



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, December 8, 2022

Day 7

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
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Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC),  
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Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
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Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier

Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
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(UC)  
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Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary  
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Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and  
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Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
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David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

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

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

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

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 8, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon, members, please remain standing for the singing of *God Save the King*.

### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal was awarded to only 7,000 Albertans in recognition of significant contribution to the province. This commemorative medal, designed to mark Queen Elizabeth's unprecedented 70 years of service, is even more relevant given her recent passing and the outpouring of appreciation and respect shown for her distinguished dedication to the people of the Commonwealth.

It is my great honour to present this medal to you today and thank you for your service to our province. This medal serves as a moving reminder of our responsibility to serve with the same strength and humility that was demonstrated by Queen Elizabeth herself. The front of the medal shows an effigy of the Queen and on the reverse the shield of Alberta and our provincial wild roses. The placement of the shield on the medal should be a reminder that our service is not about us but about the advancement of our province and the communities in which we serve. Just as Queen Elizabeth II served to see others lifted up, I trust that this award will renew our commitment to building our communities and improving the lives of Albertans.

Congratulations to each and every one of you.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has a visitor.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature Marilyn Buffalo, the CEO of the Nechi Institute and the elder who gave blessings at the unveiling of the official portrait of the 17th Premier of Alberta today. Please rise and accept the warm greetings of the House.

**Member Irwin:** I'm so pleased to rise today to introduce Ray Martin, former MLA for Edmonton-Norwood, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, former Alberta NDP leader and school board trustee. I just awarded him a platinum jubilee medal for his decades of service. I'm so proud to be his MLA. Please join me in welcoming Ray Martin.

**Ms Hoffman:** I am welcoming Edmonton-Glenora constituent and former MLA Alex McEachern. Alex was first elected in '86 and again in '89. His commitment to social democracy and ensuring all Alberta students get a quality public education are two of the reasons I'm so fond of him. Alex also received a platinum jubilee. Please join me in welcoming him.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has an introduction.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce you to some of the hardest working public servants in this province, 30 constituency assistants from each corner of Alberta. They are here today for training. I was able to join them for dinner last night, where I reminded them that every time I screw up, I know that they're the first ones to hear about it, so I thank you deeply for the work that you do. I invite you to join them and me at the tree-lighting ceremony later this afternoon, but in the meantime I ask you to rise and provide them all a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the chief government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three grade 6 classes from Beau Meadow school from the city of Beaumont. Thank you for being here. It's so great to see so many students back in the Assembly. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize, to you and through you, the grade 6 students from l'école parc élémentaire of Fort Saskatchewan and their teacher Mr. Spencer Dunn. Welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a guest.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Welcome Jose Angeles, a Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal recipient. Please rise. His record of service includes president of the Congress of the Philippine Associations of Alberta, publisher for the *Alberta Filipino Journal*, and for 40 years he's co-ordinated the Philippine pavilion at Edmonton heritage days. Jose is joined by many members of his friends and family. Please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Sara-Lyn Quist, who hails from the second-most beautiful constituency in the province. You might know which one I'm referring to. Sara-Lyn is a community builder and an asset to many in her hometown of Three Hills. I've come to know Sara very well, and I'm glad that she could join us here today.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

### Affordability Plan and Inflation Relief Act

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As a result of increasing costs and record levels of inflation, Albertans have been struggling to heat their homes and feed their families. These are things that they should never have to worry about. This affordability crisis is one that our province can't solve on our own, but due to our balanced budget and strong fiscal position our government is able to offer significant relief to Albertans who are struggling.

To prove this, an entire ministry has been created to help weather the storm. The Ministry of Affordability and Utilities is working hard and has already taken a number of steps to make life more affordable. Through Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, our government is demonstrating our commitment to support Albertans. The extension of the fuel tax relief program will help Albertans save 13.6 cents per litre every time they fill up. The natural gas rebate program is providing price protection throughout the winter months so families can heat their homes with peace of mind, and the electricity rebate program will help alleviate some financial burdens we see Albertans facing until April.

Those financial burdens are the reason we are also indexing personal income taxes to the inflation rate retroactive to 2022. As a result, money is being put back into the pockets of Albertans. Furthermore, our government is providing financial assistance to food banks and other not-for-profits across Alberta. They've been experiencing increased demand, and we are ensuring they have what they need to ensure all Albertans are being supported.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the affordability crisis is at the forefront for every Albertan. In a time of high inflation the affordability action plan and inflation relief act will help ease the burden on people across the province. Our government is committed to providing relief for Albertans and businesses while also charting a better, more affordable path forward for future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, with apologies to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore because he was the first member's statement today, and it was my error.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Mr. Nielsen:** I, like many Albertans, am deeply concerned about the passing of the job-killing sovereignty act in literally the dead of night, so I wanted to remind the Assembly and Albertans that there were members of the government who had been vocal opponents of the sovereignty act since its conceptualization. In fact, there are too many quotes from members of the UCP against the sovereignty act to fit in my statement today, so I have included some of my favourites.

**1:40**

The Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism said, quote: there is nothing about the sovereignty act that makes sense. She also said that it was "an unconstitutional delusion." The Minister of Finance said that the act "requires Albertans and Alberta business to risk their livelihoods." The MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore said that she rejected the act because it was "abandonment of the Canadian principle of Constitutionalism." The Minister of Municipal Affairs called this, quote: the anarchy act. The Minister of Environment and Protected Areas said that this act caused "instability and chaos." The Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development said: the legal,

economic, and political turmoil produced would be the last thing Alberta needs. [interjections]

Why is it these members all abandoned their beliefs, abandoned their principles, and surrendered to the Premier? How can they speak out against a bill that Albertans do not want, just to turn their backs on their constituents and vote in support of the sovereignty act? These members of the UCP are afraid to stand up to the Premier, but the NDP is not afraid, and I promise we will continue this fight.

**The Speaker:** A reminder to members that Members' Statements are an opportunity for members of the Assembly to speak for two minutes uninterrupted, and I encourage members to ensure that they have that right.

### Cost of Living and Affordability Plan

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents are struggling; in fact, many Albertans are struggling. The cost of everything has skyrocketed: \$6 for a head of lettuce. One restaurant owner told me that he is concerned. He said that seniors, who make up a big population of his clients, are not coming back. They stopped coming because of COVID, and now, because of the price shock, they can't come back.

What has brought us to this point, how long is it going to last, and is there anything that can be done to lessen the pain? These are the questions that I hear most. What brought us to this point? Well, for the past 30 months governments all over the world have printed an extra \$6.72 trillion and flooded the world with extra dollars. That money has to flow through the economy before we see any real softening of inflation. The other problem is supply chain issues caused by governments' COVID response. China has been chasing a zero-COVID policy for over two and a half years. Whole cities have been shut down. The unrest we are seeing in China and worldwide supply chain problems are a result of these policies.

The truth is that we are just a little fish in a big pond. We didn't create the inflationary problems, but we are privileged to be in a position to be able to help. Our government's affordability relief package is a whopping \$2.4 billion. It entails a retroactive reindexation of income taxes, \$600 for every person on AISH and PDD, and \$600 for seniors and children in Alberta with household incomes of \$180,000 or less. The fuel tax, 13.6 cents per litre, is gone for the next six months. Mr. Speaker, wouldn't it be nice if the federal Liberals and their NDP allies would get rid of their portion of the fuel tax as well instead of hiking it? Food banks are getting \$15 million to help our most vulnerable. Lastly, every Albertan will see a \$200 relief on their utility bills, for a total of \$500 in relief since July.

That's a whole lot of Christmas cheer going around in Alberta, and Albertans could really use it.

### Homelessness

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, the other night the Government House Leader rose to interrupt one of my colleagues who was speaking passionately about the need for more housing and government support for Albertans struggling to make ends meet amid an inflationary crisis. He literally tried to claim, in this very House, that the provincial government does not bear responsibility for people dying on our streets in the freezing cold, for people whose limbs are being amputated due to extreme frostbite, for people who are dealing with addiction, who are feeling lost. These are Albertans. They're our neighbours, friends, sons, daughters, mothers, fathers.

Not the UCP's responsibility? Let's look at the facts. As of this month there are almost 3,000 people experiencing homelessness in

Edmonton, half of them outdoors, sleeping rough, or using shelter spaces. There are hundreds in the Premier's riding, hundreds in Lethbridge, 2,000 in Calgary. Doctors are seeing patients with injuries that just won't heal, who are already missing fingers and limbs, and people who have exposed bones because the tissue has frozen off. Shelters are operating at or beyond capacity, and additional spaces promised haven't come through despite the UCP government's bragging about them. Shelters' highest occupancy rates are on the coldest nights of the winter. This has been brought to the UCP's attention year after year, and shelters are just one piece of the puzzle. The best solution is permanent housing.

These are the facts. None of this is a surprise. People are dying because of wilful choices by the UCP government. What is the price of human dignity? How do you measure the right to live? Each person who dies while experiencing homelessness is more than a fact, a number, a statistic. This is the responsibility of the provincial government.

I look forward to the election, where Albertans will have a chance to elect a government focused on ending homelessness, not avoiding the responsibility of dealing with it.

### Job Creation

**Ms Rosin:** Well, Mr. Speaker, after all we've been through these past few years, I often tell myself that nothing can surprise me anymore, but the NDP have proved me wrong. They really have. This week they are now referring to this government as job killers. Job killers. Yes. The same members who are – right now the same members whose economic track record included losing 200,000 jobs, \$3 billion of corporate tax revenue, and achieving an astonishing unemployment rate of 9 per cent have referred to this Conservative government as job killers.

I thought I just might take the opportunity to set the record straight on this government's job-killing record. What have we accomplished so far? Over 200,000 jobs created, 20 per cent of the country's total job creation from a province of only 4 million people; a multibillion-dollar increase in corporate activity; the highest number of employed Albertans in history; seven credit upgrades; the best year of oil production on record; a diversified economy; the fastest growing green energy market in the country; and the fastest growing tech sector in all of North America.

We have lowered income taxes. We have cut corporate taxes. We've slashed regulations. We've balanced the budget. We've invested in our communities. We have fought for our industries at the Supreme Court of Canada. We have created sector strategies for hydrogen, lithium, petrochemicals, plastics, hemp, recycling, agriculture, irrigation. We've signed forest management agreements. Mr. Speaker, we've seen the number of tech start-ups double year over year. We've ushered in the biggest Hollywood production in Canadian and HBO history, and we are now leading the country in economic and GDP growth. That is this government's economic track record.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP can call us job killers all they want, but Albertans know the truth, and deep down I think even the NDP know the truth. After three short years of a United Conservative government Alberta is the strongest and most diversified it has ever been, and we are well on our way to becoming the most attractive market in all of North America and the world for job creation. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

### Nurse Education in Wainwright

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have all heard about shortages of doctors. There is also a problem of a nursing shortage in rural Alberta. In order for the health system to operate effectively, we need a complete team working as a unit. Nurses are a critical part of these teams. The question, then, is: why is there a more pronounced shortage of nurses in rural Alberta? One of the reasons is that students need to go to major urban centres to get their nursing degree and then likely wind up staying there when they complete their program.

