



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 13, 2023

Day 17

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Yaseen

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Dach
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Turton

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 13, 2023

[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, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Madison Gramlich. I'd invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Commonwealth Day

The Speaker: Hon. members, today we celebrate Commonwealth Day along with the 10th anniversary of the Commonwealth Charter, a document signed by Queen Elizabeth II on March 11, 2013, that demonstrates the values and aspirations that unite the 56 member nations and the 180 parliaments and Legislatures of the Commonwealth. We are geographically and culturally diverse, yet we are unified in our shared commitment to democracy, peace, human rights, and equality.

For the first time in 70 years we recognize our significant union without the leadership and guidance of Queen Elizabeth II, who made considerable contributions to the Commonwealth during her reign. Her legacy lives on in our union and His Majesty King Charles III as he now presides over the Commonwealth.

While it is steeped in tradition and its roots stretch back generations, the Commonwealth's focus is on what lies ahead. This year's theme, Forging a Sustainable and Peaceful Common Future, is very relevant in an era where global issues and conflicts continue to persist. Please join me in acknowledging and celebrating Commonwealth Day 2023.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, seated in the Speaker's gallery today is an incredible young woman who I had the opportunity to meet just a little bit ago. She led us in the singing of our national anthem. Madison Gramlich is nine years old, lives in Slave Lake. Her passion for singing started at the age of five, and she has performed for many audiences, most notably opening Slave Lake's All-in

concert. I would ask you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. minister of community and social services, is your guest here yet? I don't believe so. Perhaps we will come back to that. I don't see her there.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Actually, I have two guests to introduce, so I'll do this one first if that's . . .

The Speaker: Okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to introduce two incredible human beings, Brad and Jennifer Bartko. In 2021 Brad started Disability – Accessible by Design with the mission to make public and private establishments barrier free. Please make yourself known and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice has a school group today.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly grade 6 students from Lycée international de Calgary. This is a bilingual school located in the constituency of Calgary-Elbow in the quiet neighbourhood of Altadore. They are visiting Edmonton this week to participate in the School at the Legislature program and to learn about the provincial government. Accompanying the class are three teachers: Julia Mills, Julien Battaglia, and Bilyana Raycheva. And a special shout-out to Elliott McKay. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Dach: Merci, M. le Président. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you 55 students from Our Lady of the Prairies school, l'école Notre Dame des Prairies, in my constituency of Edmonton-McClung. They're joined today by teachers Ms Sydney Brunelle, Mme Alicia Bussière, professeures dans le programme d'immersion française, and teacher Wieke Steynen as well as Ms Mariah Allarie, a therapeutic assistant. I ask that we please rise and give them the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a home-school association group from my constituency. I've had a very interesting discussion with them over lunch. If they would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise today and introduce some of Stony Plain's finest young students joining us from the SML Christian Academy and their incredible teacher, Tricia Shane. I had the pleasure of meeting with this group earlier today and can tell you that the future of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is in very good hands. Students, please rise and accept the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, I'd like to introduce the parents of our anthem singer, Lacey and Shawn

Gramlich, who is the interim mayor of Slave Lake, and their daughter Breeley along with their grandparents, Laurie and Danny Schmode, as well as their uncle Scott Sinclair, who is the UCP candidate for Lesser Slave Lake, and his daughter Sloan. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ashley Lundstrom, Camille MacRae, and Marta Szylo. They're working in my independent and constituency offices. They're also joined today by a good, long-standing friend of ours, Mariam Ahmed, who I actually officiated the wedding for last summer. These people have been solid for me and immensely supportive over my tenure as an MLA, and I'd ask them to please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce, through you, two close friends of mine, Ontario's brightest girl, Marisa Maslink, and well-known Albertan Hadyn Place, who is a proud Albertan. Alberta is calling is working, and as of yesterday they are engaged to be married. But let us remind them: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others." I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome and best greetings from all my colleagues.

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

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House Muslim community leaders from across the province who represent the National Council of Canadian Muslims. They came to meet with MLAs to discuss Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination and hate. Thank you so much for joining us today and for all the work that you do. Please rise and be recognized by this House.

1:40

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

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the other members someone that is very close to me, my daughter Sahej, and my niece Simran. If I could ask Sahej and Simran to please stand up and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for introductions. My apologies to those who were unable to introduce their guests today.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

Alberta Is Calling In-migration Campaign

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have some great news for Canadians: Alberta is calling again. Last summer Toronto and Vancouver heard about the renewed Alberta advantage: no provincial sales taxes, highest average weekly earnings in Canada, the beauty of the province that we know and love, affordable housing, an economic powerhouse that's leading Canada in job creation and economic growth. And, wow, did they ever get the message. In the third quarter we saw almost 33,000 Canadians come to Alberta to find a better life. We remember the opposition telling people to move to B.C. for a better job. Well, in the third

quarter so many people listened when Alberta was calling that B.C.'s net interprovincial migration was negative for the first time since 2013. And the best part? Most of them came to Alberta.

This time we're taking a different approach. We know the industries that are looking for additional skilled workers, and we know where the Canadians are that want those jobs. So we're reaching out to Atlantic Canada and inviting them to trade the ocean for the mountains, and we're reaching out to areas in Ontario where the unemployment is higher and offering them a chance to see a hockey team get out of the first round. While they were having lunch, the ads started to appear: come to a province where you earn more and keep more of what you make, come to a province where you don't have to leave town to enjoy river valleys and nature, and come to a province where you can afford a great lifestyle, not just a life.

Most banks are picking Alberta to lead Canada's economic growth this year, and with Budget 2023 we are ensuring that the necessary health care and social supports are there for Albertans. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is calling again, and we can't wait to meet the people that listen.

Hate-motivated Violence against Muslims

Mr. Sabir: Today our caucus met with members and leaders from the Muslim community, and I acknowledge that many of them are in the gallery this afternoon. We heard their concerns about the rise in horrific incidents of Islamophobic violence and the need for real action to address it. Over the past years we have seen a significant spike in hate crimes and attacks on Muslims in Alberta and across Canada. A man entered a mosque with a gun, killing six defenceless worshipers and injuring 19 in Quebec City, an entire Muslim family was run over by a vehicle and killed in London, Ontario, and recently several Muslim hijab-wearing women were assaulted right here in Alberta.

This rising violence has left many in our community feeling unsafe, yet this government has done nothing in response. The government's own Anti-Racism Advisory Council submitted its report almost exactly two years ago. Among its 48 recommendations were 11 reforms to the justice system, but this Premier and this government have chosen to do nothing. The UCP even refused to pass the Anti-Racism Act brought forward by the opposition, which would have mandated race-based data collection. Instead of working to protect law-abiding Albertans from hate-motivated violence, this Premier's priority is to meddle in the court system and try to help people charged with conspiracy to murder police officers. Instead of addressing the very real public safety concerns of people and preventing future hate-motivated incidents, this Premier is obsessed with spending hundreds of millions of dollars to create a UCP police force that nobody wants.

An Alberta NDP government will take on the important work of antiracism, including exploring strategies to address Islamophobia specifically. The Alberta NDP is proud to stand with the Muslim community and all faith and cultural groups to build a society that is safe for everyone.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has a statement to make.

David Frank Friesen

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my privilege to recognize so many amazing Albertans this last year with the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. While I was able to meet most of those recognized, there was one individual that I was unable to

know in person, so today I rise to recognize David Frank Friesen, a man who fought relentlessly for the truth. David Friesen made a significant contribution to the Canadian society at large, the Indigenous peoples, and the RCMP.

Mr. Friesen was an exceptional RCMP officer who dedicated his life to pursuing justice and righting the wrongs for the victims of abuse in residential schools at a time when many were content to ignore uncomfortable truths. In the late 1950s he was a trailblazer who started one of the first-known investigations into a residential school predator. In fact, he possibly was the only RCMP officer to initiate an investigation before the 1980s. Mr. Friesen understood that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission wanted to bring us to a place where the cycle could be broken and trust could be renewed. Mr. Friesen took the first steps to take us from where we were to where we stand today, and he will not be forgotten.

When serving at Watson Lake, Mr. Friesen had discovered that Lower Post residential school boys were being harassed. He fought relentlessly for those innocent, vulnerable boys until 2021, when the residential school abuses became public knowledge through the media. His perseverance led to justice and vindication for the survivors 67 years later. A full exposé of Mr. Friesen's story was published in the December 11, 2021, issue of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, and pursuant to the truth being revealed, Deputy Chief Harlan Schilling had contacted Mr. Friesen with plans of meeting him to thank him personally for his heroism in seeking justice for residential schoolchildren from his band. Unfortunately, Mr. Friesen passed away on June 10, 2022, missing his opportunity for full disclosure.

We thank you, Mr. Friesen, for your impact that you have made on all Canadians for generations to come.

Capital Plan and Calgary

Mr. Toor: Mr. Speaker, our government is investing \$23 billion over three years into public infrastructure through Budget 2023. We are seeing new school projects, modernized public buildings, new and updated health facilities, and maintenance and renewal of government-owned facilities. Budget 2023's capital plan is our government's commitment to Albertans to deliver on the much-needed projects in communities across the province. Rather, it's \$1.6 billion for new schools, \$2.8 billion for health facilities, \$287 million for major government facilities, or \$894 million for the maintenance and renewal projects.

Budget 2023's capital plan has something for everyone, especially in Calgary. Over the next three years Calgary is receiving almost \$3 billion in capital planning, which is 13 per cent of the total capital plan for the whole province. As part of the school planning, there is the modernization of Annie Gale school in Whitehorn, northeast Calgary; preplanning funding for an addition at Bishop McNally high school in Falconridge, northeast; and a new high school in Cornerstone, northeast.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of kids are waiting to get into charter school in Calgary northeast. As part of Budget 2023 we announced \$25 million in operating funding and \$47 million in capital investment over the next three years to support public charter school expansion and project programs in the education system.

The NICU project is receiving \$52 million over the next three years for the refurbishment and expansion for our most delicate and fragile patients. Along with this project, we have \$77 million over three years for Rockyview general health hospital.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

School Construction Capital Plan

Ms Hoffman: Eight thousand more students going to school in Calgary, and only one new school actually funded in the UCP's budget. Mr. Speaker, despite enrolment growth quadrupling, the UCP chose to put handouts for their friends over schools for children. This means more crowded classrooms in the biggest city in our province. The parents of those 8,000 children chose public and Catholic education for their kids, and they deserve schools. So why does the current Premier care more about handouts to her donors than about building classrooms in Calgary?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that our government is investing \$377 million for 58 projects, including – they must have missed the extra one – 11 projects in Calgary, including a new K to 9 school in Nolan Hill, modernization of John G. Diefenbaker high school, a new high school in Rangeview, modernization of Annie Gale school, a new high school in Cornerstone, modernization of A.E. Cross school, modernization of Sir John A. Macdonald school, a new Saddle Ridge middle school, a new elementary school in Redstone, addition to Bishop McNally high school, and a new west Calgary high school. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Hoffman: There is money for Preston Manning, but no schools in Cochrane. I guess school funding is one floor that the Premier just won't cross.

Mr. Speaker, there are zero construction dollars for Airdrie, Cochrane, Chestermere, and only one new school construction project funded in Calgary. George McDougall in Airdrie is so packed that the cafeteria has to double as a classroom. The board chair was incredibly frustrated and disappointed by this Premier's budget, saying that it's ignoring their space crisis. Will the current Premier admit that she can't be trusted to build schools and that a better plan is just to vote NDP?

Ms Smith: Fifty-eight projects, including 11 in Calgary, \$377 million. Let me just quote from Laura Hack, board chair, Calgary board of education. "On behalf of CBE students... and [their] families, we thank the Government of Alberta for [the] capital [plan] announcement... These [extraordinary and timely] investments in infrastructure are vital to support student learning opportunities [within] our system." Same with Cathie Williams, board chair, Calgary Catholic school district: the Calgary Catholic board of trustees is grateful for the capital projects announced for the Calgary Catholic school district, which includes full funding for the K to 9 school in Nolan Hill to serve this rapidly growing community.

