members opposite, you know, lit their hair on fire because they thought it was just such an omnibus bill. Yet here we have it. And every time I bring this topic up, there's always deafening silence on the other side around this.

Nevertheless, I will try to push forward here to talk a little bit about Bill 21. Some of the changes that I want to highlight – well, there are many, and I don't think I have enough time with which to bring them up, but I'll certainly try. We're seeing some changes right now around the Animal Health Act. As we know, there are cases of avian flu that are currently starting to grow within our province, which is not a good thing, of course. We are seeing changes around reporting, not necessarily the length of reporting time; it's just simply being moved from legislation to regulation, which of course signals to me that, you know – moving that: is that considered red tape? I don't know. You're simply shuffling it from once place to another unless you intend to change it, in which case, are you going to be increasing that number, or are you going to be decreasing that number? It would be interesting to hear back what the intention is around moving that, what they heard around the reasons they felt that that needed to be moved.

I'd also like to bring up some of the changes around the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. Of course, as we know, Alberta has gone through a very significant challenge this year with the death of children in care. I can't even begin to imagine what the family members have been going through with regard to trying to address that within themselves. When we're seeing some of the changes around that, you know, again: what are the reasonings for doing that? Why would you want to change it to remove the one-year maximum on licences, both new and renewals, especially during the time that we've just seen over the past 12 months? I'm looking forward to hearing a little bit more on that, and hopefully we'll actually hear from the Minister of Children's Services as to why that was handed down to the red tape minister.

The reason I bring that up is that that now takes me to changes around the Education Act. We've very clearly heard one thing being stated by the red tape minister and then something completely opposite by the Education minister. Why did that piece of legislation get handed down to the red tape minister? I mean, if that was the case, you'd think that maybe at least some briefing notes, you know, had managed to filter their way down. It wasn't like it was just a little detail that was missed or maybe slightly misinterpreted; they were completely opposite positions. One said that there will be absolutely no more reporting. Then the other one: oh, no; there will be reporting. Which one is it? Why then is the red tape minister legislating on education matters? I've always had a problem with this.

You know, it's supposedly all about making life easier for businesses to be able to operate, to make things faster, so I'm curious around these changes on education. How will these changes make business move faster? How will this be creating jobs for Albertans here in the province? I'm very much looking forward to hearing from the red tape minister some of those statistics that are available around those things. What kind of improvements has this made? Is there a percentage that we can attach on to that?

I guess, you know, as my good friend from Edmonton-Ellerslie had pointed out, it starts to question this whole notion of transparency. Can we trust the UCP government to work in the best interests of Albertans? Of course, I always will bring people back right to the leader of the UCP, who made a promise way back when to disclose a donors list, yet we're still waiting for that donors list. How am I expected to be able to trust this government to do what's right when the leader can't even manage a simple little thing like that, a promise that was made?

Now, of course, this leads me into some of the changes around the Provincial Parks Act. Now, Madam Chair, again, as I'd mentioned, members of the government bench, members of the government caucus who served in the 29th Legislature: pretty much any time that they saw any kind of authorities being given to ministers, they very clearly communicated that they were in disagreement with that. Again, as my friend from Edmonton-Ellerslie very clearly pointed out, the changes that are being made here with the Provincial Parks Act and Public Lands Act are significant changes allowing the minister to make decisions as they see fit. I can just imagine what those members would have said back then had the NDP government done something like that, you know. You always hear that notion: people lighting their hair on fire. I have a feeling they would have lit their entire bodies on fire when they saw that.

**10:30**

The reason I'm kind of going down this line of thinking here: my friend from Edmonton-Ellerslie managed to kind of get me thinking a little bit, you know, with the whole lack of transparency – and, of course, that's backed up by that beautiful title that's been bestowed upon this government as one of the most secretive governments in Canada, which tells me that perhaps transparency isn't quite as transparent or is as transparent as mud in this case – and some of the decisions that we've seen the government make over the course of the 30th Legislature. We saw the Loughheed coal policy that was taken out really without any consultation around that, and we know how that worked out. Albertans pushed back and pushed back significantly on that. Then comes the little escapade we went through around parks and how they're handled, being potentially sold off and whatnot, and again we saw that significant push-back from Albertans around that. So this starts to develop a little bit of a pattern.

When I'm thinking about the environment minister and, I guess, some of the tirades that we've seen occur, to move that degree of ability to make decisions like what's being proposed in part of Bill 21 around that causes some very significant mistrust and red flags. You know, for me to sit here and try to say: well, I'm just going to have to trust that the minister is going to make the right decisions – I mean, as soon as it seems like there's any kind of significant push-back, the minister is then, quite honestly, trying to control the narrative. And we've seen that here in the House. Why, then, wouldn't that translate to the public at large? I'm just wondering why, then, the minister, who, as I know, when serving in the 29th Legislature had a significant problem with these types of changes being given to ministers, feels that it's okay now. Was it the case that he didn't actually believe that back then? Or what has changed in the meantime to be able to take that kind of position? Of course, I would also love to hear from others that served during that time and what's changed around that.