Yesterday our government was proud to celebrate a new four-year bachelor of nursing pilot program at the Wainwright health centre that began last year. It's the first program of its kind and a big step forward for our rural health care. This program will help people that want to become nurses but want to stay in their own community for their training and to follow their own dreams. If you want more people to work in smaller communities, the best thing you can do is train them there. This program is an excellent partnership between the University of Calgary, Alberta Health Services, our government, and the Wainwright health centre. With our continued funding the school will continue providing online courses, labs, and clinical practice in person.

Eight students started the program in September of 2021, and a second cohort of eight students began in September of 2022. The fact that both cohorts were filled easily is an indication that rural people want to join the medical field. It's just the latest step in building up the health workforce. If this pilot project is successful, this will be a great model for the rest of rural Alberta to follow.

### Postsecondary Tuition and Student Loans

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, in the midst of an affordability crisis students and recent graduates are seeing their costs rise exponentially, yet this government has provided nothing, zip, zilch, in the affordability plan. Worse than that, the government of Alberta has piled costs onto students and recent graduates. Due to the cruel cuts to postsecondary by this UCP government tuition costs have reached to new heights. How are students going to make those payments? With student loans. But here, too, the government is bleeding the stone dry.

1:50

The current Alberta student loan interest rate is 6.9 per cent daily. Here's some quick math for the Chamber and folks at home. A four-year program at the University of Alberta with tuition and books is \$10,000 a year, a total loan of \$40,000. You'll see more than \$2,000 interest added to that loan every single year, not to mention housing, food, and transportation.

The slogan Students Are Our Future may be overused, but it is definitely true, yet this government has time and time again chosen to leave them behind. With the affordability plan the government had the opportunity to provide much-needed support for Albertans seeking higher education. It is no surprise that we are seeing young people leaving our province.

So tell me, Mr. Speaker, where is the Alberta advantage? Our young people deserve better, a government that funds postsecondary education properly, that supports affordable education, listens to young people, and takes action to keep them here. That will be the focus of an NDP government come 2023. I look forward to being a part of it.

Thank you.

## Oral Question Period

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

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Ms Hoffman:** Now that the job-killing sovereignty act has passed, the veil has fallen. The chief architect of the sovereignty act now says that our Constitution is broken, and he warns of an independence referendum. With this bill the Premier encourages separatist chaos, which undermines Alberta's economy and does nothing to address the affordability crisis and endangers our already under threat public health care system. The Premier has two choices. She can stand in this place and denounce the words of her flagship bill's author, or she can admit that her separatist agenda is the real heart of her job-killing sovereignty act. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Smith:** Well, the name of the bill is the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. It says right in the bill that this is about being within a united Canada, and I have to tell you that it has already achieved the objective that we set out to do. We wanted to reset our relationship with the federal government. Let me tell you what Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said today in Ottawa. What he said was: we are not going to get into arguing about something that obviously is the Alberta government trying to push back on the federal government; we are going to continue to work as constructively as possible. That is exactly what we wanted to. . .

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, Barry Cooper wrote the bill, and he says it's about an independence referendum.

Mr. Speaker, last night the UCP rammed through their job-killing sovereignty act by invoking closure and shutting down debate. They passed their flagship bill last night in the dark while most Albertans were sleeping. They did this because they know that their bill undermines the rule of law, attacks treaty rights – nothing to laugh at – and it hurts jobs and investment in Alberta. Today the UCP are celebrating their own incompetence. Is the UCP seriously so cash strapped that the Premier is willing to sacrifice Alberta jobs just to raise a few bucks off her base?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act has nothing to do with leaving the country; it has everything to do with resetting the relationship. It was our Justice minister who wrote this legislation – it wasn't some outside party – and we got independent advice from constitutional lawyers to make sure that it fell within the confines of the Constitution. We have quote after quote after quote from constitutional lawyers who have said that we met that target. All it simply does is that it restates that Alberta's constitutional authority should be respected.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier conceived, introduced, and passed this bill all in bad faith just to appease her fringe base. There is no reason it had to pass last night. There was no reason to shut down debate. The Premier rammed it through because she's scared, because she wants to change the channel. The truth is that this hurts our public reputation, and it damages investor certainty. This bill will be challenged by First Nations, likely immediately upon proclamation. If the Premier is so confident that she is right, will she review the bill to the courts before it's proclaimed?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, there were 18 and a half hours of debate on this bill. Nothing was rammed through. It was fully debated. The

problem was that the Official Opposition was not prepared to be constructive about this. They broke convention and voted not to even read the bill. Then they asked their friend Justin Trudeau to try to revoke the bill, and then on top of that whatever they put forward in amendment was to eliminate any of the clauses in the bill. If they wanted to take part in a constructive process, we were more than happy to do that. They weren't, and that's why we're proceeding with it. It's going to preserve Alberta's constitutional rights.

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

**Mr. Sabir:** Last night, while most Albertans were sleeping, this government cut off debate and imposed their job-killing sovereignty act on Albertans. They did this in spite of warnings from economists, Indigenous leaders, chambers of commerce, and constitutional experts that this bill is dangerous for the economy, dangerous to democracy, and unconstitutional. Will the Premier finally agree to do the right thing and submit this bill to the courts so they can determine its constitutionality before she proclaims it?

**Ms Smith:** The constitutionality of this bill is not in question. Supreme Court Justice John Major looked at it, and he said that he doesn't find it alarming. What's so terrible about the province saying that if you want to impose on us, you've got to be sure to do it constitutionally? Leighton Grey, a lawyer with the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, said this: it is only because the federal government is violating the Constitution that the sovereignty act is even necessary; indeed, in a properly operating federation, this bill would be entirely superfluous. This is about pushing back on Ottawa, keeping them in their own lane, and it appears to be working.

**Mr. Sabir:** Yesterday the chiefs of Treaty 6, 7, and 8 all called for the bill to be abandoned. Not amended; abandoned. The government has a constitutional obligation to consult with Indigenous communities when bringing in legislation that could impact their treaty rights, a duty that this Premier and Indigenous Relations minister have ignored and don't care about. Indigenous Albertans deserve to be heard. Will the Premier allow the court to test the constitutionality of the bill, or will she force Indigenous leaders to take her to court?

**Ms Smith:** I was delighted earlier today to meet with the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council and Chief Ivan Sawan from Loon River, Chief Albert Thunder from Whitefish, Chief Gilbert Okemow from Peerless Trout, Chief Billy Joe Laboucan from the Lubicon Lake, and Chief Isaac Laboucan-Avirom from the Woodland Cree. We had a very constructive conversation about how our relationship is going to be going forward. They know that I am committed to making sure that we address some of the foundational social issues in their communities but, more so, that we are committed to working with them in economic partnership, and I'm delighted to get started.

**Mr. Sabir:** The job-killing sovereignty act will add chaos to our economy and threaten investment. We have already seen Alberta lose 15,000 jobs last month. There are billions of dollars' worth of investment decisions for major projects in Alberta pending right now. Section 26 of the Judicature Act allows the cabinet to refer any matter to the Court of Appeal for consideration. Will the Premier take this option to protect Alberta's jobs from her failed sovereignty act, or is she now sovereign from the rule of law?

**Ms Smith:** We had such a great member's statement from the Member for Banff-Kananaskis. Let me remind the member opposite of what our actual record is: 200,000 jobs created in the last year, 20



per cent of the country's total job creation from a province of only 4 million; a multibillion-dollar increase in corporate activity; the highest number of employed Albertans in history; seven credit upgrades; the best year of oil production on record; a diverse economy; fastest growing green energy market; fastest growing tech sector in all of North America. I can tell you that that is a massive turnaround from the nearly 200,000 jobs lost when those guys were in office.

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

### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Indigenous Rights

**Mr. Feehan:** Just yesterday the Minister of Indigenous Relations said, quote: "Should we have done more consultation? Absolutely." This is a clear admission that this hon. member didn't do his job, yet the sovereignty act was passed last night. It passed after the government admitted that they did not fulfill its legal requirement to consult with First Nations. Why would the Premier support a bill to pass through this Legislature when she knows and her minister knows that they did not do their job and consult with First Nations?

**Ms Smith:** I consulted with my transition advisor, Chief Billy Morin, who alerted to me the fact that it was vitally important to make sure that we put in the legislation that we would respect all treaty and First Nations rights as guaranteed by the Charter. That was the reason why it was the framework for the entire bill. Any time we have to bring forward a motion, of course, we're going to consult with the First Nations communities. This just sets the framework for the kinds of things that we might be able to take forward to push back against Ottawa. There is no impact on treaty and First Nations rights. That's the truth. [interjections]

2:00

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Feehan:** Not only did this government not consult with First Nations; they completely ignored their calls to scrap the bill entirely. Yesterday Onion Lake Cree Nation joined other First Nations in calling for the sovereignty act not to be passed. The letter stated, quote: we call for its immediate retraction and for you and Alberta lawmakers to consult with us before enacting legislation that attempts any reconfiguration of the sovereignty within a united Canada. Can the Premier please explain why she jammed through the unconstitutional sovereignty act when she knew full well that her government failed to properly consult and ignored First Nations calls to withdraw the act?

**Ms Smith:** The mischaracterization by the members opposite has continued on for a couple of weeks, and let me just set the record straight. This does not reset the constitutional relationship. It does not rewrite laws. It just affirms that we are going to vigorously defend the areas of the Constitution that have been assigned to us under sections 92 through 95, and as a signatory to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms we're also going to make sure that we put up a shield so the federal government cannot interfere in our jurisdiction or the rights of our citizens. It's affirming the Constitution, affirming the Charter, of which Aboriginal and treaty rights are essential.

**Mr. Feehan:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations, whose main duty is to consult with Indigenous peoples, admitted that he failed. Already this morning Mikisew First Nations condemned the actions of the government. "We will not stand by while the province goes after our Treaties and our lands . . . To add insult to injury, the government limited debate [on Bill 1]". Comments from the

Mikisew alongside treaties 6, 7, and the Assembly of First Nations show a clear and utter failure of this government and this Premier. To the Premier: will she remove the minister from his role as Indigenous Relations minister since it is clear that he has failed, or will he do the right thing and resign? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Smith:** Is the member opposite kidding me? The Indigenous Relations minister is doing a fantastic job. He had a meeting with five chiefs this morning, where we talked about the Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. The focus of the discussion, actually, was working together on projects like infrastructure and transportation, the ongoing commitment we have to work with them on child welfare and education, the need to engage with First Nations on economic corridors that benefit all Albertans. This is the new, constructive relationship we have with our First Nations, and I'm so pleased by it.