Ms Hoffman: Fabrication is for welders, not for Premiers.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, in this same story south of the city there's no money in the provincial budget for shovels in the ground in Okotoks. The high school is way over capacity, and the board chair said, quote: our students will continue to come to a high school that is overcrowded, which is negatively impacting their learning. Calgary, Cochrane, Chestermere, Okotoks: doesn't the

Premier think that these kids deserve better? Under the Alberta NDP we absolutely do.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 1:52.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite again forgets to do her homework, over and over and over again. We have announced a school in Chestermere, one in Cochrane, two in Airdrie, also in Okotoks. I spoke with Rocky View school division and with the community and reinforced the fact that when we say there's planning, preplanning, design, and construction, it will happen. All 58 of those schools will be built, unlike the members opposite.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has another set of questions.

Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, last week we in the Alberta NDP proposed a better health care idea: providing universal coverage for prescription contraception at no cost to Albertans no matter which method they choose. This policy would remove barriers, improve health outcomes, and save Albertans a lot of money, mostly women. The Premier called our plan a subsidy for private insurance and then talked about choice, a shameful excuse. Will the Premier admit that her choice is to make women pay more for health care?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we are glad that the bulk of women are covered by public and private insurance plans. In fact, I'm glad to have the members opposite raise this, because it sparked a robust conversation in our caucus about the kinds of things we might want to fund. What I hear women wanting funded is in vitro fertilization and assistance in being able to have babies, and that's something that I think we should have a robust discussion about in the next election.

Ms Hoffman: Women across the province are over the moon about the idea of having universal contraception covered. Jenna says: this is amazing; my insurance doesn't cover the contraception my doctor has recommended, so this would be game changing. Shelby says: I attend university, and birth control is not covered by my health care provider. Joanne says: this great plan makes me very happy; we don't have equality without plans like this one. Why is the current Premier always offside with things like equality, health care, and doctors' advice?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the other thing that we hear from women and families that they want is support for adoption, and that's the other thing that we put into our budget. Not only are we supporting families so that they can have a grant to be able to give a home to a child, but we're also making sure that we're equalizing the level of tax credit so that more people can welcome children into their homes. Those are the kinds of things that we're going to continue to support.

Ms Hoffman: Well, these are Holly's words: "How can the Premier say that everyone has access to private insurance? This is an out-of-pocket cost for many people. Contraception is still only partially covered under most plans. The NDP plan to provide universal contraception is the only policy that will reach everyone. So thank you for advocating and standing up for women's health and rights. Contraception is a need for everyone, not just women." So how can

the current Premier find \$20 billion for her donors and not a penny for Holly's health care needs?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what the member opposite is talking about. There's nothing in the budget that has that \$20 billion figure. They're making things up, as they are accustomed to doing.

Look, if we want to have a conversation about the kinds of things that could be covered, the kinds of things that we hear should be covered are things like the diabetes pumps. Those are one of the things that we announced that we were going to be covering, and there's probably a whole range of issues that we need to have a broader discussion about that ought to be covered. So happy to have that discussion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and Official Opposition House Leader.

WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, our caucus has been standing in this House for more than a year calling on the government to listen to the firefighters who fought to save Fort McMurray during the wildfire. We've been urging this government to make sure firefighters fighting cancer don't also have to fight the WCB for the support they need. Bill 9 appeared to finally take action, but the bill won't help firefighters who've been diagnosed during these past six years since the fire, and we know of several caught in this unfair situation. To the Premier: why don't these changes help all impacted firefighters like they've been calling for?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are so pleased to be making changes to WC coverage for firefighters. We know that the fire in Fort McMurray was a particularly unique experience with nonstop fighting for 30 days, and they didn't have the ability to do the contamination procedures they normally would, so it put far more of our firefighters at risk. We were pleased to be able to cover that. As I understand it, extending the coverage retroactively would impact one or two cases, and in these instances Workers' Compensation already has a process to ensure the claims are settled appropriately.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the process that is already there is firefighters and their family fighting cancer, then having to fight the WCB and go through an extenuating appeals process. The right thing for this government to do is to make sure that the heroes who went on the ground and fought that wildfire, helped 80,000 people evacuate, and spent weeks in a toxic soup of chemicals, getting exposures to a career's level of toxins in just a short amount of time – they should have our support. It is common sense. Will the Premier change it?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I know it sounds like the members opposite and the government are not on the same page on this, but we are on the same page. In fact, Matt Osborne, president of the Alberta Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association, said at the members' press conference this morning that Alberta is leading by establishing this kind of coverage for large, catastrophic events. I want to make it clear that this is a big step forward, and this is leading our nation. And he praised us for our openness to discuss. He also said that we greatly appreciate the work the

provincial government has done so far to address the critical issue for Alberta firefighters. So we're very pleased to be able to offer this coverage.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased Matt Osborne is here in the gallery listening to question period, and this is a good start. But the Premier is ignoring that we are leaving firefighters behind who've already been diagnosed, we are not including cancers that should be covered, and they have completely ignored respiratory illnesses which we know these responders are now suffering from. Will the government accept the amendment from the opposition that I will be bringing forward? Will the government update the cancer site regulation, and will you include respiratory illnesses?

2:00

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I will talk to our Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development because I know that he's been very close to this issue. He wanted to make sure that he was offering the appropriate level of coverage when he made this recommendation to our caucus and cabinet. If he believes that the amendment is worth supporting, I'm sure he will give us that advice. But I think it's important that we have now set the standard for the rest of the country, that when a catastrophic event like this occurs, this is going to be the presumption in our province, and we hope that other provinces follow suit.

Automobile Insurance Premiums

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, the government lifted the Alberta NDP cap on auto insurance on the Friday before a long weekend, hoping that Albertans would not notice, but they did because their premiums jumped 30 per cent, and for almost three years the UCP did nothing but watch as costs hammered Albertans. Now, just weeks before the election, the UCP claim that no new rate increases would be approved for the rest of the year; that was not true. In fact, an increase of 16 per cent was approved for new policies effective March 1. Surprise. Can the Finance minister explain why new drivers will be facing increases of up to 16 per cent under his fake freeze?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that the party who did nothing about automobile insurance were the members opposite during four years. All they did is bring a rate cap in, which was a Band-Aid and didn't deal with the systemic issues. Our government, through Bill 41, dealt with many of those systemic issues, and since the passing of Bill 41, insurance premiums have gone up 1.4 per cent per year. On top of that, we have asked the rate board to pause new approvals.

Ms Phillips: Well, when Albertans were struggling with up to 30 per cent increases, the Finance minister's only answer to them was telling them to, quote, shop around. End quote. But now as the government faces the judgment of Albertans, they're claiming to have put in the Alberta NDP rate cap, except it's a fake. In the real world drivers are watching their bills spike yet again. How can Albertans believe a word this minister says when he claims to freeze their car insurance, but their bills are skyrocketing?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, again, we've recognized that many families in Alberta are being pushed during this time of inflation, and that's why we've asked the rate board to pause rate increases effective January. The rate increases they're talking about were

approved last fall; just implemented now. We've asked since early January for the rate board to pause those increases so we can work with insurance companies and other stakeholders to find further remedies to deal with the systemic issues that are driving up insurance costs.

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, just like when the UCP lifted the rate cap in the first place, the UCP are putting their friends and donors ahead of the people they were elected to serve. It's well within the power of the Finance minister to deny these 16 per cent increases. We could have had a real rate freeze; instead, we got a UCP fake. Why did the minister pick his insurance lobbyist pals over Albertans and approve such a punishing increase to Albertan drivers' car insurance? Sixteen per cent is not a freeze.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this government took real action with Bill 41, and those changes are having a real effect. Rates going up by 1.4 per cent per year over the last two years, that's progress. The NDP call a rate cap progress. If we would have left them in charge, it would have ultimately driven the province to a nationalized insurance system, which is what the socialists across the aisle want. They want a nationalized, socialized system; we say no. We're making progress. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Alberta Is Calling In-migration Campaign

Ms Issik: Mr. Speaker, all eyes were on Alberta last summer when the Alberta Is Calling campaign caught the nation's attention. And, you know, I was up in Yukon last summer, and my Ontario counterpart let me know unhappily that he'd heard it on the radio while sitting in traffic on the 401. Today we just got news that Alberta is calling again, and I've got a question for the Premier. What made her decide to tell Canada that Alberta is calling again?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, let me answer on behalf of our Jobs, Economy and Northern Development minister. He's doing such a fantastic job on calling out to the rest of the country. When we looked at the success of the first round of Alberta Is Calling, the decision was easy. When we put out the call to Toronto and Vancouver, we saw a huge surge of people visiting and requesting e-mail notifications about Alberta. In Q3 we saw record interprovincial migration flowing into Alberta. Thirty-three thousand Canadians sure make a difference when you change government. We remember what happened when the other guys were in power: everybody was leaving. We saw the opportunity, and we're going to continue.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the Premier: given that the previous Alberta Is Calling campaign focused on attracting folks from Toronto and Vancouver and given that the previous campaign worked, with tens of thousands flocking to our beautiful province, could the Premier tell us how this is going to be different than the first round and build on the success of the first Alberta Is Calling campaign?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that Premier Doug Ford didn't like that campaign very much because it was so successful. So I said, "Don't worry; next time we do it, we'll

make sure we're advertising into high unemployment areas," and that's what we're going to do this time around. We'll be going into Ontario, into Windsor, Hamilton, Sudbury, and other places. We're also going to be calling the people of the Atlantic Canadian provinces: Charlottetown, Saint John, St. John's, Halifax, and also more Canadian cities are going to be hearing from Alberta very soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, again to the Premier: given there are so many benefits to living in Alberta – low taxes, jobs for skilled workers, and our beautiful mountains, just to name a few – and given that Alberta has the best value proposition ever, what messages will she be sharing with Ontarians and Maritimers to inspire them to join us here?

Ms Smith: Oh, there are so many great things about Alberta – aren't there? – highest average wages of any province; highest workforce participation rate of any province; lowest taxes in Canada; no provincial sales tax; almost 100,000 jobs waiting to be filled; Canada's fastest growing economy; Canada's strongest job creator. We're calling it the renewed Alberta advantage for a reason, and we'll be telling them the most beautiful province in Confederation – that's what we are – is a place that they can afford a great lifestyle. We look forward to . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Postsecondary Education Funding

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For four years this government has been making life more difficult for our students. They have hiked tuition; levelled devastating cuts onto postsecondary; hiked fees, interest payments, student loans, and so, so much more. This budget doesn't go anywhere near to addressing the damage done by the UCP to postsecondary. Their own budget projects that student debt will grow by nearly \$2 billion over the next two years. Will the Minister of Advanced Education apologize to students now for making it so much harder for them to get an education?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Budget 2023 invests \$178.4 million over the next three years in major capital projects, in addition to three capital projects continuing from Budget 2022. It also invests in power engineering and instrumentation: lab development, \$11.3 million, \$2 million in '23-24, \$9.3 million in '24-25; in the University of Lethbridge, another \$3 million; in the University of Calgary, another \$5 million. Budget 2023 also invests \$73.9 million over this year to . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that this minister's budget will take out \$1.2 billion cumulatively from the postsecondary system and only increases postsecondary this year by .6 per cent, given that the minister is still allowing tuition fees to climb next year as well, meaning that it won't help a single student until the Alberta New Democrats get back in government, given the number of times that this minister defended his policies of making education unaffordable through sky-high tuition rates, how can the minister be so proud of his achievements when he has caused so much devastation?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the member opposite is not correct. In fact, we have targeted enrolment expansion: \$171 million to create nearly 10,000 new postsecondary seats and \$84.7 million to create over an additional 3,000 new seats; microcredentialling, \$2 million to create new microcredentials in PSIs; capital for SAIT, \$41 million; the U of C, \$59 million; MRU, \$88 million; work-integrated learning, apprenticeship expansion, SAIT expansion. I could go on.

2:10

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, despite the boasts of this minister and this government, Albertans see the record of this government for postsecondary loud and clear. Given that tuition and institutions are struggling under the weight of \$1.2 billion taken out of the system over the last four budgets and given that we know many students and institutions are worried about their ability to meet the needs of basic education, after four years of this minister making life tougher for students to seek an education, the message that I have for them is simple. Students, choose yourself a better government, an Alberta NDP government on May 29.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we have world-class postsecondary institutions in this province, and we have a minister, the Minister of Advanced Education, that's working with those institutions to ensure that we're delivering a sustainable advanced education system. We took over a system, left by the members opposite, that simply wasn't sustainable. Our institutions were delivering the highest cost education, and it was costing Albertans an excessive amount. We have worked with the institutions to bring about efficiency, efficiencies that will ensure our system is world-class and sustainable.

Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, this Premier wants Albertans to get used to paying for their health care out of pocket. We know this because she's said so repeatedly. On her weekend radio show the Premier again made this explicitly clear when she said that Albertans should pay out of pocket for regular MRIs to avoid things like stage 4 cancer. This follows the Premier's despicable comments where she suggested that those who have stage 4 cancer let it reach that point. Will the Premier finally apologize to Albertans with cancer that she's insulted, and will she commit to stop using cancer to push her plans to force Albertans to pay out of pocket for health care?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the member opposite is mischaracterizing our dispute with Ottawa over the funding of MRI and CT scans that are chosen on a voluntary basis by those who want to get a second opinion or have additional peace of mind. Any time a doctor will prescribe an MRI or CT scan, it is medically necessary. By definition "medically necessary" is 100 per cent covered by our system. We don't want to close an avenue, in the event that somebody else wants to get a second test or wants to be able to get a regular annual test, and that's what we're disputing with the federal government.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, given that under the UCP the wait times just to see an oncologist can stretch as long as 10 weeks, when the national recommendation is 10 working days, and given that Alberta is already short of and losing more oncologists, medical physicists, and radiation therapists and given the Premier chose to spend the weekend trying to scare Albertans that unless they pay

for their own MRIs and CT scans, they're at higher risk for cancer, will the Premier take responsibility for the Albertans who are waiting and worrying on her watch because they can't even see an oncologist for more than two months, let alone begin treatment?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the member opposite is talking about. I think what I have said very clearly is that if somebody has something wrong with them and a doctor gives a recommendation for them to get an MRI or CT scan, it is medically necessary, it is 100 per cent covered, and we are going to continue covering that. The dispute with the federal government is over a small number of scans that people choose to get voluntarily. We aren't the only province having this dispute. There are eight provinces that disagree with the way the government at the federal level is interpreting this, and we'll continue to fight it.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, given the Premier is wrong – no Albertan should have to pay out of pocket to get access to the best cancer diagnosis and treatment – and given that after decades of Conservative neglect and game playing our Alberta NDP government got the Calgary cancer centre built and given that it takes more than a facility to provide care and this Premier's reckless, misinformed comments about cancer diagnosis undermine Albertans' trust in the doctors we've managed to keep and make it harder for us to recruit the ones we need to fill the gap, an Alberta NDP government will make sure the CCC is fully staffed. Why is this Premier so obsessed with making that harder to do?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we're spending \$166 million over the next three years to staff up the Calgary cancer centre, and we're looking forward to seeing the new services that are going to be delivered there. As for the surgical backlog, I can say that we're making great progress. We identified the number of people who are on the list longer than a medically recommended period of time. Look, the waiting list grew for nine different surgeries when they were in power. We're having them go in the opposite direction, and I'm hearing from Dr. John Cowell that he's expecting that we will have that waiting list, that surgical backlog, complete in 12 months. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.
The hon. Member for Highwood.

Biodigester Facility Proposal in Foothills County

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, the Rimrock-Tidewater biodigester is a project that was scheduled to begin development at the beginning of this year, with operations fully commencing in October. To the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas: what steps are being taken to ensure the Rimrock-Tidewater biodigester project is meeting or exceeding environmental regulations?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that. I want to thank the member for the question. Alberta Environment and Protected Areas has received an Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act approval application for this project. The application is currently under a robust regulatory review before it can be authorized to proceed. The review focuses on ensuring the protection and health of communities, residents, and the environment. It also ensures that appropriate pollution prevention and control technologies are in place.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Highwood.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this project will produce biogas and fertilizer and, as stated by its developers, reduce odours in the affected area, to the same minister: can you provide more details about the technology being used in the biodigester project and how it's expected to achieve its promise to reduce odours emitting from the feedlot?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to answer that one. The regulatory approval process includes evaluating the potential environmental impact, including emissions and odour. According to Emissions Reduction Alberta this project is designed to upgrade digestate from their on-farm feedlot to produce value-add fertilizer, peat, cattle bedding, and water recycle product. These products would be produced for Alberta-based greenhouses, mushroom farmers, organic farmers, conventional farmers, and cattle producers.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given the community engagement undertaken to seek input and feedback from the local area residents about the biodigester project, to the same minister: what actions have been taken in response to their concerns and potential issues raised at public town halls?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I said, this project is currently going through our rigorous regulatory process, which includes evaluating the potential environmental impact, air emissions, and odour. In order to be approved, the project would need to demonstrate that appropriate pollution prevention and control technologies are in place. I want to be clear that land-use decisions are the responsibility of the local municipality. Any public concerns related to property value, traffic, noise, and light pollution fall outside of the provincial jurisdiction and should be raised with the municipality, in this case Foothills county.

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

School Construction Contracts

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to hand public dollars to their corporate friends while failing to invest in public education. The Minister of Education has stated the capital plan is based on asks from school boards, but we see time and time again negligible investments in growing communities like Edmonton-South. We know P3s are this government's favourite solution, but why is the minister committing tens of millions of dollars to wealthy private corporations through atrocious P3 school builds when boards are actually saying they don't want P3s, that are actually making schools harder to run?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. In fact, in the last round of P3s that was brought forward by my department, I changed tactics and decided to break them into individual contracts because it made more sense to do that for the geographic coverage over the province. We are doing that because it's best value not only for the school divisions locally but for the province as a total. We're spending tax dollars wisely and

finding the right project procurement method and the right contract for each school build according to the needs of that community.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that school boards have told us publicly that no P3 contract is the right contract and that many young families continue to move into my riding in Edmonton-South, and that's expected to grow exponentially in the next five years, we know the current capital plan is not sustainable to keep up with projected growth. Can the minister explain to my constituents why paying millions of dollars to these private corporations through P3 partnerships is more important than just funding the schools and infrastructure we need?

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

Mr. Neudorf: I hate to disagree with the member, but, again, we're going to pick the contract that best suits the needs of those individual builds. Now, what they often confuse is P3, which is public-private partnership; we do that all the time. It's the bundling of projects with school boards that they're opposed to. Having worked in this region for 26 years, when you bundle them together, you don't get the same decision-making because it goes to different sites, and the answers might differ. That is what takes time. That is what school boards disagree with. That's why we don't always do that, and we only do it where it makes sense. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

2:20

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister clearly is not listening to school boards and is not listening to parents and given that this government keeps announcing all this funding for planning into these P3s but they're falling short of actually building any new schools, to the minister: when will this government put an emphasis on actually funding our public school system or will actually create a system that's equitable for all Albertans and not just for their wealthy friends and donors?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite doesn't know what he's talking about. In fact, it wasn't the actual build; it was the contracts that school authorities had issues with. Our government worked really, really hard to ensure that those contracts were, in fact, good contracts. From 2019 to now we've built or are in the process of building 16 schools. NDP in Edmonton: eight. Us: 16. I won't take lessons from the members opposite when we are building more than they ever will. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Arts and Culture Funding and Performance Measures

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, the way we measure ourselves matters. Targets matter. Goals matter. Whether it's a musician determined to write a song a week, a theatre aiming for five sold-out shows a month, or a government setting targets in their budget, thoughtful goals show people what someone actually cares about. That's why it's so alarming that in the Premier's plan for the Ministry of Culture she has slashed the government's goals for the arts, culture, and live-event industries. To the minister: what exactly is it about the arts that his ministry doesn't think is important, and why doesn't he

care about the well-being of the creative industry and its businesses?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report that our Budget 2023 commits over \$28 million in funding to support the arts, including stable funding of \$25.6 million to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. That's in addition to the \$1.25 million sponsorship of tonight's Juno awards. I would encourage the members opposite, if they haven't heard of the Junos, to come on out tonight. It's going to be a lot of fun.

Ms Goehring: Given that almost 78 per cent of Albertans attended an art activity or event in 2019 and 2020 and given that even during the pandemic, when that number dropped to 31 per cent, the government's targets were set to have 70 per cent of Albertans participating in live events and given that artists, venues, and businesses are telling me over and over again that they are still struggling to get people out to their events, why is this government so determined to tell the arts community that they are giving up, washing their hands of any previous goals to encourage Albertans to enjoy arts and culture events?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't disagree more with the member opposite. In fact, we're very supportive of the arts. That's reflected in our budget, which has over \$27 million to support the arts. As I mentioned, that includes the \$25 million that we allocated as well as the \$1.25 million to support tonight's Juno awards. Like I said, I'd like to one more time invite the members opposite to come out tonight and enjoy the Junos. It's going to be a lot of fun.

Ms Goehring: Given that the infrastructure, investment, and innovation that artists bring is a critical part of helping to diversify and create resilience in Alberta's economy and given that the arts and entertainment ecosystem generates billions in tax revenue, employs more than 250,000 people from technicians, to builders, engineers, and more and given that only the Alberta NDP recognizes the vital economic and social contributions of this industry, Minister, if these communities feel hung out to dry by a government that insults them and a budget that wants to stagnate their growth, can you really blame them?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, again, I couldn't disagree more. The 2019 performance measures reflect prepandemic levels in the arts, and I'm happy to report that we're actually seeing attendance come back to the arts. That's why we're making such substantial investments that we are of over \$27 million. We are proud of our arts community, and that is not going to change.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has a question.

Grande Prairie Policing

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many in the House may be aware, Grande Prairie city council voted eight to one in favour of establishing a municipal police service last Monday. Many of my constituents have questions about this change. Some say that it was sudden when, in fact, the city has been actively examining policing options since 2018. Rural crime, police resources, and the reality of repeat offenders have all been identified as key issues in policing in our community for years. Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services explain the benefits of having a municipal police service in Grande Prairie and the expected outcomes for my constituents?

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Unlike that side of the House, we actually respect the independence that was conducted by Grande Prairie and the independent report that they put out there to the people of Grande Prairie. What we're doing in Grande Prairie – that community is setting priorities for their community. They have increased oversight, they have accountability, they're meeting the needs of their community, and that is what is important when they are conducting independent reports like the one conducted in Grande Prairie. This will increase public safety, and I thank the member for that question.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given the different components to start up a police service such as physical location, IT support, attracting personnel, and training and, further, given that in order to ensure a smooth transition to a municipal police service, the city of Grande Prairie has proposed a phased-in approach over five years, can the same minister explain how Alberta's government is supporting Grande Prairie through this transition to ensure that public safety does not slip between the cracks throughout the phasing-in period?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of public safety.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll be very clear; this is not something that is a transitional move that will occur overnight. This is going to take some time, and with that there are going to be start-up fees; there are going to be transitional fees. That's why this government is supporting the needs of the people of Grande Prairie by investing a \$9.7 million grant that will assist them in those start-up fees and those transitional fees, because on this side of the House we are responsive to the needs of the community and are respectful to the needs and the independence of Grande Prairie.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again through you to the minister. Given that the city of Grande Prairie had previously decided to undertake an independent study to review policing in the community and that this was not a decision about the RCMP but, rather, a decision on what service model would best serve the city going forward and further given that many other communities across Alberta are facing the same issues with effective policing in their communities as Grande Prairie has, can the same minister explain what our government is doing more broadly to help other communities across Alberta improve public safety and policing?

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question that she has provided here. You know, communities know their policing needs best. Unlike the members opposite, we're not interested in telling First Nations communities what to do. We respect their independence, and I can tell you there are five First Nations communities that want to have their own independence. I can tell you that on this side of the House we are going to respect First Nations communities, unlike the members opposite, and that's why in Budget 2023 we put aside \$8.4

million, if that budget is to be passed, to make sure that we respect municipalities in Alberta.

Capital Plan

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing that this government won't say to explain their failure to build the schools and hospitals Albertans need. They blame doctors, they blame cities, they blame us, and they even blame pipelines; however, their own budget shows the truth. This UCP government simply can't get the job done. Over a billion dollars' worth of projects that they promised to get done last year didn't get done. Can the Infrastructure minister explain why he failed to advance so many projects, and will he apologize to those communities he failed?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We are delivering critical infrastructure for all of Albertans. We are doing the work behind the scenes that needs to be done that the NDP failed to do in their four years in office. There is a consistent, laid-out, legislated process for every build to make sure that we are setting the needs of the community at the right level, making sure that their clinical needs are meeting those demands, making sure we do a functional plan so we build the right infrastructure for the right dollars in the right time so we build it well and serve all needs of Albertans.