You know, I don't necessarily have problems with all of Bill 21. I think there are some other changes that are going okay, but because of some of the major concerns I have, as I just mentioned around parks – and I'm going to take a small bet here that perhaps my friend from Edmonton-Gold Bar might have some significant comments around that. Changes and the conflicting messaging around changes to the Education Act I think are a problem. So I'm faced with that we have some legislation that's fine; some that isn't. They're butting up against each other. I don't think I could support Bill 21 as it's currently written because of those problems. Perhaps, maybe we might see some suggestions to make it a little bit better. Perhaps, maybe then I can get to a point of being willing to support it.

But I certainly look forward to comments from others on some of the questions I've raised here in this brief time. We are in Committee of the Whole, so there's a good chance that I may be popping back up with more to say based on what I hear, but at this time I'm looking forward to what others say, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and offer some comments on Bill 21, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, and I can confirm for my friend from Edmonton-Decore that I do have some changes to propose to this bill. The member spoke almost as if he had inside information as to what was going to happen this morning, offering betting advice to people who are paying attention to this morning's proceedings. I will move this amendment now. I have the appropriate number of copies. I'll wait for your signal, Madam Chair, to proceed.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1. Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'd first like to read the amendment into the record. I move that Bill 21, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, be amended by striking out sections 11(3) and 12.

And just to remind everybody in the House what section 11(3) does, the section amends the Provincial Parks Act to the following:

Incorporation by reference

12.11(1) A regulation under this Act may adopt or incorporate documents that set out standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines, objectives or other rules of any government, board, agency, association or person, including, without limitation, any standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines, objectives or other rules set by the Minister under section 12.12, relating to any

matter in respect of which a regulation may be made under this Act.

(2) A standard, directive, practice, code, guideline, objective or other rule may be adopted or incorporated under subsection (1)

(a) in whole or in part and with or without modifications, and

(b) as it reads on a specific date or as amended or replaced from time to time.

(3) When a standard, directive, practice, code, guideline, objective or other rule is adopted or incorporated under subsection (1), the Minister shall publish it on a public website of the Government of Alberta.

Minister's directives and codes

12.12 The Minister may set standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines, objectives or other rules relating to any matter in respect of which a regulation may be made under this Act.

And there are similar provisions being proposed to the Public Lands Act.

This amendment, of course, simply strikes out those two sections of the bill that I just read into the record. There's a very simple reason that I'm proposing to do this, Madam Chair, and that's because Albertans cannot trust the UCP government to keep its hands off our provincial parks or public lands and manage them in the public interest. These two sections that I read into the record give significant power just to the Minister of Environment and Parks to set any policy document that he likes as a regulation affecting provincial parks or public lands.

This follows along with the terrible track record of this Minister of Environment and Parks. We've already seen him, in February 2020, try to sell off or close down hundreds of provincial parks in the province. We've already seen him assess a random camping fee on public lands, where one didn't exist before, driving up the cost of going into our own backyards at any time during the year. We've seen him assess a \$90 Kananaskis Country pass, again, making it more expensive for Albertans to go into their own backyards, where previously no cost existed. We've seen the minister arbitrarily try to alter the water allocation order on the Oldman River system. We've seen him arbitrarily remove environmental protections during the height of the pandemic in the oil sands area.

This minister already has significant discretionary powers that he has used to significantly, negatively affect the quality of public land management, parks management, and environmental protections in this province. The people of Alberta do not trust him to do anything more with our provincial parks and public lands, and that's why we are proposing to remove these sections from the bill.

**10:40**

Now, I've had a chance to talk to some people with more legal expertise than me regarding what these sections would do, and one of the questions that was posed to them was: does this mean that any small-p policy or document by anybody can be adopted into the regulations, thus creating different regulations in different areas based on what someone wants in the area? The answer is yes. And is it that the minister still has to decide to adopt these, or can government staff, area managers, do the adopting? This answer from my acquaintance, who is a legal expert, is quite concerning. The minister needs to sign it, but he has no real obligation to understand it, giving the department a lot of effective power. Then he goes on to say that under section 12.11(2)(b) the minister can set the regulations so the incorporated document can be amended later without any ministry involvement at any time. So once the minister has adopted a small-p policy as a regulation affecting a park or section of public land, anybody in the department can go ahead and amend it at any time and not make anybody aware of it. This is not



the kind of democratic oversight that the people of Alberta expect the government to have over its department.