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

### Health Care Workforce Vaccination Policies

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our province is in the midst of a significant health crisis and Albertans deserve leadership, yet all the UCP have to offer is to throw the system into further chaos. That chaos is continuing with the resignation of the two deputy chief medical officers of health, a fact that the Premier tried to avoid this week only to have it reluctantly confirmed here yesterday by the Health minister. Can the Premier tell this House why Albertans should trust her government to protect their public health when she can't even bother to be up front when two-thirds of the public health team resign?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are up front. You know, when asked the question, we provided the answer in terms of in that regard. We are working to be able to provide the health care services that Albertans need and Albertans want. I'm very pleased to work with Dr. Joffe, and we are ensuring that he has the support that he needs to do his job and continue to – I'd like to inform this House that we are having success on our flu campaign. I spoke about it yesterday. We've had an increase in 3 and a half per cent of people who've gotten flu vaccinations. That's great. We need to do more, and we'll keep doing more.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, while this government carelessly guts the leadership of Alberta's public health team, the Children's hospital in Calgary is under huge pressure. Recently nurses at the Alberta Children's hospital have been referring to having a, quote, black Sunday. That's a day that the hospital was so overwhelmed, they were worried a child could die in the waiting room. Alberta's nurses are being put in an impossible situation. There's a worry that this situation could drive even more nurses to leave the profession, much as these deputy chiefs chose to leave their jobs. What specifically is the Premier, the leader of this government, doing today to ensure nurses have the support they need to protect the health of sick kids?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for raising this important issue. Our hospitals, particularly our children's hospitals, are under strain. We see this here in

Alberta, as it is across, quite frankly, the entire country. Working diligently with AHS, which is supporting our tremendous job that's being done by our nurses and all our health care professionals in the hospitals, bringing more resources in on the short-term basis to be able to manage through the current spike of the flu. In addition, we are investing in our health care system significant dollars to hire more people to support our great front-line . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton–City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, it's clear the Premier doesn't take this seriously. She won't even speak to health care unless she's reaching out to directly interfere in it. These are, after all, the same workers who this Premier disgustingly accused of manufacturing a capacity crisis during the pandemic. Shockingly, this Premier still will not even stand and encourage Albertans simply to get vaccinated for the flu or COVID-19 to help support these workers. I'll give the Premier one more chance. Will she rise today and join me in encouraging all Albertans to simply get vaccinated to protect themselves and their children from the dangers of influenza and COVID? Premier, simply stand, recommend to Albertans to . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to be crystal clear that our Premier, who leads our government, supports our government in having kids get vaccines and flu vaccines, to have families make that choice to get vaccinated. As I said, we are actually having success on our campaign to do so. I'm sure members opposite received the text to go get your flu vaccine that our government put out. We're in the middle of running a campaign right now. I'm sure they've seen the letters put out and the press releases put out by Dr. Joffe, and I'm very pleased that we've been able to increase, over the last two weeks, flu vaccinations by 3 and a half per cent.

### Affordability Plan

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, our government announced many measures to combat inflation and help Albertans through the time of adversity. It's clear that there are strong supports in place for families with children. There has been less focus in the media on the supports for couples without children and for young people. Can the Minister of Affordability and Utilities please share with the House what supports are available to couples without children and to young Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nine hundred dollars. That's the estimated support average Alberta households without children will receive through the affordability action plan and the inflation relief act. This includes up to \$500 alone in electricity rebates, hundreds in potential savings on gas and diesel through the fuel tax relief program, and continued natural gas price protection. We are providing \$2.8 billion in relief to make life more affordable for all Albertans while targeting families, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans hardest hit by the affordability crisis.

**Mr. Panda:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that inflation has negatively affected all of us in different ways and considering that the needs of seniors in care facilities are often unique from other seniors and can even differ significantly from facility to facility or between two seniors in the same facility, can the minister please inform the House of what anti-inflationary supports are available to a widow or widower residing in a care facility?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cost-of-living crisis is particularly challenging for those on lower and often fixed incomes, including many of our seniors. In addition to significant broad-based relief, our affordability action plan includes targeted relief for seniors, providing six \$100 monthly affordability payments from January to June of 2023. All seniors 65 and up with household incomes below \$180,000 will be eligible. We also recently announced indexation of the Alberta seniors' benefit and other core support programs to address long-term affordability. We are focused on providing additional relief to support those most severely impacted by inflation. To our seniors: help is on the way.

**Mr. Panda:** Given that my constituents are telling me every day about how expensive filling up their vehicles has become and given that increases in fuel costs are also putting a significant strain on many small businesses and given that one of my constituents now has a thousand-dollar bill for fuel that used to cost him \$600, can the same minister inform us of how long the fuel tax will be scrapped for and what other actions the government is taking to address fuel affordability issues?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that high fuel prices are creating hardship for families, farmers, and workers. Through our fuel tax relief program Albertans are already benefiting from their own resource, saving every time they fill up. If passed, the inflation relief act will make the fuel tax relief program permanent. Beginning January 1, Albertans will save the full 13 cents per litre on gas and diesel. The estimated annual fuel tax savings for a commuter or oil field worker filling a pickup truck once a week is up to \$600 or more. While NDP-Liberal policies and the carbon tax increase costs for Albertans, we are providing relief and making life more affordable.

### 2:10 Electric Utility Regulated Rate Payments

**Ms Renaud:** A pre-election utility payday loan for Albertans: that's what this UCP government included in their affordability act. It's another piece of legislation drawn up on the back of a napkin, and Albertans are going to pay the price. No Albertan on an RRO is going to save a penny, but they will be paying nearly twice as much under this UCP government than they were under the NDP, and for that privilege they get a 19-month loan. This plan is a disaster, plain and simple. Why is the minister forcing utility customers into a payday loan scheme that will have Albertans paying more in the long run?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that Albertans are struggling under high electricity prices. That's why since July we've been providing monthly electricity rebates to 1.9 million homes, farms, and small businesses. In recognition of the affordability crisis and cold winter months ahead we're extending the rebates to April 2023, bringing total electricity relief through this program to \$500. Customers on the RRO are facing extreme pricing and volatility. We're responding with a temporary 13 and a half cent kilowatt price relief and deferral from January to March, which will provide relief while smoothing and stabilizing bills next year. In addition, we'll be evaluating the RRO.

**Ms Renaud:** Clearly, this minister hasn't done his homework or even read the bill.

Given that if some Albertans get off the RRO due to high costs, the RRO pool will shrink, leaving these customers with higher costs to pay off the loans, and given that this utility payday lending scheme will leave countless Albertans holding a bag of toxic loans that will cost them a fortune and given that this scheme will result in what U of C economist Blake Shaffer described as a “death spiral” of mounting costs of utility costs in the RRO, what was this minister possibly thinking when he set up this utility payday lending scheme? It doesn’t make sense.

**Mr. Jones:** Customers on the regulated rate option, or RRO, are facing historically high rates, and Albertans are concerned about their ability to budget and pay their bills this winter. The proposed RRO ceiling and deferral ensures that RRO ratepayer bills are manageable by deferring electricity costs above 13 and a half cents per kilowatt hour from January to March and spreading those deferred amounts over future lower cost months. The government is also providing no-interest loans to providers . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Jones:** The government is also providing no-interest loans to providers of the RRO so that both providers and ratepayers can enjoy this relief with no interest related to the deferral.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this utility payday lending scheme would result in many Albertans leaving the RRO option in April and given that those who remain in the RRO will be shouldering more and more of the loans, which will be paid through higher and higher utility bills, and given that this scheme is more of a scam, a scam that will punish Albertans for 19 months with higher and higher utility costs, and given that that looks like a borderline reverse Ponzi scheme but one that is being forced onto utility customers by an incompetent UCP government, can the minister explain to Albertans how this government managed to design such a disastrous utility payday loan scheme?

**Mr. Jones:** The NDP rate cap shifted additional costs from some ratepayers to all taxpayers and avoided the underlying structural volatility inherent in the RRO. By comparison, while the NDP rate cap over the same period would cost taxpayers \$375 million, the net cost to government of the pricing and deferral is estimated at around \$12 million. We will provide electricity relief to Albertans, particularly to those exposed to extreme volatility on the RRO. We will work with RRO providers, experts, and Albertans to improve electricity affordability and stability.

### Women’s Shelters and Affordable Housing

**Member Irwin:** Thousands of Albertans fleeing domestic violence don’t have a place to go. A report released yesterday by the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters showed that Alberta’s shelters had to turn away over 11,000 women and seniors and over 6,000 children because there was no space, and an additional 7,000 women and seniors and more than 3,000 children were turned away because of staffing shortages or lack of resources. This is deeply troubling, and this government needs to take action. Why won’t this government address the chronic underfunding of shelters and treat this like the absolute crisis it is?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are working to address the challenges that we’re seeing across the social sector, not

just in women’s shelters but shelters and PDD and across the board. It was actually part of my mandate letter from the Premier, and I’m very thankful to see that it’s a part of it. I will continue to work with the sector to make sure that we’re addressing the challenges we’re seeing right across the social sector, specifically on women’s shelters.

I want to make sure that we know that anybody fleeing domestic violence will find the help that they need. If you are looking for help, please call the family violence number: 310.1818. [interjections] We’re here to help.

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Member Irwin:** Given that in response to the report yesterday the executive director of Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters, Jan Reimer, said shelters are, quote, under extreme strain due to chronic underfunding – she went on to say that some shelters are even considering closing their unfunded beds despite being at full capacity every single night. Front-line workers, who we should all be praising for their incredible work in the toughest of circumstances, have been urging this government to address that underfunding. Will this government finally recognize that we’ve hit a critical breaking point? Fund these shelters, do the right thing, and do your jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are funding women’s shelters. During the pandemic, as well, we did increase funding for women’s shelters because we knew there was going to be an increase in demand. I look forward to continuing to work with the social sector, with women’s shelters, to make sure we’re meeting this increased demand.

Again, I want folks to know that they can get the help that they need, today if they need it. We do have our \$15 million hotel program, so if there isn’t space in a women’s shelter, we will make sure that there’s a space for you today. Please, if you need help, continue to reach out and ask for help.

**Member Irwin:** Given that affordable housing is desperately needed in our province and has also been underfunded by this government and that the UCP doesn’t seem to believe that they’re responsible for the Albertans who are out on the streets, for those who’ve been turned away from homeless and women’s shelters, especially rural and Indigenous women, who are disproportionately impacted, when will this government recognize that housing is an important piece in the path to keeping Albertans safe? Stop ignoring the situation, and start investing in safe, affordable housing for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Building more housing is a top priority for this government. It’s why we implemented our stronger foundations plan. It’s why yesterday I had the opportunity to be able to announce 55 million new dollars towards helping to build housing, but we haven’t just started with housing. This has been a priority of this government since we took office.