Mr. Deol: Given that Albertans in my riding are asking why there is still just a snow-covered field where there should be a south Edmonton hospital under construction and given that we have heard all kinds of excuses from this Infrastructure minister and given that the budget tells the story that he hasn't even spent a quarter of the money for the hospital in 2022 that he promised in last year's budget, can the minister explain to the people of south Edmonton why three-quarters of the work he promised to do at this time last year has simply not been done?

Mr. Neudorf: Given that I wasn't in the chair last year at budget time – but we have set aside \$630 million in this budget to continue the work. We are committed to Edmontonians, to build them a hospital, to make sure it's rightsized, to make sure it provides the services that they need, and to make sure we do it right. We're going back and doing all the work the NDP failed to do, including getting rights-of-way and agreements with the pipeline operator who put it right under that lot. Good job.

2:30

Mr. Deol: Given that this year the UCP is funding the construction of only one new school in Edmonton, given that almost \$200 million worth of schools he promised in the last budget didn't get built, and given that growing communities in south Edmonton are calling out for more schools to save their kids long bus rides to and from distant and overcrowded schools, how can anyone take this Infrastructure minister at his word for this year's promises when he has clearly broken last year's?

Member LaGrange: Well, the members opposite should take yes for an answer. We are building schools in Edmonton, in particular in south Edmonton. Let me see: a new senior high in Glenridding Heights, a new K to 9 school in Edgemont, a new K to 6 in Rosenthal, a new elementary in Glenridding Heights, and a new junior high school in Pilot Sound, McConachie, as well a . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.
The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you. I just keep going on because there are so many schools we're building in Edmonton: a solution for Rundle Heights, a new K to 9 school in Heritage Valley, Cavanagh . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. Albert.

Support for Vulnerable Albertans

Ms Renaud: Mr. Speaker, every member of the UCP government should be hanging their heads in shame following the shocking news of the devastating conditions at the Calgary Drop-In Centre. Described as an absolute war zone by someone who depends on the centre, that description of the facility is evident from the photos inside that show broken toilets, water fountains filled with debris, and living space littered with garbage. How can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services allow Albertans experiencing homelessness to endure these conditions?

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that question. First of all, I just want to start off by applauding and thanking the numerous people that work in our homeless shelters across this province as well as those who operate these shelters. Without them, there'd be so many people out in the cold today. This is incredibly difficult work, dealing with crisis on a daily basis, so I wanted to make sure that we acknowledge these beautiful people that work in our shelter system, including my own wife, who's here with us here today. Our government is very committed to making sure that we resource our homeless shelters so that they can provide a high-quality standard of care.

Ms Renaud: Given that four years of the UCP have caused so much harm for Albertans as the government casually cut monthly benefits of tens of thousands of severely disabled Albertans, saying that they wouldn't find it onerous, and given that the Finance minister meddled with the dates of benefits to make his books look better, then cut benefits for the poorest Albertans by slashing income supports, and given that the UCP wants to pat themselves on the back for throwing money at issues they caused in the first place but, again, failed to make up for the deep well of harm that they've inflicted on Albertans, will the minister apologize to vulnerable Albertans?

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Mr. Speaker, thank you again to the member for the question. This government is deeply committed to caring for the most vulnerable in our community. That's why we recently increased shelter funding by 10 per cent to make sure that we address some of the wage challenges for employees there. We're talking about the Drop-In Centre specifically. We just gave them \$3.9 million to address capital maintenance as well as building more housing, and we just put \$4 million into the Drop-In Centre to build medical detox so that we can actually deliver real results for people. This government is not only committed to making sure we address people in the immediate crisis of homelessness, but we're also creating pathways out of homelessness through recovery, through housing, and through so many other options.

Ms Renaud: Given that this UCP government doesn't appear to understand what compassion means and given that someone less fortunate than any of us fears that speaking out about the inhumane conditions at the Calgary Drop-In Centre will jeopardize their access to supports they desperately need and given that staff at the centre say that a recent cold snap led to overcrowding concerns and

impacted the services at the centre, will the minister admit that he and his caucus colleagues are more focused on their political futures than they are on Albertans who are experiencing harm and homelessness?

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing to hear the tactic that's currently being taken by the opposition. Again, I commend the many workers that work in this sector and the incredible care and compassion that they deliver, including the operators there. This government is doing significant work to increase salaries . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: . . . for those who work in the sector, a 73 per cent increase in this budget to add that. Under that government: nothing. Nothing. There were no increases at all for this sector. This government is delivering to make sure that there is support for people who are vulnerable in our community.

Transportation Infrastructure in Lesser Slave Lake Constituency

Mr. Rehn: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of representing the great constituency of Lesser Slave Lake. We are one of the largest constituencies by area in the province, which means we need roads and bridges that connect everything together so my constituents can go to medical appointments, work, visit family, or go to the grocery store. I've heard loud and clear from the people of the High Prairie area that we must take action to improve our roadway network. On behalf of these people I ask the minister of transportation to please tell the House what my constituents can expect from the 2023 provincial construction program from your ministry.

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

Mr. Dreshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question. I'm happy to say that he can tell his constituents that there are 15 projects in the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake that are included in the provincial construction program. The biggest one is 21 kilometres of repaving of highway 2A and highway 679. Also in the budget, rather than these record levels of investment, we're also seeing \$14 billion of debt being paid off. That takes about one year of the NDP's four years off the books completely of their massive spending and debt. Not only are we investing; we're also paying off debt.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake has the call.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. The people in the High Prairie area will be delighted to hear about the upcoming provincial construction program. Given that my constituents around the Slave Lake area also heavily rely on a road and bridge network to connect them to the rest of the province, I ask the same minister to please tell the House how the 2023 provincial construction program will address the road and bridge needs of people around the Slave Lake area such as highway 88.

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

Mr. Dreshen: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Wilson Creek culvert replacement on highway 2A is another important project in this riding, roadwork on highway 2 east of Mitsue road, 14

kilometres of repaving between Slave Lake and highway 754 as well as a bridge rehabilitation at the Lily Creek bridge. Overall, we're investing 62 per cent more in capital maintenance and renewal above the greatest year that the NDP ever put into capital maintenance and renewal. I don't know if the NDP could find rural Alberta on the map, but we're investing in historic levels.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for his ongoing efforts to enhance Alberta's transportation infrastructure. Given that the Smith Bridge, which is a critical link for the town of Smith in the municipal district of Lesser Slave River, has a detour of nearly 100 kilometres, it is vital to ensure that the bridge is replaced before it becomes unusable. I ask the same minister to please provide this House with information on any actions to address this issue and prevent the people of Smith from losing this vital connection.

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that very important question. Budget 2023 actually does commit to the engineering work on Smith Bridge, something that the NDP didn't do in their time in government. Budget '23 also has \$211 million for the Alberta waste-water and water program. That's a \$120 million increase for rural municipalities. Again, when you contrast that to the NDP and the restrictive labour agreements that they want to bring into Alberta – the B.C. NDP have done that, something that the NDP leader had to pilot project here in Alberta – that's something we will never see here with a United Conservative government in Alberta.

The Speaker: Unfortunately, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. [interjections] I think that if there's a real challenge here, it's with the minister's answer, not the Speaker's ruling.

In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

2:40

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Red Deer-South.

Alberta

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My son and I listened to Dr. Jordan Peterson in a packed Calgary Jubilee Auditorium. It was good. Dr. Peterson is from Alberta. He has lectured at the universities of Toronto and Harvard. He is a clinical psychologist. Dr. Peterson has raised concerns that Trudeau is narcissistic. He is right. Narcissism is defined as a mental health condition where a person has an unreasonably high sense of his own importance. Trudeau's words and deeds speak for themselves. Alberta should not be compelled to protect ourselves from our own federal government, yet in spite of them Alberta succeeds.

Recently I attended a French immersion school assembly in Red Deer. I asked the packed gym how many had moved here from another country. Half the gym stood up, and all began applauding. We love them and their courage to seek a better life in a new land. Mr. Speaker, why are record numbers of families coming to Alberta from all over the world? Is it because Alberta is a woke NDP socialist paradise? No. But is it because Alberta is the best? Yes. Is

it because Alberta leads Canada in economic growth? Yes. Is it because we have the highest incomes and lowest taxes? Yes. Is it because our government is not a fiscal train wreck with billions in surpluses and debt repayments? Yes.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a land of opportunity, of freedom and prosperity. We must be vigilant to keep it that way.

The Speaker: With apologies to the hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, we are mildly out of order, but we will proceed to him immediately. The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Publicly Funded Health Care

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is obsessed with having Albertans pay out of pocket for health care. She just can't stop talking about it. Just this weekend she went on the radio to say that she'd like to see more Albertans pay out of pocket for an MRI or a CT scan. She said: it's a great preventative; if you pay for enough of them yourself – buy nine, get the 10th one free – maybe you'll identify an issue like stage 4 cancer.

But you know another great preventative, Mr. Speaker? A visit to your family doctor. Indeed, the Premier noted that these scans are covered when your doctor refers you. Unfortunately, thanks to this government's war on physicians, hundreds of thousands of Albertans don't have one. But let's not forget that this Premier is also on the record asking: "A regular checkup with your doctor. Is that really something that has to be covered 100 per cent by the government?" Well, for the record, yes, it is.

Then there are her comments from last summer: when you think about everything that built up before you got to stage 4, that's completely within your control, and there's something you can do about that that is different. Mr. Speaker, how cynical and out of touch can this Premier and the UCP possibly be? Whether it's a visit to your doctor, an MRI, prescription contraception, or a life-saving insulin pump, their go-to prescription for Albertans is for them to pay up. It's about as likely to work as the Premier's suggestion they take horse dewormer for COVID.

Mr. Speaker, we have a different plan, a real plan to strengthen and rebuild our health care system and ensure every Albertan can access the care they need, when they need it, close to home. Our plan for primary care will connect 1 million more Albertans with a family doctor and a family health team by supporting existing doctors and clinics and expanding their teams and funding 10 new clinics in communities of greatest need. We'll provide universal access to free prescription contraception, empowering women to take more control over their reproductive health and economic futures. An Alberta NDP government will provide more access and choice that doesn't require Albertans to reach for their wallet, and that's a promise.

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

Retrospective by the Member for Edmonton-South

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Edmonton-South I rise today with mixed emotions. On one hand, I'm excited for what the future holds for both my constituents and for the entire province of Alberta. On the other hand, I'm looking forward at the great work that remains to be done even after serving almost eight years in this place. It's been one of the greatest honours and privileges of my life to serve the residents of Edmonton-South, and I'm proud of the work we have accomplished together.

We have built new high schools, we've announced a much-needed hospital, and we've made significant infrastructure

investments on the ring road. We've also championed social justice issues like GSAs and the protection of our environment. But our work is far from over, Mr. Speaker. Our government must listen and care about the people we serve. We must ensure that every single Albertan has access to quality education, quality health care, and quality infrastructure. We must also protect our environment and stand up for social justice.

We all know that the current UCP government is failing in these areas. Instead of listening to the concerns of everyday Albertans, they're more focused on protecting the interests of corporations and their wealthy friends. They've chosen not to invest in our communities. They've chosen not to build new schools. They've chosen to attack doctors and nurses. They've neglected our environment and have been hostile to our marginalized communities.

But I am optimistic about the next election, Mr. Speaker. I'm confident that Albertans will choose a government that truly cares about their well-being, a government that will prioritize education, health care, and affordability, a government that will take action on climate change and cares about our communities.

As I see the end of this term as an MLA, I want to thank my constituents and all Albertans for their trust and support over the last eight years. It's been an honour to serve in this place, and I look forward to continuing to fight for a better Alberta in whatever capacity I can. I know Albertans will be making the same choice at the polls soon.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to table the Alberta Boilers Safety Association annual report 2022. Pursuant to section 38.1 of the Standing Orders I am tabling the required five copies of the report.

The Speaker: Opposition House Leader, do you have a tabling today? No? No tablings.

Are there other tablings?

I do have a tabling before me. I have an important memo that has been sent from the Speaker to the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Infrastructure. It is a birthday note saying happy birthday to the Deputy Premier.

Hon. members, just prior to you rising, I understand that there may be a desire for unanimous consent to revert to introductions. I received a note from the hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services for a brief introduction, so this will be a unanimous consent request to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. the minister.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce my wife, Anita Nixon, one of the most compassionate, caring individuals that I know. She has dedicated her life to service for others. She is my strength, my pillar, and my inspiration, so I ask her to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: We are at introductions. Are there others?