Allowing department officials to change regulations effectively at any time is a remarkable power to give to the department and one that they should not have. It is widely accepted that the Legislature is the place where we set legislation and orders in council are what govern regulations. Those are the purview of cabinet and only cabinet. Here the minister is taking this job away from cabinet, giving it to himself, and then letting the department officials do whatever they want with it. This should make people extremely uncomfortable.

What is mind-boggling to me, Madam Chair, is that the party of small government, the party that wants no government control over things like provincial parks or public lands, is effectively relinquishing its control to the public service, saying: "You know what? It's not our job anymore to administer parks and public lands. We're going to let the staff do it, and we're not even going to bother to check in on them or use the powers that are given to us as members of cabinet to run the show." That's not right. It's certainly not consistent with the ideology that the government members purport to hold, and it's certainly not something that the people of Alberta are comfortable with.

Madam Chair, I think that this amendment will successfully limit the ability of government to overreach in its powers to regulate provincial parks and public lands, and people should vote for it. What's particularly concerning to me, though, is that this can create an arbitrary set of rules for individual provincial parks or different segments of public land that aren't consistent across the province and could lead, potentially, to widespread privatization of our public parks, the encroachment of industrial activities on public parks.

You know, I'm dealing right now, as the environment critic, with a couple of significant issues that are affecting provincial parks here in Alberta right now. One is the threat to the Big Hill Springs provincial park near Cochrane. There's a massive gravel pit proposed right on the western boundary of that pit. If this piece of legislation goes forward, the minister actually has it within his power now to carve out a segment of Big Hill Springs provincial park as part of the gravel pit. I don't think the people of Alberta realize that that kind of power is being given to the minister here. If members opposite vote against this amendment, what they are essentially saying is that they trust the Minister of Environment and Parks to not turn over a provincial park like Big Hill Springs to a gravel pit operator.

Dealing with another issue right now in Pigeon Lake, the government is entertaining a proposal to allow a massive feedlot on the shore of Pigeon Lake. The Pigeon Lake provincial park is right next door. What's to say – if this amendment isn't adopted and this bill goes forward as originally proposed, the Minister of Environment and Parks could allow manure spreading in Pigeon Lake provincial park from that feedlot. Is that what government members want? Do they want 36 tonnes of manure a day being spread in Pigeon Lake provincial park? That's what this section of the bill would allow.

Those are just two examples, Madam Chair, two realistic threats to our provincial parks that exist right now that could be made much worse if the minister is given this power. I know that all government members have had an earful from the people of Alberta on the need to better protect provincial parks.

Well, here's a tremendous opportunity to show them that they've learned the error of their ways. They should vote in favour of this amendment and stand up for protections of provincial parks like Big Hill Springs and Pigeon Lake. At the very least they don't want those constituency e-mails and phone calls about why a gravel pit

is encroaching on Big Hill Springs provincial park, why manure is being spread in Pigeon Lake provincial park. They don't want those. Moreover, they shouldn't trust the minister of the environment to have this kind of power.

Madam Chair, I sincerely hope that the members opposite give serious consideration to this minister of the environment's track record on protecting public lands, on protecting provincial parks, more accurately on failing to protect those things, that they understand what's at stake here if this amendment is voted down and the original bill is allowed to go through as is. We could have significant degradation of our provincial parks and public lands, and they have no power to stop it once this is in place.

For those reasons, Madam Chair, I urge all members of the House to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Are there others to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you. I'd just like to seek unanimous consent of the Chamber to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of this morning.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we'll have one 15-minute bell, and then we'll have one-minute bells following that. If I could comply to your wishes, I certainly would, but that will be possible after the first bell.

**Ms Gray:** It was a good try. All right. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you. I would just like to speak briefly to the proposed amendment. Not surprisingly, the messages being shared by the member opposite are not accurate. Many components, all components, of this bill are about making life better for Albertans and enjoying their use of parks. As it relates to the Provincial Parks Act and the Public Lands Act, the changes are going to support an outcome-based approach and development of locally specific rules and guidelines which address concerns about a current one size fits all. We know the members opposite would like to have one size fits all apply to as many things as possible and have as much control as possible, but this is about moving from one size fits all to more location- and use-specific rules of Crown lands. This approach will manage recreational activities in parks and public lands. It can be complicated and confusing. It's good news. It's about moving to an outcome-based approach where we can provide that flexibility while maintaining protection of Crown lands, and it's about a common-sense solution, tailoring solutions to the need of a specific area.