For example, \$4.9 million for Swan River First Nations housing; Paul First housing, \$3 million; Neoma housing, \$2.5 million; Gilchrist Gardens, \$30 million; YWCA Banff, \$2.6 million; YWCA Calgary . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

### Highway 28 Capital Plan

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you are no doubt aware, I've been advocating for improvements to highway 28 since I was first elected in 2015. Highway 28 is the main highway through my constituency, a constituency that produces 30 per cent of the bitumen royalties for this province. To the minister of transportation: does the economic benefit of a region influence decisions into allocation of funding for highways and infrastructure?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul for his question, especially today, which is a very exciting day for the NDP as their coalition partner just appointed their new Liberal leader, John Roggeveen. It'll be interesting to see what deals come out when the new Liberal leader meets with his NDP counterpart. But, yes, I'd like to inform the member and his constituents that his persistent advocacy of the economic benefits of improving highway 28 has paid off, and he has made it perfectly clear how his riding contributes to Alberta's economy and why they need to have a strong road network to help . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that highway 28 was the subject of a feasibility study in 2018 and given the study was projected to take approximately three years and was to be completed in 2021, to the minister: can you provide some detail as to the scope of the project once approved?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is right. His constituency is more than just a vital economic corridor that's home to hard-working families; it represents a strategic military importance as well to the Cold Lake air base. Obviously, getting supplies in and out and having a safe, reliable road network for the base is all vitally important to our country. The importance of highway 28 will be considered going into budget 2023 in February, but the best I can say right now is that Christmas is 17 more sleeps away; Budget 2023 is 78 more sleeps.

2:20

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you to the minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, of course, for the answers. Given that this highway is crucial to supplying our thriving oil and gas industry as well as our famous 4 Wing air base in Cold Lake and many communities on the route from Edmonton to Cold Lake, to the minister: I know that there are highways across the province in much need of repair just like highway 28, but can you commit that highway 28 will rise up the priority list, recognizing the economic benefit to the province of this very important region?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have completed a highway 28 study from Edmonton to Cold Lake. It recommends improvements to intersections, grade widening, safety, rest areas, and more. Albertans can't afford the risky NDP and their costly Liberal coalition. Here's just one example of why. The NDP are planning to bring in restrictive contract arrangements to block construction companies from bidding on provincial projects, and this just reduces competition, creates longer delays and increased costs to taxpayers. The NDP will always put their big union bosses ahead of Albertans. Apparently, big union bosses like Gil McGowan . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### Municipal Governance and Funding

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This disdain that the UCP government has for our municipal leaders has reached a new level under this newest leader. She supports the same rejected municipal policies of the previous Premier, like a provincial police force. Only days ago the Premier made her views of municipal leaders clear when she told CBC, and I quote, municipalities get their power from the provincial government. End quote. In her mind there are only two levels of government, federal and provincial. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs explain if she shares the views of the Premier that the democratic, elected municipal leaders have no rights, powers, or standing under this government?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier stated a fact that municipal governments do get their authority from the province. But it's a government. We're going to work with municipal leaders as we have over the last three and a half years to ensure that we're bringing solutions forward for all Albertans. I know the minister is engaged, the Premier is engaged, this government is engaged.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister has also refused to rule out the ridiculous UCP policy that elected municipal leaders and councillors should be treated as lobbyists when dealing with the provincial government and given that while our party has proposed real partnership with municipalities, the UCP has rammed their job-killing sovereignty act through this House, which gives cabinet dictatorial powers to issue directives to municipalities, treating them as subordinates to be ordered around rather than as elected representatives of Alberta, can the minister explain why she wants to be the municipal dictator rather than a partner?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, of course, none of that is true, Mr. Speaker. Of course municipalities are partners of ours. We have been working with them throughout our time in government, throughout the last three and a half years. We'll continue to do so. We've been consulting with municipalities throughout the last three and a half years on a number of issues that the member has raised, including whether or not to end contract policing, over the sovereignty act. We'll continue to engage municipalities individually and through the RMA and Alberta munis and will continue to do so for the remainder of this term.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has refused to adequately fund affordable housing in its entire time in office, meaning that municipalities have had to rely on the federal funding, and given that under the current text of the act municipalities could be directed to stop accessing funds used to support affordable and social housing from the federal government and given that we are tragically seeing homelessness and Albertans dying from the cold, will the minister of housing explain why he supports the sovereignty act that could jeopardize municipalities' efforts to care for some of our most vulnerable Albertans just so the Premier could have political . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to clarify again because they obviously weren't listening yesterday. Bill 1 has nothing to do with that, and it will not put at risk our housing strategies. Actually, we are working with the other provinces, the other housing ministers, and the federal housing minister to make sure that our housing strategies align, that we're working together to make sure we're addressing these issues and also working with the municipalities, the municipal leaders as well as our not-for-profits and private providers to make sure that we are expanding the supply of affordable housing, and we're making progress on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Francophone Rights

**Ms Renaud:** Alberta is home to a diverse francophone community that's growing. Outside of Quebec Alberta has the largest number of francophones. While this should be something that a government celebrates, this government, through their sovereignty act, is creating great concern. The sovereignty act doesn't acknowledge the specific rights of francophone Albertans, which is creating some worry that this government could use the act to unilaterally override them. Why does this Premier's signature act fail to acknowledge the rights of francophone Albertans? Was this another mistake or a clear view on how the UCP views the francophone community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Francophone Albertans make up a very important part of our province. I was very pleased. I met with the president and CEO of the francophone association of Canada yesterday. We did exchange views about their thoughts on where we're going. Let me tell you this. They're pleased with this government. We're working together with them. We're having more meetings set up in the coming months. The report of the francophone policy committee is going to be released, the annual report. I'm looking forward to working with them.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this government's disdain for francophone Albertans was seen clearly with their decision to slash funding for Campus Saint-Jean, the only French language postsecondary west of Manitoba, and given that the UCP was more willing to go to court than fund francophone education and given that now they're trying to give themselves power to ignore francophone rights in the sovereignty act, if she was more interested in respecting francophone Albertans, the Premier would apologize about the attacks to Campus Saint-Jean and commit to ensuring that they have all of the funding they need so nobody has to go back to court.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education has risen.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to talk about Campus Saint-Jean. As you know, and as I think I've reiterated to this House on numerous occasions, the government of Alberta provides funding to the University of Alberta, who then distributes that funding to the relevant faculties and programs, including Campus Saint-Jean. That being said . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister has the call.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** . . . the government, of course, recognizes the value of francophone education, which is why we've worked with the federal government to secure an agreement that provides direct

funding to Campus Saint-Jean over the next few years to ensure their sustainability, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this government abandoned any semblance of respect for the francophone community by eliminating the position of the secrétaire parlementaire pour la Francophonie and given that now many francophone Albertans don't feel like they're being listened to by this government, something reinforced by the exclusion from consultation on this job-killing, francophone-rights-trampling sovereignty act, will the Premier admit that this was a mistake by ignoring francophone Albertans? I mean, you have so many parliamentary secretaries; why not one more?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I find it rich coming from the other side, the opposition, when they themselves eliminated the position within my department to look after the directorate for francophones. We started the newly created French language service branch to continue to work closely with our francophone community. We added \$5 million to the francophone equivalency fund. We're looking after francophone students and parents and, of course, the community as a whole.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan is next.

### Calgary Cancer Centre

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Calgary-Peigan it has been fulfilling to watch the city I call home continue to develop. Calgary has been host to a number of important infrastructure projects in 2022. The Calgary cancer centre is among them. This centre will provide increased accessibility to cancer treatment services for Calgaryans and Albertans. Can the hon. Minister of Infrastructure tell the House more about this project and the value it brings to the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure and the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Building the vital public infrastructure that Albertans need, creating jobs, and attracting investment is key in our province's economic development. I'm proud to say that the \$1.4 billion investment in the Calgary cancer centre will make life better for Albertans by providing comprehensive cancer care services in a first-class facility. I'm also proud to say that this project has been an economic driver in Calgary, creating over 8,000 well-paying construction and construction-related jobs throughout its duration. In fact, last summer it peaked at 1,650 workers. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan has the call.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks, through you, to the minister for that great answer. Given the clear value of facilitating world-class cancer care in Calgary and given that such an important project has been met with much anticipation from residents, especially those struggling with cancer, can the Minister of Infrastructure inform the House of what progress has been made on the project thus far?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to say that this project has reached substantial completion, meaning it is ready for AHS to take over from here and install the vital technology, furnishings, and other items they need to provide excellent care and

services to Albertans. While the hospital is not ready to open its doors just yet to the public, it is a huge milestone in the construction process and a huge milestone in providing world-class cancer care right here in Alberta. I'm looking forward to joining the Minister of Health as well as others in the official ceremony to hand this centre over to AHS tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, thank you to the minister for his dedication to improving our province. Given that the Calgary cancer centre is currently the largest government infrastructure project in Alberta and given that such projects require significant financial investment, can the hon. Minister of Health advise the House on the services we can expect to see at the centre?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Approximately one-half of Albertans will be diagnosed with cancer some time in their lifetimes. The Calgary cancer centre will be life changing for countless Albertans in their battle with this terrible disease. From the beginning this place was deliberately designed to create an environment that encompassed the whole of cancer. From prevention, screening and early detection, research ideas and collaboration, treatment, development in clinical trials to supportive patient care and education, this world-class facility will offer cutting-edge cancer treatments and provide the services Albertans need.

#### **Children's Health Care and Hospital Capacity Chief Medical Officer of Health**

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, last year I was so privileged to become a new father, but like so many parents across Alberta, I am terrified of what might happen if my son ends up needing emergency health care. Children's hospitals have been at capacity for weeks. I know the minister will stand and explain that maybe we will see off-brand Tylenol on our shelves a month from now, maybe further, but that is not going to solve the crisis that we are seeing in the emergency departments across the province. Why does the government continue to stand by and do nothing while our hospitals are in crisis?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the new father across the way – and congratulations, by the way – and I also want to assure all Alberta parents that health care will be available when they need it. Yes, our system is under strain, but we are providing more resources to the hospitals. AHS is working incredibly hard to actually pull in the resources they need to ensure that Albertans can access them. Again, I was very pleased, with the Premier, to be able to announce 5 million bottles, a shipment of acetaminophen and ibuprofen coming in, that will help relieve the pressure on the hospitals. And I'll speak more to that . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Given that Dr. Paul Parks, former head of the emergency section of the AMA, said that children's health care is in pure chaos and is in disaster mode and given that Dr. Shazma Mithani said that the government's lack of response to the crisis has been deafening and that their lack of leadership is driving down morale on the overrun front lines of our hospitals and given that it has been months since the last CMOH briefing, why aren't daily public health briefings being provided so parents can get the information they

need? Can the minister explain why this government stays silent while parents and front-line health care heroes are crying out for help?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our government hasn't stayed silent. I was very pleased that Dr. Joffe put out a news release to all Albertans about how to manage through this very challenging respiratory virus season. Dr. Joffe also put out a letter to all parents of children in terms of how to manage and urging them to make the choice to get flu shots. I'm very pleased that over the last couple of weeks, given our flu campaign and including the text messages that were sent to all of our phones, the number has increased by 3 and a half per cent, and we'll continue to do more. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Carson:** Given that Alberta families deserve a Health minister that understands their file and knows whether or not important public health officials are still working through this unprecedented health care crisis and given that while the minister told the House yesterday that deputy CMOH were still working after their resignation – their voice mail said that they had stopped working nearly a month ago – and given that with a volunteer CMOH and two deputies who may or may not have stopped working several weeks ago, Albertans want to know when these important roles will be filled and why the minister's statement contradicts the timeline of the deputy CMOH.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I commented in this House earlier, the two deputy CMOH have resigned. You know, when asked that question, I did provide the input on that. I understand that they still are on the payroll although they may have actually taken vacation to get to the end of it, which may have caused the confusion in my answer yesterday. The point is that we are going to fill those positions. We have a new CMOH. He is active in his role right now. We are ensuring he has the resources that he needs to do his job, and we'll continue to support Albertans through this challenging time.