Seeing none, I see the hon. the Opposition House Leader is rising. I believe she has a unanimous consent request as well.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of co-operation which we just saw, I rise to seek unanimous consent, in this case to waive Standing Order 41(5.2). Later this afternoon we will be debating Motion Other than Government Motion 504. The Official Opposition would be pleased to introduce an amendment that has been shared with the government, and with unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 41(5.2), we would be able to do that. We seek the unanimous consent and the goodwill of the House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, given that this is the first time we've had such a request, I will just read for the benefit of the Assembly Standing Order 41(5.2) as this is a request for unanimous consent to waive this standing order.

An amendment to a motion other than a Government motion, moved after the motion has been moved, must

- (a) be approved by Parliamentary Counsel no later than the Thursday preceding the day the motion is [to be] moved, and
- (b) be provided to the mover of the motion no later than 11 a.m. on the day the motion is moved.

I will ask only one question. Is there anyone opposed to providing unanimous consent? If so, please indicate now.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: We are at Ordres du jour. Oh, correction. My apologies. Correction. I just get so excited for Orders of the Day every day that I missed my second favourite part, which is points of order. At 1:52 the hon. the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." At the time noted for the point of order, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora said, "Fabrication is for welders, not for Premiers." In this Chamber you can't do indirectly what you can't do directly. That'd be like me saying: being misleading is for bad tour guides, not for opposition leaders. That word is not acceptable; neither is "lying." To fabricate something, I suspect implying fabricating the truth, would be unparliamentary, and I argue that this is, in fact, a point of order and ask the member to apologize and withdraw.

2:50

The Speaker: The Deputy Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 23(h) covers "allegations against another Member" specifically, and (i) also covers allegations against another member. What the Member for Edmonton-Glenora said was "fabrication is for welders, not for Premiers," so it was not directed at the Premier. It was a general statement that fabrication is left for welders; Premiers have a different kind of job. It's not directed at the Premier. It's not covered in 23(h) and (i), so it's not a point of order.

The Speaker: Are there others?

I am prepared to rule. While I appreciate the defence of the Opposition House Leader, there is only one Premier in the Assembly. It would be difficult to assume that it was directed at anyone other than the Premier. As the Government House Leader

has noted, it's not possible to do indirectly what you can't do directly, and as such I find this is a point of order. You can apologize and withdraw on behalf of the member.

Mr. Sabir: I apologize and withdraw on behalf of the member.

The Speaker: I consider the matter dealt with and concluded. Now we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 204

Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022

[Debate adjourned March 6: Mr. Nielsen speaking]

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the question.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and share my thoughts about Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. May I first extend my gratitude to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for bringing forward this private member's bill. I'm pleased to support the bill as it's written because I think that it serves an important function that will be in the public interest and will certainly protect a lot of senior citizens from potential harm.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, as I understand the bill, this makes some changes to a previous bill, that was passed by our government in 2017, creating the silver alert system. The silver alert system will operate similar to the amber alert system but will apply in cases of missing adult citizens, generally senior citizens who are suffering from dementia. Some other changes that this bill makes: it specifically removes the definition of a mental disorder, and it's less prescriptive when it comes to identifying the circumstances under which the police may issue an alert, but it also limits a silver alert to an individual who is over the age of 55.

Now, in general, Madam Speaker, I think that, as I've said, these are positive changes that, if adopted, will improve the silver alert system, but I note that the silver alert legislation has never been proclaimed, and it is not currently in effect. Not only am I pleased to offer my support and vote in favour of this legislation, I urge the government to proclaim the bill, if it's amended as we see here today, as soon as possible because there are a lot of seniors whose lives and well-being could be protected if this bill were passed.

Now, Madam Speaker, it's, of course, no secret that our seniors population is growing. Certainly, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar I have the privilege of representing a large number of senior citizens who live in my riding. Statistically speaking, Edmonton-Gold Bar is one of the oldest urban ridings in all of Alberta when it comes to considering the age of the population, so seniors' issues are something that I hear a great deal about.

I'm pleased to see that the government caucus is making some amendments that will actually make lives for seniors better after making so many decisions that have made lives for seniors harder over the last four years. I know that one of the first things that the government cut in its first budget was the seniors' drug benefit plan so that seniors' partners who were under the age of 65 were no longer eligible for coverage under the plan, and that created a great

deal of hardship for the seniors living in my community. There were countless seniors who had partners under the age of 65 who were negatively affected by this and were scrambling to find drug coverage for their partners who were under the age of 65.

It's incredibly disappointing to me to see that this government hasn't restored that plan to its original form in spite of the fact that there is a considerable surplus. I can't think of anything better that the government could spend than to provide extended drug benefits to senior citizens and their partners regardless of their age, and I think that it's unconscionable that the government had decided so many years ago to eliminate those benefits.

One of the other decisions we see in this budget is that the government cut another additional \$100 million in drug benefits. I don't know why the government continues to attack seniors' drug benefits, especially in light of our financial circumstances these days, but it seems that the government is ideologically opposed to government providing services to seniors and to providing public health care.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Just a reminder that we've been off the topic of Bill 204 for quite some time. Perhaps we could get back on topic. Please proceed.

Mr. Schmidt: Madam Speaker, I mean, this is the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act. It deals with seniors and protecting them. My comments are related to protecting seniors. Some of the moves that this government has made I think are fully within the scope of debate here, and I would appreciate the opportunity to continue making the points that I'd like to make and that my constituents would like me to make on their behalf.

You know, one of the other things that this government has failed to address is the issue of continuing care. We see that the government has failed to adequately support the Good Samaritan and has allowed the Southgate centre to close down, which is shameful.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I have the same concern I had last time. I stood up to provide some caution to you and your remarks. We're on Bill 204, which is the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. Please speak to the bill. Please proceed.

Mr. Schmidt: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am speaking to the bill, and I'm also raising some issues that a number of senior citizens who live in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar have raised and insist that I discuss here in the Chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you are not here to debate the Speaker. I have asked you and provided caution on the remarks that you are making and the relevance to the topic that we are speaking on. You have one last chance to speak relevantly to Bill 204.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. If you insist on shutting down my voice and not allowing me to speak to senior citizens, I'd be happy to go back to the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar and let them know what happened here today.

3:00

On the issue of the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, as I said many times already in the few minutes that I've been up speaking, this is a significant advance in the protection of the health and well-being of senior citizens in this province. Unfortunately, it comes at the tail end of a government's term where we have seen a number of decisions that have made the lives of senior citizens harder. It's hard for me to accept that this

government is genuinely concerned with the well-being and health of senior citizens when this government has made so many decisions that have been harmful to senior citizens. As I said, we've seen the government cut off drug benefits; we've seen that in multiple budgets. We've seen issues with continuing care that have affected a number of seniors.

The issue of seniors living with dementia is one that I hear about all the time in my constituency, and it's shameful, the lack of facilities that are provided to seniors who suffer from dementia. I know many people in my constituency have a great deal of difficulty finding adequate care for their partners or loved ones who are suffering from dementia and have to rely on friends and family and people who are not adequately equipped or trained to look after their partners or loved ones with dementia, and there is no government help available for them.

I hear continually concerns about the services that are provided through home-care providers, particularly when it comes to caring for people with dementia. I know that many seniors living with dementia are forced to live at home because there are no adequate facilities for them to live in. Unfortunately, their families just do not get adequate home care for their partners or loved ones who are suffering from dementia. And when they do get home care, the home-care services that they provide are often inadequate. I've heard countless stories from people who are living in my constituency who have in name home-care services but in practice don't receive the home-care services that they are expecting or that they deserve.

I know many people have partners or loved ones who are receiving home care. Their home-care workers don't show up on time. Their home-care workers don't provide the services that they're expected to provide. They often change without notice.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to speak to Bill 204? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to provide a few comments to Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. There is no question that the discussion that my hon. colleague began with on the topic of supports for people with Alzheimer's and dementia is an issue that I hear in my riding of Lethbridge-West as well given that we, too, have, I think, a slightly higher than average number of seniors living in Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. I think it's just shy of 20 per cent. Certainly, I have had over the years many, many, many people come to me to talk to me about the need for more specialized Alzheimer's and dementia care, and ultimately that kind of care is what is at issue here.

Here we have an act, and a good one at that, to ensure at least a modicum of safety for adults who go missing. We also have a history with this particular bill. The hon. member had previously introduced this bill in 2017, noted it did not receive royal assent. It wasn't proclaimed due to the powers it could grant police in disclosing information not collected in accordance with the Missing Persons Act. So there's no question that we've had a few years to examine that. We should certainly find ways to answer those questions, and I hope that the hon. member has been able to receive those assurances in the intervening period, because ultimately I think this is a really good piece of legislation.

These silver alerts are for missing adult citizens, generally senior citizens with some form of Alzheimer's, dementia. You know, there's no question that we have an increasing number of folks, because we have an aging population, who certainly have been diagnosed these disorders.

We're getting better at early diagnosis, Madam Speaker. We're getting better at even brain research and understanding some of the pre-existing conditions or other aspects of brain development that show or that can begin to unlock some of the mysteries as to why dementia and Alzheimer's occur in some folks and what some of the precursors may be. Indeed, much of that research in the Canadian context is undertaken at the University of Lethbridge at the centre for neuroscience. Given the amount of interest in my local constituency I'm pleased to provide my support to this legislation.

Having said that, there is no question that appropriate care at every stage of diagnosis or early onset of dementia and Alzheimer's and appropriate support for both the patient and their families can certainly head off the need for such legislation. There is no question that investment in long-term care facilities with specialized Alzheimer's-dementia units with the appropriate number of staff, with the right kinds of supports for the patients – not only are they quite inaccessible; waits are long.

Sometimes families are put in a position where they have to purchase these services privately because there are no public facilities. There is no question that with home care, as my hon. colleague indicated, even when families are trying to support people at home before they make that transition into some form of supportive living facility, home-care budgets are strained, often families are paying out of pocket for these services, and they are not necessarily the level of care and support that families need.

I knocked on a door a couple of weeks ago now. It was quite a lovely day out, so I was able to get out onto Chippewa Crescent. Some folks came to the door and said: you know, we really appreciate your advocacy for health care in the riding. They have been supporting the woman's mother for some time and in that transition over to a continuing care facility where they knew that she was not getting exactly the level of care she needed for the level of dementia with which she had been diagnosed, but the family could not, with the assistance of home care, provide the kinds of supports that this woman needed so that she would remain safe, so that she would not need something like this legislation.

This human drama is playing itself out across the province, Madam Speaker, where families, essentially what we call the sandwich generation, are dealing with their aging parents, you know, and getting their children ready for university and what have you, and they find themselves looking for a public health care system that over the last three to four years has taken body blow after body blow with respect to availability of family doctors, of specialists, of continuing care spaces of various kinds.

Then they've seen the costs of those go up as well. Many, many people, as I said, are now paying privately for home care or because they need that additional piece of home care for their family members who have potentially early diagnoses of these diseases. Then once they do get into continuing care, the rental rates for that have gone up over the last three years. When the income tax bracket indexation did not happen, the amount of money given to residents in long-term care facilities was frozen as well, so they lost that pace of inflation. Their rental charges kept going up. The amount of money that was given to folks from the government, the government piece, remained constant. This also put a pressure on people's budgets.

3:10

Mr. Hanson: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

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

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under 23(b)(i), which is a little bit different than we're used to, you know, basically it speaks to matters other than the question under discussion. You've pointed out to the previous member and — you know what? I've been in the House for about eight years, and I've witnessed some pretty shameless behaviour from the members opposite. I know the folks are in full campaign mode, and I get that, but politicizing a good bill like Bill 204 is pretty much a new low. I would appreciate if the folks would stop the politicizing of Bill 204 and get to the point. Talk about what this is actually doing. It's protecting seniors that happen to wander away from their home. It gives the families some kind of a facility to issue an alert. If the members could . . .

Mr. Schmidt: You have more hairs on your head than brains in your head.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, those are inappropriate comments in this Legislature, completely uncalled for, and I heard them. You have an opportunity now to stand up and apologize to the hon. member for your insults.

Mr. Schmidt: I apologize, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There's a reason that I shave my head, because when I let it grow, it looks like his.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, you now have the opportunity to apologize.