**10:50**

There would, of course, continue to be public stakeholder and Indigenous engagement on regulations, directives, rules, codes, and standards as required, so I will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm always pleased to rise. In spite of the minister's, you know, shameful personal attacks on my character, I do want to correct the record on one of the things that she said. She said that the regulations would be put out for public consultation before they're adopted. There is nothing in the bill that does that. There is absolutely no requirement to do any public consultation before any piece of policy is adopted as a

regulation, so for the minister to stand here in this place and suggest that that's true needs to be called out. The people of Alberta need to understand that these changes can be made at any time with no notice and no public consultation whatsoever. I think that's important to get on the record, that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction is completely wrong on that fact.

Thank you very much.

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

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise in support of this amendment.

You know, Madam Chair, I think, first of all, it is destressing to say the least to hear the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction provide the Chamber with some explanation as to the accuracy of what a bill introduced under her name does and does not do – the track record is not great on this topic certainly with reference to other aspects of this bill – when, certainly, this particular minister had absolutely no idea what this bill, in fact, does around education.

Now, to the substance of her remarks that this section of the act provides flexibility and an ability to sort of deviate from a one-size-fits-all approach to parks and public land management: first of all, I find it interesting that the minister has in fact, in the speaking notes that she read verbatim off her piece of paper, conflated parks and public lands. They are two different management approaches with two different management intents regardless of which parks designation you're talking about within the Provincial Parks Act or even what kind of public land one is discussing, whether it's in the green zone or elsewhere.

Now, there is no question that within the parks act, if we want to focus in on that – because I highly doubt that the minister knows this – permitted uses and activities according to each park designation are already laid out in statute, and those uses and activities are enumerated then with further detail in a park management plan. I'm speaking specifically here under the parks act. There are different permitted uses under different classifications within the parks act, and then what happens is that a park management plan is put out to further provide detail to the public on what is and is not a permitted use, activity, lease, and so on.

Oftentimes, because the parks act is a very old piece of legislation within the GOA – to my understanding it's one of the oldest pieces of legislation within the GOA – it can be a little bit confusing, which is why the parks management plan is so important. In general, for example, in provincial parks one is not allowed to hunt; however, there is an ability already for the minister to allow for certain seasonal hunting, for example, or for certain wildlife management purposes, and they do that through the parks management plan.

The public knows and expects this to be the case, because when they put it out in the parks management plan, it is put out to public consult and an even lengthier period of Indigenous consultation, so any of the flexibility and one-size-fits-all little catchphrases that the minister just read off her piece of paper provided to her by other people can be captured with appropriate public consultation within that park management plan. Certainly, then, operational decisions are made within that rubric by, first, the executive director of operations within Alberta parks and then on down through regional directors and even park rangers, if there are any left. I am reliably informed that the layoffs have been quite severe, and there are fewer and fewer of them all the time.

There is no need for this change, Madam Chair, unless one wants to introduce more range of permitted activities within the current designation or grant leases that may not be in the public interest or may not conform to appropriate levels of oversight in a way that makes it opaque to the public that this is happening without changes

to the park management plan, without those public consultation periods, and without those Indigenous consultations. I'm just going to put it on the record right now that Indigenous nations will be reviewing any of these changes because they are subject to judicial review under Indigenous consultation. If you start changing land-use purposes, activities, designations without Indigenous consultation, there is an equal and opposite reaction from both treaty organizations and individual Indigenous organizations of various kinds.

Now, it seems to me that what we are doing here is putting power into the hands of a minister and a Government House Leader that as recently as last week proved to the public and to this House that he is not trusted by even the majority of his own party members, let alone Albertans. This is a minister that was responsible for the first iteration of prepandemic outrage based on his handling of parks and coal mines specifically. His environmental management record sparked absolute outrage in particular throughout Calgary and in particular in the riding of Calgary-Elbow, where the member has just announced his resignation rather than face the music of the public. In no small part when you walk around those streets of that particular seat, you will see no end to parks and coal mining signs. Now going on two, two and a half years of this. This is a source of tremendous shame and electoral peril for this government, for which this environment minister is in large part responsible given that it was also his job to shepherd legislation through this House and in so doing has certainly flushed a great deal of his own credibility among his own caucus members, let alone the public.

To be asked by this House at this time to entrust that kind of power through this legislation in the hands of that Government House Leader is a bridge too far. Certainly, we just saw last week it is a bridge too far for his own party members, it is a bridge too far for a good number of his caucus mates, it is a bridge too far for the Alberta public, and it is certainly, Madam Chair, a bridge too far for sound environmental management in this province whereby we are protecting nature for future generations and for recreational and other uses in a sustainable way for our children and grandchildren. It is for that reason that this amendment should be accepted. This piece of legislation in its current form must be amended to take out this most egregious and vexatious section of it, a piece of the legislation that Albertans do not support. Certainly, management of parks and protected areas should be placed in the hands of someone who merits the trust and respect of the people of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to join debate on the amendment before us. I mean, I think the important role of the opposition is to, you know, scrutinize any legislation that does come through by government and to make suggestions on improvements. Certainly, I know that this amendment brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar goes a long way to improve Bill 21, so I guess I commend all of the members in this Legislature to be in support of it.