#### **Nechi Institute**

**Ms Sigurdson:** Part of the UCP's appalling record on Indigenous issues is their treatment of the Nechi Institute. Since 1974 Nechi has trained mental health and addictions counsellors with an Indigenous perspective. An estimated 15,000 people have been trained at Nechi and gone on to do critical counselling work in their communities. But in 2019 the UCP evicted the Nechi Institute from their premises at Poundmaker's Lodge. Last month the UCP evicted Nechi from trailers they had set up on the grounds of Poundmaker's. Why is the UCP so determined to shut down the Nechi Institute and their vital work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure has risen.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have been working collaboratively with the Nechi Institute and the Poundmaker's Lodge to try to find a peaceful resolution to this challenge. We did have to send them a letter. The trailers that they were in were dilapidated and need work, and the Poundmaker's Lodge was asking us if we could find a way to access the site for ground-penetrating radar to look for possible sites of people that were buried there. We have been ongoing working with them. We have sent them a letter. We have yet to hear back from them, but it is my understanding that they co-operatively were moving to a new site, and we're continuing to work with them.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the Nechi Institute executive director, Marilyn Buffalo, is with us here today and given that in his October eviction letter to her the Minister of Infrastructure threatens to fence off and dismantle Nechi's trailers and even potentially arrest and criminally charge Nechi Institute staff, why did the Minister of Infrastructure make these threats towards Indigenous Albertans who were training their peers to do important mental health and addictions work in communities which are disproportionately affected by the drug-poisoning crisis in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're very thankful for the work that the Nechi Institute has done, and it is my understanding that after that letter was sent on November 11, 2022, the Nechi voluntarily vacated that site. We have sent them a further letter, and we have asked if they need help with further work on accommodations. That offer still stands. We are waiting to hear an official response. We continue to hope to work with them and provide them the help that we can to help them into a new site.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that when the UCP evicted Nechi from Poundmaker's buildings, the Minister of Indigenous Relations promised that he would find them a new location – in fact, almost exactly three years ago, on December 3, the minister told this house, and I quote: we will find other space for the Nechi Institute. End of quote. Three years have passed, and the Nechi Institute is homeless. Why did the minister break his word in this House to Marilyn Buffalo and to the Nechi Institute?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have sent a letter still reaffirming that promise to help them find a location and to provide them new trailers to help them continue to do that work. We are at this time still waiting for an official response to continue that work with them. We thank them for the co-operation that they have shown by voluntarily vacating the site so that we can do the essential work that we need to do, the ground-penetrating radar, to find if there are any burial sites there. We continue to wait for their response.

Thank you very much. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

### High School Construction Project in North Calgary

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education is an important subject for all Albertans. As Calgary's population continues to grow, more students are entering into the education system, thereby increasing demand for new schools. I am happy that construction for a north Calgary high school is under way, making members of my community very happy and excited. However, I am concerned that the current inflationary environment may have impacted this project. To the Minister of Infrastructure: can you please provide an overall update on the north Calgary high school project?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As the member said, the north Calgary high school is currently under construction and is actually over the halfway point in that process. Right now construction of the building envelope is under way, HVAC and sprinkler installation is ongoing, the interior framing is under construction, and other interior finishes are on track as well. As a former contractor and project manager I understand the member's

concern about inflationary impacts on projects, and I would like to say that this is something that has always been monitored by the department of infrastructure and accounted for throughout the building process.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that rising inflation is an ongoing concern in Canada and a significant issue in Alberta as well and given that Alberta is also experiencing supply chain problems and further given that Alberta is currently going through labour shortages, to the same minister: can you please provide an update on the cost of the north Calgary high school project?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budget for this project is \$70.5 million, which, on top of providing a new school, has provided about 400 construction and construction-related jobs. Each individual infrastructure project in Alberta varies in terms of supply chain impact, which is a global problem. However, Alberta Infrastructure continually monitors inflation and cost-escalation trends to ensure that anticipated cost escalations are calculated into our project budget right from the planning stage and all the way through construction. Project teams, contractors, consultants, and suppliers are also actively working to mitigate risk of delayed structures, schedules, and cost implications.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that detailed answer. Given that the Calgary board of education is one of the busiest and largest school boards in western Canada and given that high schools near north Calgary are already reaching capacity while more students are continuing to enrol and further given that parents in Calgary-North are eager to send their kids to this new high school, can the Minister of Infrastructure please give an update to this House on when parents and students can expect the grand opening for the north Calgary high school? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. One thing I can assure the members down there on that corner of the Assembly is that the hon. Member for Calgary-North listened intently while you asked questions. Perhaps you would show him the same courtesy.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of my mandate is to work closely with the Minister of Education to build more schools in our province, and that is exactly what we're doing. The Calgary north high school will be able to accommodate up to 1,800 students. We are expecting to see construction finished during the summer of 2023, when it will be handed over to the school district to prepare for the students' arrival at the start of the '23-24 school year. Our government is focused on creating jobs, providing the facilities and spaces communities need, and ensuring that all Albertans have access to quality education. This project accomplishes that goal.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Bill 6  
Police Amendment Act, 2022**

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It is a privilege for me to rise today and introduce the first reading of Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022.

Alberta is a much different place than it was in 1988, when the current Police Act came into being. This is the first major update of the Police Act in over 34 years. This act would improve accountability and public confidence in the police by establishing an independent commission to handle complaints against police, creating new governance bodies that will give communities greater say in setting policies, priorities, performance targets, building police services that better understand their diverse communities and are more responsive to their distinct needs. I encourage members on both sides of this House to support this legislation, and I ask that we move first reading of Bill 6.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Bill 203  
Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties)  
Amendment Act, 2022**

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 203, the Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022.

The purpose of this bill is to improve traffic safety by reducing unsafe, excessive speeding and stunt driving. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to discussing this bill with my colleagues and encourage all members in this House to support Bill 203.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

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

**Bill 204  
Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022**

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022.

In 2017 I introduced the private member's Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017. It was patterned after an Amber Alert, which enabled police to issue a notice when a senior or adult with a cognitive impairment went missing. The Assembly passed the bill. The bill received royal assent but was never proclaimed due to the powers it could grant police in disclosing information not collected in accordance with the Missing Persons Act. Private member's Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, will address the concerns by working within the MPA and amending the disclosure section to make clear that silver alerts do not contravene the Missing Persons Act and therefore allow police to be able to access a silver alert to help find a missing senior.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a first time]

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings?

Seeing none, I do have a tabling. I rise to table six copies of a letter from the Member for Peace River requesting early consideration of Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022.

**Statement by the Speaker**

**Private Members' Public Bills**

**The Speaker:** However, members, before we proceed to the remaining items of the Routine, I have a matter to address with the Assembly that has to do with the tabling that I just made. The Member for Peace River has requested that the private member's bill that he's sponsoring, Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022, be granted early consideration and be called in Committee of the Whole on Monday, December 12, 2022. I have just tabled this letter.

Since this type of request has not occurred for some time, in particular during the 30th Legislature, I would like to speak a little bit about what the request entails and what past Speakers have said about such requests for early consideration. Currently Bill 202 is on the Order Paper with a due date of day 12 of session, which equates to Monday, December 19, 2022. The member's request is that Bill 202 be considered in Committee of the Whole this coming Monday, December 12. There is a protocol in place, that has existed since 1997, that a member may request early consideration on their bill so long as it has passed the previous bill stage. In this case, that has occurred. Bill 202 received second reading this past Monday, December 5.

The other aspect of the protocol is that the bill for which early consideration has been granted must not bump another private member's bill where debate has been adjourned, the committee has not completed the work on a bill, or a bill is due according to the rules. Currently there are no other bills that fall into any of these categories. Accordingly, following the practices and precedents of this Assembly, Bill 202 will be first up for consideration in Committee of the Whole on Monday under private members' bills.

2:50

I'd like to make a few remarks regarding early consideration of private members' bills. My predecessors repeatedly called upon House leadership to review the procedure for early consideration. This has not happened, and I'm mindful that the early consideration process might jeopardize the ability of private members' bills to proceed through the legislative process as expeditiously as possible. Therefore, I renew previous calls of Speakers, including Speaker Wanner, Speaker Zwozdesky, and Speaker Kowalski, for such a procedure that ensures that the consideration of private members' bills be as fair as possible for all private members.

For additional information – and I'm sure you'll be reading up on it this weekend – on the matter of early consideration of private members' bills I refer you to Speakers' statements from December 3, 2014; November 18, 2013; March 15, 2012; November 23, 2009; November 27, 2001; and lastly, February 11, 1997.

That brings us to Ordres du jour.

**Orders of the Day**

**Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

**Bill 2**

**Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022**

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.



**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

Bill 2 is a priority for Alberta's government as it recognizes the affordability crisis facing Albertans and enables us to provide additional support. Many families are struggling with rising grocery bills, power bills, mortgage payments. Seniors are facing tough choices about whether to fill their prescriptions or buy fuel for their cars. Rising inflation impacts everyone, especially those living on fixed incomes or facing higher costs such as families, Albertans with disabilities, or those out of work.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

Our government has moved quickly to put our affordability action plan into motion, but legislative changes are needed to enable us to provide quick and effective supports. It is my privilege to present this bill and to move it through second reading in the House. If passed, these legislative amendments will enable us to deliver affordability relief to all Albertans struggling under the burden of increased costs and crippling inflation. Through Bill 2 our government will deliver critical affordability measures that are designed to provide both broad-based support and targeted relief across the province. Most significantly, this legislation makes necessary changes that will enable our government to deliver upcoming targeted relief to millions of Albertans.