Mr. Hanson: I apologize and withdraw the comments.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now that we are done with apologizing, I think at the second reading of a bill you can talk broadly about the principles of the bill. From what I've been hearing from my colleagues, they have kept the debate around the safety of seniors, issues facing seniors. They appreciated that it's a good step, but they are also highlighting the concerns relating to safety and issues facing seniors that they hear in their communities. I think it's well within what we do at the second stage of a bill. It's not a point of order, and certainly I can say this, that my colleagues will try to keep their comments more on the bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I certainly can appreciate the last words that you added to this point of order.

I have given great latitude when it comes to relevancy on this topic for all members of this House during the course of this debate. However, I feel that members are starting to take advantage of the niceness of the Speaker in this regard. Hon. members, we're speaking about Bill 204. If you are going to talk about all sorts of aspects in all sorts of areas, please make it relevant to the state at hand. This will be a caution.

The hon. member has I thought 45 seconds, which made things a little bit more difficult, but it's two minutes and 45 seconds. I'm sure she will speak to the topic at hand as the caution has been provided by their own House leader.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Debate Continued

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to conclude my comments as I was discussing the specific challenges of my constituents as a result of knocking on doors, hearing from a specific family who were dealing with the safety and security of their family member who had dementia, and they were having to look for the appropriate amount of care. There's no question that that was difficult to come by, and that in itself was — they had to settle for a level of care that, over time I think, has become better. At least their family member is now safe from the very obvious thing that was about to happen without that care, which was potential harm to the family member themselves or others.

There is no question that, just as we have Amber Alert for children, this is obviously an important piece of infrastructure for public safety and public emergencies. There is no question that when we discuss Amber Alerts, we also need to discuss safety and security for children in all of the aspects of family and social life that surround children to keep them safe. In the context of the silver alert it is the same dynamic at play.

Now, I am quite certain that I will end up in many more of these conversations over the next couple months given that these sorts of issues are raised on the doorstep all the time. Given that my colleagues, as well, are out knocking on doors and people are raising their health and seniors' care concerns with them and that we will all be having these conversations, it would be good, I think, to be able to answer them with something, with a proclaimed silver alert amendment act that has grappled with some of the issues that were first raised in 2017. What would be even better is to be able to pair that with a commitment to expanded long-term care, particularly public long-term care, that is affordable for everyone and gives the right level of care for all seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there are other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 204? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to a bill which I think is very important. I must express some of my concern that while the government side is berating us for speaking to the issue, they themselves are not speaking to it at all. If they feel like it should be addressed and we should focus on it and that's what we should use our time to do, you would think they would have some value in actually speaking to it themselves, so I'm a bit concerned.

I am concerned about this because I certainly know a lot of people who are of a certain age, as am I, who are looking more and more at the concerns of aging and some of the outcomes that are possible for us as we get older. I know in my own family, now that we're all reaching our 60s and 70s, more and more of our family members are experiencing health issues. For some of them, unfortunately, those issues also encompass cognitive issues that make the rest of us very concerned and very worried about the well-being of our family members and their safety. Recently I had a family member who had to go to hospital emergency because of exactly that kind of situation. You know, we are all very concerned about it.

I remember one particular incident that sort of resonated with me for many years. That is that back in the 1990s, when I was working an NDP campaign in what is now called Edmonton-Riverview, a gentleman came in and sat in our campaign office. I noticed that although it was March, he didn't have a jacket on, and he was wearing slippers, so we kind of approached him and, you know, "Can we help you?" as you do when someone comes into a campaign office. It became apparent that he wasn't there for the

campaigning purposes, so we said, “Well, would you like a ride home or something?” because I was concerned that he didn’t have a jacket on. He said, “Oh, sure; that would very nice,” so I said to him to hop into my car.

We got into my car. We were just by the university, and I said to him: so where is it that you live? Then he identified a World War II camp that used to exist near the university as his place of residence, at which point I realized this was an individual who was not cognitively aware and believed himself to be living in an era that was, at that point, 50 years old. It just so happened that I do know about the veterans centre near the university, just south of the university, and I suspected that someone wearing slippers and without a jacket had probably wandered away from that centre. Indeed, I drove the individual over to the veterans centre, and they had not even been aware that this individual had left the centre. This is the type of circumstance we’re talking about today, where people are clearly vulnerable, and they certainly need to be taken care of. You know, that’s the kind of thing I think that we should be doing.

3:20

I’m increasingly worried about these because of some of the context within which we are seeing this bill being brought forward, the context of the behaviours of this government over the last number of years. For example, the elimination of drug coverage for partners of seniors worries me a lot because if you can’t afford drugs for your partner and those drugs allow your partner to live a fulsome and safe life but your inability to pay for those drugs causes that partner to become increasingly vulnerable, then how much more likely is it that we’re going to find that someone whose services have been diminished by this UCP government is going to be in need of a service like the silver alarm? I am very discouraged to find the government, you know, wanting us to speak to supporting the silver alarm, which obviously I do – I’m very, very happy that there is an outlet for those circumstances where something negative happens, but I’m very concerned that the government is actually creating the circumstance under which the likelihood of needing that service is going to increase. I think the government has continued to do that in a variety of ways, and I think that’s an inconsistent philosophical place for the government to be taking.

For example, the government has eliminated the Seniors Advocate position in this government, a position that’s been around for a number of years, and they didn’t see right to follow that up. Now, how many of these vulnerable people could be well protected if there was somewhere in the government where concerns could be addressed, where phone calls could be made about, “I’m very concerned that this person is not receiving the services that they need in order to be safe,” to prevent the need for a silver alert, to get in front of it, to be proactive? We certainly could have used a Seniors Advocate who would ensure that all of our seniors are well taken care of in appropriate facilities with appropriate services and getting appropriate services in their home. Had all those things existed under this government, which they do not, how many times could we save ourselves from having to go to the end-resort activity of putting out a silver alert?

That’s the kind of concern I’m concerned about. That’s the context we have to understand when we look at this government wanting us to support silver alert but then not philosophically staying with the concern of the protection of seniors in the rest of their behaviour. I think that is a deep concern and therefore legitimizes the members on this side spending time talking about the context, legitimizes the members saying in this House what we all know, and that is: if you create the structures that increase

vulnerability for seniors, you are going to increase the need for some kind of an after-the-fact intervention such as the silver alert.

We know that this government has done a variety of things to increase that vulnerability and that risk. I have within my constituency, for example, a seniors’ residence, southside care, that has recently had a reduction in the number of beds available. Given the increasing population that we have in the seniors area, that is a real serious concern. The concern is that if we reduce the number of beds in places like the southside care centre, that resides in Edmonton-Rutherford, then we are going to be in a situation where people do not have the ability to move into appropriate settings where they will receive appropriate care and therefore be in a place where their vulnerability has been increased and therefore are likely to be the type of people that we end up having to create a silver alert for.

That’s the kind of thing that we would like to see this government do: to prevent it before it actually becomes a problem in the first place, to reduce the vulnerability of our seniors, to reduce the threat to their safety and their well-being that we see when you do things like eliminate the Seniors Advocate, when you do things like eliminate the drug coverage for partners of seniors, when you do things like reduce the number of beds available in long-term protected care. Those are the things that are deeply concerning on this side of the House, and we think it’s philosophically consistent to say that if we care about seniors, we care about them not only when they are lost and we want to find them again through the use of a silver alert, but we are concerned about them when they are lost living in their own home, when they are lost in institutions that do not have sufficient resources, when they are lost because when things go wrong, they do not have an advocate that they can call to correct the vulnerabilities, to reduce the risks, and to bring them back into the place of well-being that we want our seniors to live in.

Now, some of us in this House are a little bit more worried about those seniors’ issues as we’re a little bit closer to it than others, but I think it’s really important that all of us in this House take the time to evaluate what our position is as a society with regard to our elders. Do we as a society have a responsibility to ensure the well-being of our elders?

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

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. This is actually my first opportunity to speak to Bill 204, so I do have some questions in relation to how the bill was drafted and why some changes were made in relation to a pre-existing Bill 210, that was actually taken to a community and some consultation was done on that bill, because some concerns were raised respecting the Missing Persons Act, disclosure of information by police to public, and a couple of other topics that I haven’t seen addressed necessarily or heard being addressed through debate. Again, in fairness, this is my first time speaking to it, so if there are answers to my questions, I would be more than happy to hear from the member of the government being able to maybe clarify some of these questions.

One of the things that happened in Bill 210, that was passed in 2017, was that there was an opportunity and an ability for this not to just impact seniors but also to support individuals that may be dealing with some type of mental health concern and the police then being able to issue an alert because of that. It wasn’t necessarily just related to a 55-plus. It could be someone who may be known to a family member to have some mental health concerns that people would be relatively concerned about their safety and well-being and needing to be able to find them as soon as possible to ensure that their health was being addressed.

Now, my understanding is that the definition of a mental disorder has been removed from the bill and that it limits the silver alert to only being for those at the age of 55 and over. My concern is that I have had, actually, a few situations in my riding where adults, young adults in their 20s, have had some mental health disorders that they've been dealing with, diagnoses that they have, and unfortunately they have left the home and have gone missing. Of course, my riding has a little bit of an urban setting but mostly has lots of farmland and then, of course, the river valley along the North Saskatchewan. It's concerning because there's an ability to wander in my riding and get lost, and there's not a lot of population in certain areas of my riding for people to see if someone is wandering down the road without a coat on or any of that kind of stuff. So to see this removed – what ended up happening for this one particular family in my riding is they ended up having to put up billboards in the neighbourhoods with this person's picture on, a phone number that they had come up with asking for people to call, Facebook, using social media as much as they could. But, of course, had there been an ability for an alert to go out, the opportunity to maybe share that information would have been, well, more efficient and would've gotten out to a lot more people.

3:30

I think, you know, when we look at these alerts – and I think we can all acknowledge that we are very familiar with the alerts given last week or the week before, when we all got about eight or 10 alerts all within, like, 30 seconds of each other and nobody was quite sure what was going on. The test apparently worked, too efficiently, some would say probably, but we know it can work. I think, looking at a piece of legislation like this, this is really important, I would say, for our smaller communities, our rural communities, where the population is less and the opportunity for individuals to wander into bigger spaces and things like that and not necessarily be noticed as quickly as maybe if you were in downtown Edmonton or downtown Calgary. I think it's very important.

You know, I'm not saying I don't support the bill, because I do; I just wish the age group wasn't there. Maybe part of the reason for that is that there's a reason why the member chose the age of 55 and over. Maybe that was part of what came out of the consultation with the Missing Persons Act and whether or not they were able to disclose information and whether that has more to do with the fact that there are probably some guardianship components that are attached to this. I appreciate that, but I would be curious to know: if it was someone between the ages of 18 and 55 that's missing in this piece of legislation, if they also had guardians, would they be able to actually engage with this alert system? Can we do interventions in private members' business?

The Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr. Smith: We could do interventions at first, but we can't now.

Ms Sweet: No, we can't. Okay. Well, maybe somebody else can answer when I'm done. I appreciate the member who wrote the bill wanting to answer my questions.

I think that, you know, it's an important piece because it isn't always just seniors that I think we're talking about. In fact, I would say, again, going back to my riding, that I have one of the youngest ridings in the province, and many of the individuals that would benefit from something like this would probably be in that 18 to 55 age group who are needing additional supports. So I see that.

Again, recognizing and moving on into the rural components, I do think that this is very helpful. You know, I would hate to hear of a scenario where this wasn't being able to be used. My family is

from Pincher Creek, and had my grandma still been around, if she had decided to go for a walk without anybody with her, I think we would all be pretty scared at that point although she was pretty well known; people would've noticed her pretty fast. Anyway, the idea behind that, though, is that I think it is a good idea.

The other piece that I'm looking into wanting to kind of understand from the member, which, again, I think goes back to what came out of the committee when this was debated before, was: what is the privacy for adults and the idea around self-determination and, you know, at what point do we consider someone missing? Obviously, that is clear in the Missing Persons Act, and we would know that.

Now, the other piece around this is, again, looking at the infrastructure. Going back to the fact that we obviously know the alert systems work, I would be wondering, from the government's perspective, what the financial commitment would need to be to be able to update this system. Would it be piggybacking on the back of the Amber Alert, or would it just be a line text change? So the system would be the exact same system, no different than if we use the Amber Alert and it's a different child, age, vehicle, things like that. If it's really just a turn in phrase or if there would have to be a whole other infrastructure component built to support this.