**11:00**

As was already explained by the member previous to me, this is sort of – the amendment addresses the most egregious, I think, part of Bill 21, which is, of course, giving the minister significant powers to sort of do what he will. Sadly – and I really do see this as a tragedy – we've seen time and time again that this UCP government is not trustworthy, oftentimes not competent in the decisions that they make. When this kind of bold action of giving

the minister the significant support – it creates tremendous concern for me, you know, as an Albertan, let alone as a member of this Legislature, and I know that certainly when I speak to my constituents or others that I meet with on a regular basis, they, too, express this very similar concern.

Certainly, this amendment strikes out section 11(3) and section 12 of Bill 21. I guess the most challenging part of it, certainly for me, is section 12.12, and it says, “The Minister may set standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines, objectives or other rules relating to any matter in respect of which a regulation may be made under this Act.” That’s one part that we would like to amend, to actually take that out of the legislation, because that gives sweeping powers to the minister. I certainly agree with that.

We know that this seems to be a little bit of a trend by the UCP. I know that the Minister of Seniors and Housing also has a similar clause in the affordable housing act which gives her tremendous power. She gets to designate what’s affordable housing, what’s not affordable housing without sort of any definition. Oftentimes things are specified more clearly not in this specific legislation but in regulations, which we can’t see until they are produced. Of course, we know that regulations don’t have the power of legislation, and they are easy for the minister to change autonomously, like, unilaterally. Certainly, you know, as a believer in strong democracy this, of course, is a concern. There need to be checks and balances in politics, having things brought before the Legislature instead of being decided by one person, one cabinet minister even, and not even the Executive Council.

I think that that is a significant weakness of the legislation, and I would certainly encourage all members of this Legislature to vote in support of this amendment, which goes a long way to improving this legislation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:03 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Eggen	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Goehring	Phillips	Sweet
Loyola	Sabir	

**11:20**

Against the motion:

Amery	Luan	Shandro
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Singh
Copping	McIver	Smith
Fir	Neudorf	Toews
Frey	Nixon, Jason	Toor
Hunter	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Issik	Orr	Walker
Jean	Pon	Williams
Jones	Savage	Wilson
Kenney	Schow	Yao
LaGrange	Schulz	Yaseen
Lovely	Schweitzer	

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on Bill 21 in Committee of the Whole.

Let’s get a speaker set up, and then members can move freely as they wish. Any speakers to Bill 21 in Committee of the Whole? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’m not going anywhere, by any means. In fact, we’ve got some amending to do.

You know, it’s a very good reflection of just how these red tape reduction bills are actually just omnibus bills with no rhyme or reason to them. Bill 21 also contains changes to education and the Education Act, right? When we go from parks to education, it’s like this spinning wheel that’s perhaps a reflection of this government’s agenda for the last three and a half years, taking potshots at parks and schools and hospitals and whatnot.

Anyway, you know, we’re always here, the Official Opposition, to try and help, right? As you might recall, with Bill 21, when it was introduced, the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction told the media that private schools would no longer have to report on the tuition fees they charged. You also may recall, Madam Chair, that later that same night the Minister of Education told the public that her colleague was wrong, that private schools would still have to report on the tuition fees that they collect.

Madam Chair, my good friend and MLA for Edmonton-Glenora has sought clarity on this issue, you know, in the public interest and to help the government as well, so I do have an amendment that I would like to move on her behalf, please. Let me know when you want me to read that.

**The Chair:** All right. Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A2.

Hon. member, just note that you’re moving on behalf of another member. Please proceed.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Well, thank you, Madam Chair. You can see that we have this amendment which is including some new language.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Can you start by reading it into the record?

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. That’s what I’m going to do.

**The Chair:** Oh. Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. I’m just getting warmed up, right? Before noon it takes a few pulls on my chainsaw to get going here.

The hon. Ms Hoffman to move that Bill 21, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, be amended in section 4(3) in clause (a) by adding the following:

(3.3) The person responsible for the operation of an accredited private school must, within 30 days of the end of each fiscal year, report to the Minister the amount of any tuition fees charged to [the] students during that fiscal year, including all academic and non-academic fees.

Also:

(3.4) For the purpose of subsection (3.3), the fiscal year of an accredited private school is September 1 to . . . August 31.

And then:

(3.5) The Minister must publish the information received under subsection (3.3) on the publicly accessible website of the department administered by the Minister within 30 days.