Bill 2 will amend the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act to enable us to deliver six nontaxable monthly payments of \$100 to seniors, families for each child under 18, and vulnerable Albertans receiving AISH, PDD, and income support. We wanted to ensure that all low- and middle-income families received the support. Approximately 80 per cent of families with children will be eligible based on the \$180,000 income threshold, which is the same threshold we use for child care subsidies. Legislating this program ensures that the payments are nontaxable and do not affect other benefits. Passage of this bill is a critical and necessary step to enable these payments early in the new year. We remain committed to the legislative process, and more details will be outlined through regulation if the legislation passes. We look forward to updating Albertans as quickly as possible.

Through this legislation we will also index both personal income tax and the Alberta child and family benefit. The Alberta Personal Income Tax Act will be amended to resume indexation of nonrefundable tax credits and tax bracket thresholds in the personal income tax system, retroactive to 2022. With this change, many Albertans will owe less tax or receive a higher refund come tax time. They will also benefit from lower tax withholdings on their paycheques next year. The Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, will also index the Alberta child and family benefit program to inflation, increasing quarterly benefits to low-income Alberta families by 6 per cent.

This legislation will also provide temporary price protection on electricity costs through the newly named regulated rate option stability act. Right now approximately 800,000 Alberta homes, farms, and small businesses purchase electricity through the regulated rate option, or RRO. They are facing record-high electricity rates this winter. To protect them from price spikes, we will set a temporary price ceiling of 13 and a half cents per kilowatt hour, lasting from January through to the end of March. For January, February, and March any electricity costs above the 13 and a half cent ceiling will be deferred until and spread over lower price months. Other changes to the act will ensure this price protection is provided as fairly as possible, including for consumers served by rural electrification associations and for municipalities not regulated by the AUC. The

city of Medicine Hat is included as well to make sure that its residents also benefit from this price stabilization.

To ensure providers can shoulder any added costs, the government will offer no-interest loans to RRO providers needing to finance the deferrals created by the price ceiling. Providers will pay back the loans through future RRO rates from April 1 to December 31, 2024. This measure is temporary and necessary. It will provide price protection for consumers when RRO rates are expected to be the highest. This price ceiling combined with the electricity and natural gas rebates will provide real support for millions of people and businesses facing high utility costs.

The high cost of fuel impacts all of us. That's why we will also amend the Fuel Tax Act to expand fuel tax relief and save Albertans money every time they fill up at the pump. To provide immediate help, we will implement a temporary suspension of the fuel tax on gasoline and diesel from January through to the end of June 2023. These legislative changes will enable us to pause the full 13 cent fuel tax for the next six months and make the fuel tax relief program permanent, with ongoing reduced fuel taxes during periods of high oil prices. Details on oil price thresholds and methods for calculation will be outlined in the regulation.

Mr. Speaker, with Bill 2 we are taking decisive action to enable broad-based relief that helps millions of individuals, families, farms, and small businesses during this affordability crisis. Measures we have taken in the past to pay down provincial debt and put our fiscal house in order made it possible for our government to be there now to support Albertans when and where they need it the most. This legislation appropriately balances the need to provide both broad-based relief and targeted support for those most impacted by soaring costs. Alberta's affordability action plan is the largest of its kind in Canada. If passed, this legislation will ensure that desperately needed financial support is delivered quickly and effectively.

I hereby move second reading of Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Other hon. members looking to speak to Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, at second reading? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak at second reading of Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. I'm thankful for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 2. Much of what's in this bill has already been announced.

You know, before I get into my comments about the specifics of the bill, I would just like to say something about the rollout of this piece of legislation. This is perhaps for everybody in this Chamber to hear and understand. This particular piece of legislation touches the lives of a lot of Albertans that perhaps don't understand what's being rolled out or what's being announced by the government. What that does, if there isn't clarity in answers or a place for people to go to get more information immediately when something is announced: it creates fear and uncertainty. Because this piece of legislation will touch tens of... [interjection] Excuse me? Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the minister was saying, but okay.

Anyway, where I was going with this is that because this piece of legislation touches the lives of disabled Albertans, many of which struggle to understand what this piece of legislation structurally means to them, there's a lot of panic and fear. So my suggestion is just, in future rollouts that we know are going to impact the lives of people that are particularly vulnerable and maybe struggle to understand, that there be some clarity, that there be more clarity, and that there be some thoughtful process involved to understand that – you know, we're just going to have to take more care to

explain things. I know my office has just been bombarded with: "When is the money coming? When will it go up? Am I eligible?" It's just fear, and it's fear from a lot of very desperate people.

I'm going to move on to my comments. What's new in this bill should be deeply concerning to Albertans. Much like the Premier's signature sovereignty act, that was written in crayon, it looks like this legislation didn't get the benefit of due diligence, that or this government is actually intent on delivering the most poorly designed plan on utilities that this province has ever seen.

3:00

In this legislation the UCP government set a temporary ceiling on the price of electricity for customers on the regulated rate option. That rate is set at 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour, nearly twice as high as the hard cap under the previous NDP government.

That egregious doubling of the ceiling is actually not the worst part of the bill. For reasons passing understanding, this government is forcing RRO customers into a utility payday lending scheme. Folks on the RRO get three months of temporary relief but then end up paying more over the next 19 months to pay off the loan. These loans, let us be clear, could come with interest.

We have a bit of a scheme here, but this scheme is very poorly designed. Everyone on the RRO is meant to be paying back these loans through higher utility rates over the next 19 months, but after March this government has created a huge economic incentive for people to leave the regulated rate option. Albertans with good credit who can sign up for the market price option will leave the RRO. Who are those people with poor credit? They're very vulnerable people, usually. Hence, the pool of Albertans paying back the loan will shrink, forcing utility prices higher and higher. This is a terribly designed scheme, what some have called a reverse Ponzi scheme, that will lead to disaster.

University of Calgary economist Blake Shaffer, perhaps this province's leading expert on the electricity market, has called this design feature of this scheme "a death spiral." Now, members opposite heckling may think they know more. They do not. This is someone that has studied this and is an expert, and I think that we need to listen to the experts, not to conspiracy theorists and not to hecklers. The UCP utility payday lending scheme is a trap. It will trap Albertans who can't get off the RRO into paying even higher utility costs. In other words, there will be some Albertans left holding the bag, a bag full of toxic loans, paid back with higher and higher utility rates.

It's been less than 24 hours since this legislation was introduced, and already we can see how deeply flawed it is. It looks like the same level of due diligence and careful thought that went into the job-killing sovereignty act, and that's a pretty low bar. Albertans deserve better. They deserve much better. Instead of delivering a utility payday lending scheme that's designed to fail, the government should get back to basics. We're in an affordability crisis. The solution is simple. In the short term we need a real program that protects Albertans from these price spikes, and in the longer term we need a real solution to drive down those prices.

We're near the end of this government's mandate, yet they've given next to no thought on a real, long-term plan on electricity. The only thought they've got is a reverse Ponzi scheme or, put another way, a utility payday lending scheme that really is designed to fail.

Mr. Speaker, let me move on from this payday lending debacle. There are other things that are missing from this bill that should be highlighted: absolutely no action on sky-high grocery items; absolutely no action on sky-high auto insurance rates, rates that this government knows are set to jump again.

In the view of the opposition, it's time for this government to start listening to Albertans, to their needs. Albertans are under enormous financial pressure right now. The health care system is on the brink. Kids can't get good access to hospitals when they need them, but the priority of this government and its focus and its energy is entirely on the sovereignty act, an act that two-thirds of Albertans don't want. Listen to that: two-thirds of Albertans do not want the sovereignty act. Investors tell us that it will drive away investment in this province, and still government members think they know better. It's time for this government to get their priorities straight and to focus on what really matters.

Let me conclude and reflect on one of the cruelest decisions made by this government, and by that I mean the decision to stop indexing AISH and other critical benefit programs to inflation. Let me be clear. For years this government weaponized inflation to punish the most vulnerable in our society. It was a heartless decision, and it did real harm.

The UCP government can't undo the suffering people experienced for years, but perhaps they could have decided on a go-forward basis to reverse their cruel cuts. Unfortunately, this legislation also fails people on AISH. The UCP government could have just adjusted payments for all of the years that it was frozen, but they chose a different path. Even after the changes in this act, an AISH recipient will still be \$3,000 worse off than with the previous NDP government, had we remained in power. They lost three years.

The Premier has a \$12 billion surplus, a record \$28 billion in natural resource revenues. There's apparently money to set up an Alberta revenue agency at a cost of \$500 million per year and another 5,000 civil servants, a 20 per cent increase in that workforce. There's money for an Alberta provincial police force at a cost of billions, but there's not enough money to undo the egregious harm that they've done to people on AISH, some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Now, I want to stop and tell you that I remember in 2019, when the deindexation – we found it in the omnibus piece of legislation, and we warned that it would be a problem. Then for the next three years, Mr. Speaker, we continued to warn that it was a problem and that people were suffering. We warned at that time that this would increase poverty, the stress and the cost of poverty. Make no mistake: there is a massive cost to poverty; there is a massive cost to government systems when people fall further into poverty. We said: this is going to harm people.

And what do we see now, three years later? Certainly, we have had COVID and inflation and deindexation, and what we see is enormous pressure on Alberta food banks, enormous pressure all over the place. I represent a community that is fairly wealthy on the whole, St. Albert, and even their food bank is breaking records. The pressure is all over the province. I'm sorry, but the food bank plan announced by the minister is insufficient. It talks about matching funding over three years – let me be clear: there is an election in six months – and that is insufficient to fund the hole, really, that food banks are experiencing as a direct result of benefits being deindexed. We warned that homelessness would increase, and what do you know? It has skyrocketed. It has skyrocketed all over the province. Shelters are full. Shelters are turning people away regularly. That is a problem.

Still, these are the things that we warned about when these benefits were deindexed, and since that time I am quite sure that many members in this House have received e-mails from all kinds of people talking about the struggle that they've had with AISH, trying to manage on AISH over the last three years. I know that I'm just completely overwhelmed with phone calls and e-mails and letters, handwritten letters sometimes, from people telling me their stories, telling me their stories that they live in their car, that they lost their apartment, that they live in their vehicle with their

daughter. I've heard of people in unsafe situations renting an apartment with an abusive spouse: they have no funds to leave; they have nothing; they can barely afford food. People that were using the food bank before are now going twice as often, and they're eating unhealthy food. They are getting sick in many cases because of the lack of nutrition in their diet.

And it's not just the payments that people are getting or the income benefits; it is so many other things in AISH that are not going to be fixed with this piece of legislation. You know, I have a number of questions that, when we get to that stage of debate, I will ask, but I'm just so alarmed by the lack of thought that goes into this government's legislation.

For example – here's just one little, tiny example – they talk about reindexing benefits for AISH, which is assured income for the severely handicapped, and PDD, which is persons with developmental disabilities. Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you know this, that most if not all people that receive PDD supports are on AISH. So what does that mean? Did you intend for them to get this benefit twice? Did you intend for the amount being indexed to double? I don't know. How many people receive PDD support that aren't on AISH? Tell me. I don't understand that. PDD is not a direct payment support to Albertans. PDD pays for staff to support people with disabilities, so I'm not quite sure what this act intends to do.