And then, on top of that, given our experience over the last couple of weeks with these alerts repeatedly going out into the universe on our phones, what is the measurability to make sure that people don't become desensitized to the alerts? I think even based on our experience a couple of weeks ago, when we were getting inundated with alerts, at some point people get a little bit frustrated with the system and how it works. I want to make sure even from a testing perspective as well as a use perspective that this is being used in those urgent moments and not being done to the point where people become desensitized to them and then they don't read them; they don't look at them. That would be the other question that I have around the bill.

You know, I would hope that we can use the Amber Alert system and that we're not trying to create another system that is going to have a financial component attached to it that couldn't be somehow figured out so that we're not spending money if we can use a system that already is being used and working.

Other than that – oh, the other piece, too – sorry – that I just wanted to flag is that we know that something similar exists in Ontario, B.C., and Manitoba, and I just want to make sure that it's no different than our Amber Alert, that the silver alert would then be compatible across the country and that we're not building systems in other provinces that don't necessarily work together. Again, it defeats the purpose, and then we're just creating redundancy after redundancy on these issues.

I think that is what I have in closing. I look forward to hearing from the member that introduced the bill, Drayton Valley-Devon, maybe when he has an opportunity to answer my questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Just in time.

Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. I have appreciated the debate so far from members on this side of the House. I think they've raised some important questions, some that I will likely highlight through my time in discussion.

You know, again, just looking at what this bill is proposing, at the end of the day, offering changes to Bill 210, that was passed back in 2017 – of course, we never saw that proclaimed as far as I

can tell, Madam Speaker. Instead, we see some changes being proposed through this amendment act regarding some of the details within here, arguably making it less prescriptive than what was previously introduced. The previous member spoke to it but, specifically, removing the definition of a mental disorder and the circumstances under which the police may issue an alert and, finally, limiting the silver alert to an individual over the age of 55.

Again, I think, as the previous member stated, it would be important to hear from the mover and creator of this legislation to provide comments and details about exactly why these changes have been made, what further consultation took place that has made them arrive at a different place than what was originally proposed. I, you know, do not argue the changes that they've made. I think that likely there's good reason for it, but I think it's important that we hear why those decisions were made in terms of the changes that are being proposed in this amendment act.

You know, we see that – again, as the previous member spoke to, we've seen jurisdictions across the United States moving forward with similar legislation, specifically in 48 states, as well as Quebec recently introducing a pilot project in the fall of 2023, and Ontario, B.C., and Manitoba have also brought forward similar legislation. I would also ask the mover of this legislation if what we're seeing proposed in Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, is exactly what we see in other provinces, if there are some minor changes, if there are any larger changes that are important to provide and have our own distinct policies here in the province compared to what we've seen in other jurisdictions, whether across North America or across Canada.

You know, in my time as an MLA, like many other of the members who have spoken this afternoon, I have seen instances of what I would believe to be somebody in my community that would likely meet the criteria of a silver alert. Thinking back to those situations and how concerning it is for the family of a senior or a member of our community that has gone missing, for potentially the support staff who may or may not have been in charge of keeping them safe and ensuring that they were in a specific location and just in general the broader community and the concern there.

3:40

It's just about ensuring that the people that live in that community are protected and safe. In general I think those are all important things that we should aim for and things that we also need to measure, you know, before this legislation is introduced and following the implementation of this legislation and this amendment act if it is passed.

Some questions that I have – and hopefully this came up through the consultation process. I would be interested to find out if there is a breakdown of where the majority of these cases are happening, the majority of cases that would meet this criteria of a silver alert, if it's primarily happening in long-term care settings, if it's primarily happening in community, you know, home support being provided to a senior potentially, where we are most likely to see this. If there is a breakdown that the member or the government is able to provide – or even anecdotes, Madam Speaker, I suppose would suffice at this time – I'd be interested to find out if there is quite a difference between how, when this is happening, and where it's happening overall.

I think that question would lead back to some of the discussions that we've heard from members this afternoon and very likely through previous discussions about the need to ensure that no matter where a senior or any Albertan is getting supports, they are getting adequate supports.

Again, this goes back to the idea that I've heard again and again and concerns that have been raised throughout my last eight years

representing many seniors in Edmonton-West Henday. We have a number of long-term care facilities as well as seniors receiving supports in their own home and in their own community. I think it's important to understand, again, past what we're seeing in this legislation and what could be argued as reactionary compared to what changes we could potentially be making on the prevention side if it is a need, which very likely is a need for increased supports in home care and increased supports in long-term care facilities in general, Madam Speaker.

That is something that I've heard again and again, that not only is there not enough space in our long-term care facilities, but if you are able to get a space in them, very often they unfortunately are just – you know, a lot of them do the best that they can with the funding that they're provided and the funding that they collect, but sometimes mistakes are made at the end of the day, and I guess that is why there is value in seeing something like what is proposed in Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act.

Beyond hoping and looking for a breakdown of where the majority of these situations are happening, you know, whether it's a senior who has stepped out of their home and is potentially lost, if it is a senior that has left their long-term care facility, I'm hoping that the member or the government is able to provide how many cases Alberta traditionally sees year to year that would likely meet the criteria of what is being proposed in Bill 204 and likely meet the criteria of having a silver alert put out to the public, if that number is growing year to year as decisions are made and, of course, through the pandemic, that has added a number of complexities to our long-term care facilities, to the ability to provide supports to seniors in our community. I'd be interested to find out if there is any sort of breakdown year to year and potentially looking back and, again, looking forward, what we might expect to see from those numbers.

As the previous member and many other members have brought forward, looking for a cost analysis of this legislation. Again, I am in full support of what we're seeing proposed in Bill 204, but I think that it's always important that we look at the effectiveness of a program based on the cost. Again, not arguing the effectiveness of this program. But we need to ensure, if we are putting forward legislation like Bill 204, that the money is best spent in a reactionary way, in this instance, compared to putting that money forward into prevention. Again, I wouldn't argue that, but I think it's valuable that we have an understanding of the cost breakdown, where those funds are going to come from, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, I want to be careful, because I do appreciate that you have put forward a number of I don't want to say warnings, but for lack of better terms I think we do have to look at the way that we support our seniors overall, in general, when we have considerations like Bill 204 in front of us. I won't push the point too much, but when we do look at changes that have been made over the last few years around the elimination of drug coverage for beneficiaries, I think there is very likely a case to be made that we could see ourselves having more seniors or Albertans meeting the criteria of a silver alert if they are no longer able to access the medication coverage that they need.

I think that it's just a part of the bigger conversation, that it needs to be discussed, that all changes that have been made, whether it be under this government, under previous governments, around the way that we support our seniors are very much relevant and that they do provide a better picture of what is being proposed. At the end of the day . . . [Mr. Carson's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. This is my first opportunity to speak to this, and I'm listening closely to the debate. You know, I think I can agree a hundred per cent that we need to do as much as we can to support seniors in this province, and I think that this is a good step towards doing that.

I know that here in Alberta we have the Amber Alert system, which is for children, and I've seen as a social worker a few instances where that has resulted in some incredible responses from the community, from the police, from those that are all alerted to this to make sure that a child is located safely. I've seen the success first-hand of that. The intent of this legislation, with Bill 204, I think is to make sure that when someone, I believe, aged 55 or older is missing, they meet certain criteria and then an alert can be issued.

Now, I think that when we're talking about this bill, there are a few questions that I have that I am hopeful will be addressed. I'm curious: why the age? Why 55? Where did that number come from? I know that there are individuals that are younger that have early-onset dementia and could benefit from this legislation if something unfortunate happened to them and they were missing and their loved ones determined that, you know, an alert needed to be issued. So I'm curious how the age, 55, was determined when it came to this legislation.

I'm also curious about why the definition of mental disorder was removed. I think that when police are looking at the criteria to issue an alert, the more detail and definitions that we can provide, the better. I've watched in court cases where people have come forward requesting from the courts a secure – regarding either a youth or an adult. Having a clear definition is definitely helpful for those that are making the decisions. We saw numerous requests coming forward to the courts to have some of these certificates issued, but they didn't meet the criteria. So when a definition is available, I would argue that that is a lot more user friendly for those that are making the decisions.

3:50

When an alert is issued, it is important, and it's something that we want to make sure Albertans are paying attention to when they get that alert on their phone. I know that it's a fine line between someone's privacy and someone's personal information and an individual's, an adult's, self-determination. There are many criteria that come into place. When someone is coming forward and arguing that a silver alert needs to be issued, it's beneficial to have a very clear, concise definition of what that could mean.

I know that I've spoken to many people that are in situations right now where they have their aging loved ones at a place where they need more supervision, where they need more assistance, and caregivers are really struggling with what to do. We've watched a system, from this government, of lack of support to seniors, and we're hearing from families that they're feeling overwhelmed, that they're feeling burned out when it comes to caring for seniors, and they have this awful circumstance that they've described as being not able to meet their loved one's needs in their home. There's a lack of resources and supports for home care but also really struggling with having their family member going to a longer term facility despite knowing that the level of care is needed, that they are at high risk of being someone that could require a silver alert.

When we're talking about ways to support seniors, I think the conversation needs to be bigger, Madam Speaker, and I think that having a silver alert amendment act is definitely a positive step. We want to make sure that seniors are safe. We want to make sure that the community is engaged in ensuring their safety. We know that when an Amber Alert comes out, everybody gets notification and a

description, and people are paying attention. People do not want to see a child at risk or hurt, and I believe that the same is true for seniors.

When we're talking about the resources and supports to help diminish the need for a silver alert, we need to talk about the bigger picture and what sort of services and supports are being supported. Throughout this term of this government we've seen those supports be significantly decreased. We watched through the pandemic devastating impacts on seniors, with so many being exposed unnecessarily to COVID and to other heartbreaking scenarios where families are at a place where they're struggling with what to do with their loved ones.

I know as a social worker supporting caregivers in the community that these are tough decisions. When we're looking at ways to support seniors in Alberta, it needs to be a broader conversation. Why is there a lack of supports for seniors? Why is there no longer a Seniors Advocate? Those are the conversations that we're having at the doors. Those are conversations that I know are happening around kitchen tables all across the province.

I've heard a devastating story about a family friend's great-aunt. I believe she's in her early 80s, and she is struggling with some significant memory issues: dementia, Alzheimer's. The amount of care that is required is – when she's awake, she needs to be supervised, and she's a significant risk to herself, without intending to be, because she has no idea of where she is, who's around her, her loved ones, et cetera, and she's afraid, Madam Speaker. When trying to have conversations with her great-aunt, she said that it's heartbreaking, because if she was to leave the floor of the unit that she's on, they don't believe that she would ever find her way back, and without assistance of the community it could be a really devastating situation. They were quite worried about her when it was quite cold because she liked to be outside, but she needed constant supervision.

So there were family conversations about what that could look like, what that quality of life was for her. Was it better for the family to bring her into their home, where they were hopeful that there would be some form of normalcy, or should she stay in the facility that she was at? It was a very, very real fear that if she left the facility, she would be at risk of needing a silver alert. These are conversations that I know people are having when it comes to their loved ones and the seniors.

I'm just curious what the intention is around the age, like I said, in this piece of legislation and about making sure that it doesn't contravene the Missing Persons Act. I know that there are some conversations that we're having here in the Leg. talking about these things, but I would really hope that we can get some clarity around that, because this is a piece of legislation that I really want to support. I think that when we're talking about making steps to ensure that seniors are at a decreased risk if they go missing, we need to come together to support that. I'm not sure that all of the information has been clarified in this piece of legislation. Like I said, a definition of mental disorder I think would be incredibly important when it comes to those making the decision of whether or not to issue an alert. There are circumstances that I've seen when it comes to issuing alerts regarding children – it's a tough criteria to determine what is the best interest of that individual.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to this Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, for second reading. I think, if I'm not mistaken, it is one of the very few

times I have seen a private member's bill make it to second reading, because for the most part under the UCP the process was that the bill will get introduced and then handed over to a committee, where it will be decided without any input from members of this House, all members of this House, whether that bill should be debated or not. For the most part we missed out debating all those private members' bills, good ideas that private members have brought forward.

This is one such bill, which comes with a good idea on what we can do to make sure that for those who are at risk of going missing, there is some process in place that will make sure that they are safe. In all of our ridings, in our communities seniors are a vital part of our communities, and the constituency I represent has also a considerable number of seniors living in it. There are quite a few senior-serving organizations as well, and whenever I have the opportunity to engage with them at their events, engage with their loved ones, the conversation about seniors will start with their safety and their well-being because, as my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford said, when we grow older, which we all do, our needs change, and those changes do impact our safety needs as well.