And then also adding after section 29(4)(a.1):

(a.2) if, in the case of an accredited private school, the person responsible for the operation of the accredited private school does not comply with subsection (3.3).

Madam Chair, this is a way by which we can, you know, clear up some of the confusion from the government side. That confusion spread into the public as well, quite frankly. Regular folks were

very frustrated that they couldn't get clarity from this government as they focused on busily fighting and squabbling with their own internal party matters, and in the meantime here we have some of this legislation left hanging.

This amendment – thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora – removes ambiguity, right? Ambiguity is the enemy of reason in this House, Madam Chair. You know, if we can just simply compel private schools to submit information to the minister about tuition fees that they charge, that clears the whole issue up.

Quite frankly, I know that private schools are happy to do so, on the whole. Certainly, I know that I myself as minister of K to 12 education did work closely supporting private schools to have clarity around tuition and everything else, right? I have always worked very closely, for example, with the Edmonton Islamic Academy, who are exemplary in their operations of their private religious school, and we should all be very proud of the example that they provide in regard to both clarity and transparency and education as well.

You know, as well, just to make sure we catch the other side – right? – it is to compel the minister to make that information public online. I think everybody deserves to know that. We know that private schools receive quite significant monies, public money, and any time we see anything that does get public money, then I think we deserve to see what's going on behind that expenditure.

You know, this government, again, has set a trend and a tendency to not do that – right? – anything from the war room to other investments that this government makes. It's very hard to see how and where and why that money is being spent. We don't need that in education. It really is not helpful.

Quite frankly, I believe that this amendment really should be supported by this government as a demonstration that they have no ulterior motives with this particular part of the red tape reduction act. Of course, when it came out, at first it was pure chaos in regard to different ministers saying different things. Once again, you know, we're trying to help out here as the Official Opposition. We're trying to set a good example. I mean, if the government happens to be the Official Opposition next time, this is kind of how you do it, right? Pro tip: look for constructively critical places where you can make legislation better.

This amendment does what the Minister of Education said she would do, promised to do verbally. It's always good to put it in writing, I think, and I think that the public will be better served and that the government will demonstrate their clarity on this issue. Most importantly, the public interest will be better served as well.

I would encourage all members to support this amendment, and I'm curious to hear from other members in this regard. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise this morning to speak to the amendment introduced by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I have to say that I agree with the previous speaker in wanting to ensure that there's clarity and understanding. We've watched this government create chaos in so many ways, and specifically under this piece of legislation, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, we had the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction saying one thing and then the Minister of Education saying another.

When we're looking at ways to help, I think that this piece of legislation could be amended, and it should be supported. We're asking for some clarity, and I think the Member for Edmonton-Glenora provides that in the amendment request. It will help reduce

confusion, provide some transparency. I think that when we're looking at ways to make legislation understandable to the public, decreasing chaos is the way to go.

When we hear the discrepancy between the cabinet across the way there, I think that this amendment is a way to decrease that confusion and that chaos. If it's their intention to be clear, I think that this amendment is simple, it's straightforward, and it should be supported by the government if they truly have no ulterior motives and want to be able to support the way that that they say that they do.

**11:30**

I appreciate that the previous member, from Edmonton-North West, mentioned the Edmonton Islamic Academy. That was a school that was in my riding from 2015 to 2019, and I can tell you that they do incredible work in the community. Although they're no longer in Edmonton-Castle Downs, many of the staff and the volunteers and the students that attend EIA live in Edmonton-Castle Downs. I've watched over the years as this school provided incredible opportunities for young people, that, you know, they're still benefiting from today. They have a culture in that school where once you're involved, you tend to stay involved. We watched students who've graduated come back and volunteer and provide their experience to the students that are emerging through the academy.

I think that when we're talking about schools within the province of Alberta, we need to be able to provide them with clarity and with understanding, and they should be able to feel that they have a clear understanding of the legislation that is impacting how they do day-to-day business. I think that the incredible people at Edmonton Islamic Academy deserve to know what's happening within this government and what decisions are being made that have an impact. You know, I'm a complete supporter of this school and the education and the community building that they do, quite frankly, and I would hope that all members in the Chamber want to provide that clarity and understanding to all schools in the province of Alberta, and accepting this amendment is a way to do that.

I know that this piece of legislation is quite significant. It has many pieces of legislation that are impacted, all under the statement of red tape reduction, but specifically when it comes to education, we saw complete chaos happen, where we have a minister responsible for red tape and then a minister responsible for Education giving two completely different messages. What this would do is that it would align what the government is saying their intention is, and it will provide some clarity and perhaps reduce confusion that was created by these two ministers on the same piece of legislation.