There is so much that has gone on over the last three years. You know, I got a little emotional yesterday when I heard an answer from the minister about AISH, and the reason that I got upset is because for the last three years that is what I've spent my time doing, listening to people and listening to the struggle. To hear this government really boast about what they're doing and how they're helping people and helping the most vulnerable – you did the bare minimum. Let's be clear. You did the bare minimum. You started indexing from here on. What they need is for you to make up that difference, and that isn't even going to cut it because they have fallen further into poverty over the last three years.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I want to talk about one other program that is in this piece of legislation.

Can I get a time check, Mr. Speaker?

3:10

**The Acting Speaker:** About seven minutes.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you.

One of the other benefit programs that is mentioned in this piece of legislation is income support. As you know, income support is very much like AISH except it is an income replacement for people. There are two strains of income support; there's barriers to employment, and there's expected to work.

I'm going to talk about barriers to employment. People that are receiving income support, barriers to employment, very often have chronic illnesses. Very often they have disabilities, and they're just not on AISH yet, or they've been denied AISH benefits. Very often these are people with disabilities and very serious concerns or issues that prevent them from financially supporting themselves.

Now, this government indexed those benefits, and it went up a little bit. It's still under \$900 a month. Can you imagine trying to live on \$900 a month, that you demonstrably have problems working so you need income replacement, that you get income support and it's \$900 a month? Now, at one time people in Alberta had the ability to apply for supplemental benefits to income support. There was a whole host of them. A couple of them in particular that I'll talk about are accommodation or rental support. There was some extra money to help with rent. As you can imagine, people can't live on \$900 a month, so there was this extra \$300 benefit that

people could apply for to help with rent, and that would help quite a bit.

But this government, Mr. Speaker, has systematically kicked people off that benefit. Well over a thousand people lost that benefit. I know directly of probably, like, at least 15 or 20 people that lost their housing because of the loss of that supplemental benefit. Then, to make things worse, when they would appeal this decision – so they would literally go to the Appeals Secretariat to appeal the decision that this government made to reduce income support, get rid of accommodation support, that \$300. They would appeal it, but here's the rule: they had to have an address, they had to have a home to be able to appeal that decision. But these guys are the heroes of red tape reduction. That's just one example of the things that have happened over the last three years.

The other one is medical transportation. People literally lost a little bit – it was about \$100 that people on income support lost for medical transportation. Now, keep in mind that these are people with chronic illnesses, diseases, disabilities. Clearly, they are unable to work because they're receiving this benefit. Nobody wants to live on \$900 a month on income support if they can help it. They lost medical transportation. You know who it harmed? People in rural communities and suburban communities. They can no longer afford to get an Uber or a taxi to get to the Cross or to get to their doctor or to get to a program because there isn't very good regional transportation. Those are the people that were harmed.

I received letters and calls from people all over the place, primarily Red Deer county, weirdly enough, and the Bonnyville area. People are struggling not just because these benefits were deindexed but because of the systematic withdrawal of benefits for people that are extremely vulnerable and people that have disabilities. And then this government has the gall to say: we're stepping up; we're helping. You're vote buying. But you haven't done enough. You haven't made whole these people that suffered for over three years, that lost all kinds of things. All kinds of things. So I have a really hard time being thankful for this because this isn't really progress; this is doing the bare minimum. These folks have struggled.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that I cannot be the only constituency office that receives this kind of correspondence. I know because I'm copied on many of the e-mails that go to your offices. Every single constituency has people with disabilities and has people that are low income and has people that are vulnerable and has low-income seniors. It's not enough. Do you know how much the low-income seniors' benefit went up thanks to this bill? Do you know? Did you read it? Seventeen dollars. Seventeen dollars for low-income seniors. That's what it went up. So you have a \$13 billion surplus, and low-income seniors in Alberta get \$17 extra a month. That's not good enough. That is not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that I will ask in future debate – there are so many things that are unknown. Now we have indexed certain benefits, but what about all the thresholds, then? Okay. So what about if someone needs legal aid? Have you changed those thresholds? Have you thought about that? Is there any plan whatsoever? My experience with this government is that they do things, they make bad decisions, and they maybe consult after the fact, if you're lucky. Rarely do they correct the mistakes properly, and then they continue.

Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere hope that through debate on this bill this government will realize, "Maybe we didn't get it right; maybe we didn't fix enough; maybe we didn't go far enough," and they will entertain some amendments that will actually improve life for people in Alberta that are vulnerable, that are low income, or that are disabled, because what is in this bill is not enough. It doesn't undo the years of damage.

You know, I want to say one other thing about this. It is one thing to index AISH, but all of these other things have happened over the last three years specifically to AISH recipients and income support recipients. They deindexed, and then there was a systematic attack, so removing the supplementals, making the application process even more difficult for people to apply for AISH and income support. Now you have to do it online. You don't even know how many calls I get from people way up north that have poor connections, don't have computers, and don't even have the ability to go find someone to help them to apply for benefits online, so they're calling my office. There's no access for people. It's just shocking to me.

The application process for AISH: there is no clear timeline for how long things are taking. There is no benchmark where we can say to the ministry: are you meeting your targets?

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to add to debate this afternoon? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Albertans are facing an affordability crisis right now, and that's why I am proud to support Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. The UCP government has already announced affordability measures, but these, in conjunction with Bill 2, will undeniably help Albertans during this difficult time.

The provincial NDP has supported the excessive federal spending that we've seen from the Trudeau government. The unnecessary, inflationary carbon tax has made things substantially worse for everyone as well. You know, Mr. Speaker, even though we can't repeal Justin Trudeau's carbon tax and we can't convince the NDP to lobby their ally Jagmeet Singh to support their affordability measure, there are things we can do in a timely and targeted manner. Through Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, we will be able to help the most vulnerable and make life more affordable.

Unlike the NDP, who couldn't make up their mind when they opposed the UCP government's cut of the fuel tax in April and then supported it in September, our government has acted decisively to cut the fuel tax by 13.6 cents per litre on every litre of gas and diesel. Bill 2 acts to authorize the current program retroactive to April 1, 2022, and extends it to June 30, 2023, regardless of oil prices.

With Bill 2 our government will support the most vulnerable by reindexing AISH, PDD, income support, the seniors' benefit, and the Alberta child benefit. For families with children under 18, seniors aged 65 and up, and families with an income below \$180,000, they will be provided a targeted \$600 by our government. We know that many of these families live on a fixed income, so these payments will be structured as refundable tax credits, making them nontaxable and making sure 100 per cent of these supports go to the Albertans that need them the most.

You know, Mr. Speaker, my mom is a senior, and, as many Albertans do, I help her manage her finances. I can see how she is struggling and is being forced to tighten her belt. But what I see in our measures here is not only seniors' benefits being reindexed, but I also see an extra \$100 a month for her for six months. I also see her electricity bill having rebates attached to it, lowering her monthly payments for her electricity. That's important for seniors. That's important for seniors, and it's a heck of a lot more than the base \$17 that the Member for St. Albert seems to think is a big nothing burger.

3:20

You know what else? As a mom I raised two boys, and I can tell you first-hand that when finances get tight, the first thing you do is decide whether or not your child is going to be able to play soccer or go to dance lessons, and it's an incredibly hard decision as a

parent to have to make a decision like that. Right now, after everything that kids have been through in the pandemic, they need activities, really, more now than ever. These are tough decisions. So that's why we're going to help parents with children. A hundred dollars a month makes the difference between being able to put your child in soccer or not in lots of cases. Given our strong provincial financial position I strongly believe that it's our responsibility to support Albertans and families who are struggling to pay their bills, and I'm really happy to see our government doing this.

Mr. Speaker, the use of food banks has also gone up 73 per cent between March 2019 and March 2022, which is why our government will provide targeted support to those in need, and that's also why we're funding food banks. You know, the Member for St. Albert seems to think that \$20 million is insufficient. I'm going to point something out: this is the first time ever that food banks have received funding from the government of Alberta. That is incredibly important. It's the first time, and it never happened during the NDP government, I'll point out. [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has the call.

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, 180,000 lost jobs, and they think nobody needed the food bank while they were in government? Give me a break.

You know what else we're going to do? We're going to support those that rely on transit, and we're going to provide additional funding for low-income transit programs.

Mr. Speaker, our government understands that heating and powering your home when it's minus 40 outside is not optional; it's pretty much a necessity. But it can also be incredibly expensive, which is why under Bill 2 we expand the electricity rebate for four months and provide an additional \$200 to over 1.9 million homes, farms, and businesses. You know what else happens in the wintertime? Not only is it cold, but it's dark. You kind of use a little more electricity.

At any rate, I want to talk here at this point, too, about some comments, again made by the Member for St. Albert. She talked about how this program is so poorly designed. Well, let me tell you a little bit about a poorly designed electricity program. It happened during the NDP government when they accelerated the removal of coal from generation, which, of course, increased the price of electricity. And then what did they do? Oh, that's right. They put a price cap on to hide, to cover up the fact that they'd raised the prices over the acceleration of coming off coal. And then what did they do? Oh, that's right. They pushed the costs forward onto ratepayers through the Balancing Pool. It was a giant cover-up.

This brings the total relief for our electricity program to \$500. We'll have a three-month price ceiling of 13 and a half cents per kilowatt hour, and it'll also be set on the RRO for consumers. The government of Alberta will provide zero per cent interest loans to providers to support deferrals. Zero per cent. I think the Member for St. Albert referred to it as some sort of Ponzi scheme – I don't know – interest rate loans. [interjection] Interest-free loans, yeah. Okay.

Furthermore, the natural gas rebate program for when natural gas hits over six and a half dollars is going to be extended indefinitely because we believe that the owners of the resource, which is the people of Alberta, should benefit when our prices are increasing for that particular commodity.

Mr. Speaker, with Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, our government will deliver on our promise to reindex personal income taxes retroactively to the 2022 tax year. As an aside, I'm just going to remind this Chamber that we had no tax brackets

and therefore no tax bracket creep until the NDP came along and eliminated the flat tax.

At any rate, reindexing personal income taxes means that 80,000 to 95,000 more Albertans will pay zero personal income tax by 2023. This is in addition to the current 1.3 million tax filers that already pay zero. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? That's actually pretty good news for many seniors and also for young people who are just starting out.

Mr. Speaker, low-income Albertans will also be able to take advantage of Alberta's rent supplement program and expanded temporary rent assistance benefit and the Alberta adult health benefit.

Under Budget 2022 we're also supporting students, Mr. Speaker. Postsecondary students will have \$980 million provided for student loans, \$108 million in scholarships, and \$60 million in grants. Through the new beginnings bursary low-income Albertans will also have access to \$15 million in funding over three years and a further 3 and a half million dollars that was just recently announced.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the affordability measures that have been addressed by Budget 2022. I strongly urge my colleagues as well as the members across to support this bill, that will act to support Albertans in this time of need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Others wishing to speak to the matter? I see the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to speak to Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. Before I begin, I just want to thank the countless residents of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain that have reached out to me with their suggestions as well as for the great work that I know many of my caucus colleagues and the minister have done to put this important piece of legislation forward.

As an MLA my job is to ensure that my constituency of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and the people that live there, the people that call that area home, are looked after. This has always been and will continue to be my main priority and the greatest privilege of my short elected life. With that said, it is my absolute pleasure to speak to this bill as I know that this substantial package of targeted measures will provide some relief and much-needed support to my constituents and countless other Albertans.

Alberta's economy has recovered strongly, but we understand that Albertans are still struggling to heat their homes, fill their cars, and feed their families. We hear you, and we want to help. That's why addressing this inflation and affordability crisis was put at the top of our government's agenda, ultimately resulting in this critical piece of legislation. As we continue to grapple with the inflation and affordability crisis, this act will help Albertans manage these difficult times while we maintain fiscal responsibility and economic stability. Every decision our government makes from now until this crisis is over will balance affordability for Albertans with the need for continued balanced budgets and fiscal responsibility. The Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act provides important legislative changes necessary for our government to take decisive action and deliver timely and effective support for Albertans.

Now, under this legislation families across Alberta with dependent children under 18 will receive \$100 instalments for six months for each child. As the MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and having one of the youngest average ages of any provincial riding in the province, I know this is going to be a massive help for many of the families that live in my riding. According to Trevor Tombe, an economics professor and fellow at the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, families have been affected even more by inflation. Those with kids have faced higher costs than those without.

I think any of the parents here would attest to that. It's undeniable that having another mouth to feed without another stream of income makes things much more expensive. Now, that said, this measure proves to be imperative to many of the families that live in my area.

Furthermore, some of the most valued yet most vulnerable members of our society continue to be our seniors. Seniors have always been integral pillars in our communities and in our families. Unfortunately, this demographic is also increasingly vulnerable to situations regarding inflation and affordability. This is one of the greatest sources of correspondence and phone calls and e-mails that I receive from residents in my area. That said, I'm extremely pleased to see that under this relief package recipients of the Alberta seniors' benefit will also see an increase in their January cheques in addition to receiving \$100 instalments each month for the next six months. Our seniors have spent decades making our communities what they are today, and I'm proud to stand behind this bill so that we may take care of our seniors as they have spent their lives taking care of us and have helped build our communities for many decades.

3:30

Now, for other Albertans, relief through this legislation is going to be seen at the pumps and on the energy bills. Legislative amendments will suspend the fuel tax in its entirety for six months while extending rebate programs for electricity and natural gas. By saving 13 cents per litre at the pumps and receiving additional electricity rebates of \$200 per home between January and April, I am confident that my constituents and all Albertans will be better equipped to weather the storm.

For our province's most vulnerable, recipients of PDD, AISH, and income support will receive cash instalments, and they can rest easier knowing that those benefits will now be reindexed. Again, I just want to give kudos to the rest of my caucus colleagues, especially the minister, for ensuring that this change took place. For those who are frustrated seeing their pay increases make negligible impacts in their budget, this legislation will reindex provincial tax brackets to inflation retroactive to the 2022 tax year and ensure that you will not be penalized for moving up a bracket.

If the members opposite choose to vote against this bill, I would consider that to be a direct attack on Albertans and many of the families that they would represent. Alberta's inflation was 6.8 per cent in October, up 6.2 per cent in September, a bump that is likely due to increases in the price of gas, electricity, and food. On a year-by-year basis Albertans paid 6.8 per cent more in October of 2022 for the goods and services over the same period a year ago. Albertans are calling for help, and our government is there to listen. This bill will allow us to follow through on our commitment to answer that call. The Leader of the Official Opposition has warned Albertans to take caution when it comes to our government's substantial package of targeted inflation relief measures. Now, personally, I would be petrified of any party or government that is not willing to offer the same level of relief or support during this type of crisis. Our residents are demanding this type of support.

As we work together to manage these trying times, our goal as Alberta's government is to increase affordability. The Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, does exactly that, Mr. Speaker. That is why I support Bill 2, so that the hard-working families and individuals across this province can go back to living a more affordable life. I encourage all members in this Chamber to do the same and support this very important legislation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With that, I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Bill 3**  
**Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022**

[Debate adjourned December 7: Mr. Deol speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has eight minutes left if he wishes to use it.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the floor.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you so much, and thank you to my colleague from Edmonton-Meadows for his remarks earlier on this legislation. It's my pleasure to take a few minutes to engage in it today as well. As we are here today to debate the property rights amendment act, Bill 3, 2022, I want to begin by saying that I appreciate that this bill went through a process to address some of the challenges that were identified through Bill 206, that was brought forward by a private member of the UCP caucus previously, in 2020, and that in turn a committee was created to help gather feedback and bring forward through the committee process a government bill to remedy some of the issues that were resulting of that Bill 206 and then also to do – one of the things I love most about committee work is that there's a very thorough interjurisdictional comparison that's typically done to make sure that we know where our legislation is in terms of national standards and where the rest of the country is. I believe that the bill in the iteration that we're considering today does significantly improve our standing to be more in line with other jurisdictions across the country.

This bill is an example of a bill that was drafted after consultation and the advice of community stakeholders. I know many members of the Legislature, through the committee, travelled the province to get feedback from local residents as well as had conversations with the Alberta Law Reform Institute. I think that these types of engagement lead to better legislation, typically.

I can't help but think about this bill, which is number three of the government's priorities, in contrast to Bill 1. Instead of having the type of in-depth consultation that we've seen with Bill 3, Bill 1 was of course rammed through with no mandate. You know, only 1 per cent of Albertans actually voted for the current Premier, and many members of the current government actively campaigned very aggressively against that bill for many, many months, and they were right to do so, as well as many members of the community.

Bill 3 acknowledges the role of the courts and the judiciary in terms of arbitration disputes. This is important because, of course, when it comes to questions around one's home and the right of one to occupy that space, if it is your primary residence it carries great concern if one was to be evicted from their home without any due recourse or any opportunity for arbitration or for the judiciary to engage in that process in the courts.

I appreciate that this bill does acknowledge the important role of the courts, of arbitrators, and of the judiciary in terms of making sure that no decision is made that could negatively impact individuals without them having an opportunity to get that clarity from the courts. Again, a contrast to Bill 1, a significant contrast, but of course the courts will have to engage in Bill 1 because chiefs have already made it very clear that they will be launching a suit against that.

I did earlier today talk in question period about referring the bill prior to proclamation to the courts for an opinion, and I want to assure members of the Assembly that this has been done before. It's been done before by Conservative Premiers, in fact. Don Getty did as much in the 1990s with a piece of legislation that he wanted to

bring forward but, of course, didn't want to waste significant provincial resources having multiple claims launched against that so, prior to it actually being proclaimed, referred it, as the economically responsible thing to do, to get a judicial opinion so that before it was actually passed and proclaimed, members could have confidence that it was, in fact, constitutional and that it would in fact be upheld by the courts and that they wouldn't be throwing good money after bad by trying to fight something that wasn't constitutional. So this is something that we have precedent for.

Again, I like that Bill 3 does acknowledge the role that the courts have in terms of these challenging conversations around people's property rights and typically their homes. I know that there might be some areas in the province where there are disputes where people have been living somewhere that maybe doesn't have a settlement land claim remedied for the location where they're at, and I think it's important for those individuals to have an opportunity to engage in the court process to make sure that nobody is without a home without having due recourse on what might be land disputes.

We know that there is language in here around guidelines, that they will likely be further clarified through regulations. I hope that the government shows good faith to the folks that were consulted in the drafting of the bill and takes those regulations back to those stakeholder groups that engaged in the creation of the legislation prior to enforcing regulations. Clearly, there was interest. There are well-documented stakeholders that are engaged on this topic, and then, of course, we do have significant interjurisdictional comparisons, as supported through the legislative services research branch of the Legislative Assembly.

It's with that that at this point I will probably wrap up these remarks. Simply to say that I think that this bill is something that my colleagues and I are keen to support. I hope that this type of legislation and the collaborative process, the community-driven process, the recognition of the role of the courts – I wish it was something that was emulated in other bills, particularly the first bill of this session, which essentially took the opposite approach, was something that was created in a silo by now well-documented individuals who say that the next step is a referendum as it relates to independence.

This is certainly a much better process, much more collaborative, and something that I wish the government would follow this lead on when it comes to other pieces of legislation to ensure that they are done in a fair, forthright, transparent way and that they will be upheld by court challenges and that they represent something that is not headstrong and disrespectful to communities in this province and our role in Confederation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to cede the remainder of my time on Bill 3.

3:40

**The Acting Speaker:** Others wishing to speak to Bill 3?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been an incredibly interesting, robust week of debate in the House. We've made a lot of progress, and I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 on Monday, December 12.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:41 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 4th Session (2022)**

**Activity to Thursday, December 8, 2022**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1\* — Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (Danielle Smith)**

First Reading — 4-5 (Nov. 29, 2022 aft., passed on division)

Second Reading — 22-31 (Nov. 30, 2022 aft.), 43-52 (Nov. 30, 2022 eve.), 65-73 (Dec. 1, 2022 aft.), 105-36 (Dec. 5, 2022 eve.), 172-77 (Dec. 6, 2022 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 177-96 (Dec. 6, 2022 eve.), 231-38 (Dec. 7, 2022 eve.), 238-45 (Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed with amendments on division)

Third Reading — 245-50 (Dec. 7, 2022 eve.), 251-57 (Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed on division)

### **Bill 2 — Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (\$) (Jones)**

First Reading — 208 (Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 270-75 (Dec. 8, 2022 aft., adjourned)

### **Bill 3 — Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Shandro)**

First Reading — 86 (Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 148-55 (Dec. 6, 2022 aft.), 224-30 (Dec. 7, 2022 aft.), 276 (Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed)

### **Bill 4 — Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022 (Copping)**

First Reading — 86 (Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 155-70 (Dec. 6, 2022 aft.), 220-24 (Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed)

### **Bill 5 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2) (Shandro)**

First Reading — 147 (Dec. 6, 2022 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 211-20 (Dec. 7, 2022 aft., adjourned)

### **Bill 6 — Police Amendment Act, 2022 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 270 (Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed)

### **Bill 201 — Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act (Notley)**

First Reading — 64 (Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed on division)

Second Reading — 88-91 (Dec. 5, 2022 aft., deferred to December 21, 2022, or next available date pursuant to motion under Standing Order 8(8) agreed to on division)

### **Bill 202 — Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022 (Williams)**

First Reading — 64 (Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 91-98 (Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed on division)

**Bill 203 — Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022 (Toor)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

**Bill 204 — Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022 (Mark Smith)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)







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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)