I think that, you know, Albertans that I talk to are frustrated with this government and with the chaos and consistently opposing messages that are coming. This takes a very important piece of legislation and provides that clarity, and it basically says what the Minister of Education promised would happen, so I see no reason why this government wouldn't want to accept this amendment and remove any ambiguity that's caused by their own government. It's providing some clarity on what the Minister of Education is saying they want to see happen, and I would be very, very curious why any member in this Legislature wouldn't want to accept this amendment and vote in favour of it.

I think that by saying yes to this amendment – it's quite simple, it's straightforward. It's doing exactly what the Minister of Education said that they want to do. It would compel the minister to make the information public online and not be shrouded in secrecy. It would provide an opportunity for transparency to Albertans. You know, in our opinion, on this side, it should be

supported. There should be no reason, unless there are ulterior motives, not to support this amendment. It's a way to make what the associate minister of red tape said and what the Minister of Education is wanting – it provides that clarity and that transparency.

I think when it comes to, you know, the role of opposition, we're listening to frustrated Albertans. We're listening to people that just have had enough of the confusion and the chaos. And this is one simple way that, I believe, this government could reduce that, by supporting the amendment brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

I think that with that, Madam Chair, I would like to conclude my remarks, but I truly hope that everyone in the Chamber supports this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you. I will not be supporting this amendment. It's not surprising that the members opposite continue to fixate on this component of the bill as a distraction from all the amazing, good content that was in this bill. The Minister of Education already clarified that independent schools are required to report private sources of revenue, including tuition, to the government, and that that's required as part of the annual audited financial statements.

What we are eliminating is one specific additional schedule that independent schools currently submit specific to tuition. This has been clarified by the Minister of Education, therefore making this amendment unnecessary. Again, just a distraction by the members opposite from all the amazing components of this red tape reduction bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I find it interesting to hear the minister stand and say that there is open transparency and that that has to be reported, but we are removing one piece where, you know, charter schools don't have to report on tuition. In fact, then, there isn't openness and transparency because not everything is having to be reported and disclosed, clearly, as the minister just indicated, which is why this amendment is so important.

Again, why would the government choose to remove one schedule that does not require the openness and transparency of every financial component of running a school? I don't understand why the government feels the need to do this. What is it about the tuition piece that the government doesn't feel should be reported?

We see – again, I have a Christian school in my riding, and I just went on their website and everything that could be reported – because they're open and transparent, and they did actually end up going under Edmonton public schools. They were an independent school that chose to move into the public system partly because of the fact that they weren't able to keep up with the tuition schedule that they would need to be able to operate outside of the structure of the public schools. They still have, however, the requirement for the fee schedule when it comes to the Christian program fees, and they also still have school fees.

Now, the concern that I have here is that that doesn't necessarily have to be put on every single website. And to not have to disclose what the tuition is for each school, I think should speak to the question around: what is going on within this government to ensure that tuition is accessible for all Albertans, to ensure that anybody who would choose and want to go to that school has the financial ability to do that? If that is not publicly reported, there is no accountability to ensure that independent schools are open to all

Albertans, because they could potentially create a tuition schedule that becomes so expensive that not every Albertan has the ability to access it.

The whole argument from this government is that these schools should be accessible to all. It's about giving choice, according to the government. But if individuals aren't able to access those schools because the tuition is so high they can't afford to go there, then it's actually not accessible, which is why all of these need to be publicly disclosed and reported, so that Albertans can make those choices and so that's there's also an accountability there to ensure that every school that is being funded through public dollar, supported through public dollar, is accessible and available to all Albertans.

Again, the minister has been clear – and I'm sure we'll want to hear from the Minister of Education at some point as to clarifying this piece now around the tuition.

**11:40**

Clearly, what we've heard over the last few weeks from the minister is that everything is open and transparent. Everything was supposed to be publicly disclosed. And now, again, we hear from the minister opposite, the associate minister, saying that, well, everything is disclosed except for the tuition. Again, it's not going to be openly disclosed. Inconsistencies between the Minister of Education and the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: this is why Albertans are concerned and why Albertans don't feel like they can trust this government, because we keep getting inconsistent responses when it comes to the questions that are being asked.

Why now is this schedule being changed? Last week we were being told that nothing was being changed. Everything was going to be open. Everything was going to be transparent. Albertans would be able to see everything. Now, today, we hear that that's actually not the case. I think, again, that is why it's so important that this amendment be adopted by the government. Be open. Be transparent. If you're going to help through public dollar to support independent schools, then Albertans have a right to know what those fee schedules look like, including tuition fees. Tuition is actually one of the biggest barriers that Albertans face when trying to access these schools, so it needs to be open. It needs to be transparent. If the government chooses not to do that, then what they're saying is that they don't actually believe that these schools should be accessible to all Albertans. Albertans should be able to access them through these fee schedules.

Again I would urge the government to really consider showing Albertans that this is about educational choice, as they say, that this is going to be accessible to all Albertans, that there won't be a financial barrier when it comes to tuition, to accept this amendment and do what they're saying they're doing. If they choose not to, then once again they're validating the very concerns that Albertans have, which are that they can't trust this government to make sure that they have access to the very services that are being supported through their public dollar.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll keep my comments very brief. I think my friends from Edmonton-Manning, Edmonton-Castle Downs have very clearly spoken to why we need to vote in favour of this amendment. You know, I've lectured over and over and over again in this House about language and what's being presented. Obviously, when Bill 21 came forward, the red tape minister believed, with her comments, that the case was that they

didn't have to report. Now, she said that the Minister of Education has corrected that. I want to know why it was misinterpreted to begin with. If we're allowing the red tape minister to bring forward changes like this to different pieces of legislation, as I had mentioned, 16 different acts across nine different ministries, why is that confusion happening? Either the red tape minister is not consulting with the different ministers on legislation that is being changed, or it's the other way around.

Again, it's funny how it always comes down to the language; what's being said, what isn't being said, and, more importantly, what are you saying about it? There was obviously a conflict there. This amendment, that was brought forward by my friend from Edmonton-Glenora and the critic for Education, clears that language up so there's no misinterpretation about it. Again, it's not about us. We know what's now happening in the debate. But if somebody else isn't able to check, for whatever reason, isn't able to ask any one of us what went on during this discussion, this is how confusion begins. I've persistently and consistently seen that from the UCP government bringing this forward.

I would sincerely hope that members opposite will reconsider voting in favour of this amendment. This will clear up the language. There won't be any kind of misunderstandings going forward. There won't be any need for a minister to correct another minister, and, hopefully, that practice would then even continue going forward. But then at the very least maybe one of these ministers would like to stand up here in Committee of the Whole and explain to us who's not talking to the other. I'm very much in support of this amendment going forward, and I think we need to continue this kind of practice to clear up these constant misunderstandings that we've seen with regard to pieces of legislation that are being handed down to the red tape ministry, obviously in some effort to try to justify the \$10 million to \$15 million that's being spent on this associate ministry over the course of this Legislature.

Albertans needs to know that they can trust the decisions that are being made, because clearly right now that trust is almost gone. I'll conclude my remarks there, and we'll see if I'll maybe perhaps get an answer for one of my questions.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:46 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Eggen	Nielsen	Sabir
Goehring	Phillips	Sweet
Loyola		

**11:50**

Against the motion:

Amery	Loewen	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Schulz
Barnes	Luan	Shandro
Copping	Madu	Singh
Fir	McIver	Smith
Frey	Neudorf	Toor
Hunter	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Issik	Nixon, Jeremy	Walker
Jean	Orr	Williams

Jones	Pon	Yao
LaGrange	Savage	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 7	Against – 33

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to Bill 21? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to speak briefly to this bill. I do understand that this bill has changes which are mostly of an administrative nature, and we can support those changes. But this bill also contains very controversial changes that we cannot support, that Albertans don't support. For instance, the bill gives the Minister of Environment and Parks broad powers to "set standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines . . . [and] other rules relating to any matter in respect of which a regulation [can] be made under this act." That's huge, huge power. In legal terms, if we interpret that, that means the minister can do anything he wants. That's not okay with us. That's not okay with Albertans. Nobody trusts this caretaker government with our cherished provincial parks.

The second thing is that they are also making changes to how private schools report public funds. I think Albertans deserve to know how their funds are spent, how their tax dollars are spent, and this bill will water down that transparency. No wonder this government got an award in secrecy and transparency because of changes like this.

It is for those reasons, primarily these two changes. These are not acceptable to us. These are not acceptable to Albertans. That's why we cannot support this piece of legislation.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I will take my seat.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 21 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:53 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Schulz
Barnes	Luan	Shandro
Copping	Madu	Singh
Fir	McIver	Smith
Frey	Neudorf	Toor
Hunter	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Issik	Nixon, Jeremy	Walker
Jean	Orr	Williams
Jones	Pon	Yao
LaGrange	Savage	Yaseen
Loewen	Schow	

Against the motion:

Eggen	Nielsen	Sabir
Goehring	Phillips	Sweet
Loyola		

Totals:	For – 32	Against – 7
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[The remaining clauses of Bill 21 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 21.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mrs. Frey:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments

considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is carried.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I see that the clock is on or nearing 12 o'clock. With that, I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. today.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:58 a.m.]









## Table of Contents

Prayers .....	1403
Orders of the Day .....	1403
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 21 Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.....	1403
Division .....	1409
Division .....	1412
Division .....	1412

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