4:00

As my colleague mentioned, when the pandemic hit, certainly it was a general health risk for Albertans of all ages, but we know from day one that medical professional advice was that seniors will be more vulnerable, that they will be more at risk. There's more that was advised of us all to do to protect seniors. Their safety is an important concern, and that's what this bill is trying to help with in at least one way, by creating a silver alert so that for those who are vulnerable or at risk of going missing, there is some process in place that will make sure that they have some help that will be available to them.

As I said, I'm speaking in support of this bill and in support of this proposal that will help make our communities safer, at least one step more safe, but we do have some questions about this legislation. We do know that the same or a similar bill was brought forward before, and it was not proclaimed. At that time I think one of the reasons that was noted for not proclaiming that piece of legislation was that there were concerns that it could give police information not collected in accordance with the Missing Persons Act. So we do want to know, need to know: what steps, if any, were taken to make sure that that concern was addressed? What assurances has the member received, can the member provide this House and Albertans that this bill will not be in contravention of the Missing Persons Act?

Another concern that was raised with respect to these amendments was that now this bill, the bill in its current form, removes the definition of mental disorder and the circumstances under which police may be able to issue an alert. I do understand that it's a difficult topic, and coming up with a definition which will cover a range of mental health concerns, issues is difficult, but as was mentioned by my colleague from Edmonton . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Standing Order 8 the mover of the bill has five minutes to close us out.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Private member's Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, will enable police services across this province to be able to access a tool that will help the police to find seniors that have gone missing and are believed to be at risk. I'm grateful for the members of the Legislature that have stood and have spoken to this bill in second

reading and have provided some insights and some questions that they may have as we move on to the next stage, which would be the Committee of the Whole. I look forward to resuming the debate and to perhaps answering some of those questions. I would encourage all to pay attention, to listen to the debate as it moves forward, and hopefully, at the end of the day, to support this in Committee of the Whole and to support this in third reading.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed with debate, there has been a request to briefly revert to introductions, so I will seek unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose on introductions.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you members of the rodeo and chuckwagon associations. I have with me Geoff Turnquist; PBR event producer Angela Watson; Coy Robbins, professional bull rider; Shaun Morton, rodeo production manager; Denny Phipps, GM, Canadian Professional Rodeo Association; Patty Auger, Canadian Professional Rodeo Association; Celeste Chaytors with the Cowboy Channel Canada and also with Alberta High School Rodeo; Presley Chaytors is here with the rodeo as well; Pam Golden and her daughter Emma, also with Alberta High School Rodeo. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: Welcome. Welcome.

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

(continued)

Bill 205

Official Sport of Alberta Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill 205, regarding the recognition of rodeo and chuckwagon as the official sport of Alberta. You know, I wanted to pause and just tell you all why it is that this bill is so important to me. Rodeo and chuckwagon are events, sports that I grew up watching as a child, and the reason I had that opportunity is because my grandfather used to break horses. He would say to us every year, at least two or three times a year: come on, girls; get in the car; we're going to the rodeo. And off we would go, and we would spend the day together. Those bring back such great memories for me, and I hope that all Albertans have that opportunity to spend family time attending rodeos and chuckwagon races because it's made for very long-lasting, pleasurable memories for me and my family.

I'll just go on to tell you that sports are not just for competition but also a way of life that creates a cultural identity. Canadians have always and will always be identified by their love of hockey. Most Calgarians and Edmontonians have an identity built around their

love of the Flames or the Oilers. The rivalry against each other and their close connections to their respective cities create culture identities for both Calgarians and Edmontonians.

A similar logic and view apply to the beloved sport of rodeo and chuckwagon racing here in our province. Without the rodeo and chuckwagon races there would be a missing piece in Alberta's proud western heritage. Rodeo and chuckwagon promote Alberta's strong cultural mindset of being a proud maverick. Alberta was founded by settlers who embodied the values of hard work, resilience against the untamed prairies, and communities built by people who believe in one another. Rodeos and chuckwagon racing display all these traits and characteristics. Rodeo and chuckwagon racing are sports that demonstrate a passion for improving oneself, both mentally and physically. They bring together the young and the old to rally around adversity and competition.

This also describes who Albertans are, what we stand for, and why we live in the most fantastic province in Canada. The cultural importance of rodeo and chuckwagon racing to Alberta cannot be overstated. When visitors come from across Alberta, the country, and the world to participate in rodeo and chuckwagon events, it gives Alberta a chance to welcome people from different backgrounds. It creates a sense of community, belonging, and friendship.

4:10

The sport of rodeo and chuckwagon racing is a vital part of Alberta's rich cultural fabric that highlights Alberta's agriculture sector. To give members of the House an idea of the impact that rodeo and chuckwagon racing and its agriculture events have on Alberta, I'd like to mention a few examples. There are 94 primary agriculture societies, seven regional agriculture societies, and one major agriculture society that hold a whopping 138-plus rodeo events spread across our great province. The first Canadian rodeo was held in Raymond, Alberta, in 1903, two years before our province came into being. The first Calgary Stampede quickly followed, in 1912, which has been popular with tourists from across the country and the world ever since. The Calgary Stampede draws around 1 million visitors annually and is now called the world's most significant outdoor attraction event.

The direct impact of the 10-day Calgary Stampede has an economic impact of \$282.5 million, but imagine the indirect effect of the Stampede, from the hotels that are booked to the tourists visiting Calgary's small businesses, to buying souvenirs, to the indirect jobs created because of the Stampede. These indirect impacts are likely unaccountable. The beauty of all this comes because we embrace our western heritage culture, and rodeo and chuckwagon have no doubt helped in the creation of building Alberta's unique cultural identity.

Rodeo and chuckwagon racing: the economic tourism benefits are not just insulated to Calgary. In fact, hundreds of similar stampedes happen simultaneously across the province every year due to the long months of summer. For example, the Canadian Finals Rodeo, held at Westerner Park in Red Deer, is a six-day event with over 43,000 attendees and an economic impact of \$37 million. Also, rodeos, like the Ponoka Stampede and Strathmore Stampede, contribute millions of dollars to our local economies. In my Camrose constituency we are enjoying the PBR in Camrose.

At its heart, Madam Speaker, rodeo is about community. They're not just about competition and the demonstration of skills but also about coming together to enjoy food, listening to local singers, shopping at trade shows, and visiting the rides at the fairgrounds. They bring people together from all walks of life and backgrounds, immigrants and new Albertans from all other parts of Canada, people who have been here for generations.

Making rodeo Alberta's official sport would help to illustrate the importance of rodeo and chuckwagon racing to our province and local communities, who work year-round preparing for the season. Families, agriculture associations, local businesses, community associations, and individuals rely on the income they make from the season. Our love for rodeos and chuckwagon racing is something we all share as Albertans, and I want that to be officially recognized in this Legislature.

Some of the most notable rodeos in the Camrose constituency include the Sodbuster Rodeo, the Cloverdale rodeo, the Hardisty Rodeo, the Killam Indoor Rodeo, and the Bruce Stampede. The Bruce Stampede is particularly noteworthy as it has produced some of the most talented and accomplished rodeo stars for nearly 100 years.

It's important to note that the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association regulates the sport. Rodeo judges are responsible for enforcing all CPRA rules, including a section that deals exclusively with the humane treatment of livestock. Rodeo and chuckwagon judges undergo constant training and evaluation to ensure they are knowledgeable and up to date on the rules. The association's rules and regulations include more than 60 rules dealing with the treatment of livestock. Committees ensure that the facilities are inspected before the animals and contestants arrive, to minimize the chance of injury to the animals and contestants. Professional judges check the livestock before each performance, and any animal suspected of being unable to compete to the best of their ability is pulled from the competition.

Alberta's love for rodeo and chuckwagon mirrors the values and character that Albertans represent today. Rodeo is not a sport but a way of life for Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to have this opportunity to introduce the bill and welcome the guests.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, can I just have you stand back up and say that you move second reading?

Ms Lovely: I move second reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Perfect. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 205, the Official Sport of Alberta Act. I would like to also extend a warm welcome to all those that are joining us in the gallery today from the rodeo community. I think it's wonderful when individuals can come and experience the Legislature and hear about the debate that's happening.

I, too, have a strong connection with rodeo. I grew up in Whitecourt, Alberta, and my parents had many friends from childhood that participated in rodeo. They were athletes from bull riding to barrel racing and calf roping. I have very, very fond memories, as a little girl travelling all across the Alberta rodeo circuit, cheering on some of these athletes from Sangudo, Mayerthorpe, Boyle. It was just a great experience. I was very fortunate, Madam Speaker, to be able to sit as a board member at Northlands and participate in some of the behind-the-scenes stuff that was happening around the CFR specifically. I'm very grateful for rodeo and the contribution that it made in my life upbringing, so it's wonderful to have these conversations and talk about, you know, a key piece of Alberta's culture and history. I couldn't agree more that there are so many wonderful memories that come out of rodeo, and being able to talk about it is incredible.

I mean, when you travel, if you go down to Vegas for the rodeo there, there are lots of Albertans there, and they're well represented. I can say with pride that, you know, when you're around the

community, the pride that comes from so many family and friends that have athletes involved in rodeo is spectacular.

On the other side, Madam Speaker, I am the Culture critic, and I represent all sport across this beautiful province, and I have some questions that I hope will be answered through debate in the House. I think that rodeo is absolutely an identity when it comes to Alberta's culture and history, but I question why it was chosen at the exclusion of so many others. Not to say that I don't support it, not at all. I just have heard from so many organizations in sport that questioned: who was consulted when this came to be? I know that there's a great hockey community in the province. There's lacrosse. There's soccer. There's basketball. There's baseball. I would like to know, you know: were these organizations consulted? We have Alberta representatives from soccer, from basketball, from hockey. I'm curious if they had a consult in terms of when the sport was being determined for the province. If they haven't been consulted with, are there plans to consult with them? I feel like when we're talking about an official sport for the province, we have to include some of those major players.

Part of my childhood was rodeo, absolutely, but I also spent a lot of time in arenas all across the province both as a figure skater myself and supporting my brother's hockey. We played in barns all over Alberta. It was part of our life, and I know that it's a part of many Albertans' lives, as is soccer. I know that soccer is huge in the province. We have so many that play, and to not have those sorts of organizations at the table is a bit concerning.

I've heard that some are feeling left out. They're not feeling like they've been included in the conversation about selecting a sport for the province, and I would like to hear from the hon. member that brought this forward what that consultation looked like, whose voices were at the table, and how it was determined that rodeo was selected. I think that Alberta is a very, very diverse province, and I think we have so much going for us when it comes to sport. I would hope that the hon. member took opportunity to speak to the many, many levels of sports that are represented all across the province.

When it comes to reporting activities in the province, as the Culture critic it's something that I look at, it's something that I see as being very important when we talk about targets and looking at ways to include activities, physical activity, to Albertans. I know it's broken up into two categories: we look at adults, and we look at children. When we look at participation, from a government report from 2018-2019, it states that the adults who participated in organized sport activities: 22.7 per cent played hockey, 16.3 per cent played soccer, 11.5 per cent played golf, 10.7 per cent played basketball, and 10.2 per cent were involved in curling. Now, the report did not identify rodeo as a common sport of interest and/or participation.

4:20

I'm hopeful, Madam Speaker, that government consulted with those adult activities that were reported in the report as they were the most identified participation from Alberta adults. I would hope that there was a robust conversation with those organizations.

When it comes to adults and children that participated in organization or sport activity, 33.3 per cent of children played soccer, 25.4 per cent played hockey, 19.9 per cent swam, 19.2 per cent played basketball, and 17.5 per cent played baseball.

Again, there's no mention of rodeo in the government report, so I just question: when it came to determining the designation of Alberta's official sport, who was at the table to have these conversations, and how was it determined? Was it determined on activity? Was it determined on access? Was it determined on longest sport in the province? I'm just not clear how it came to be named as the official sport. I know that a decision like this requires

a great deal of consultation. I know that when we are standing up for what we believe the official sport should be, it's important to have rodeo at the table, but it's also important to have other organized sports at the table.

Just listening to the conversations that are happening within the sports community, that doesn't seem to be the case, Madam Speaker. There are many that have felt ignored by this government. They've felt a lack of support from this government, and they haven't been at the table for decisions about what their needs are, what supports they would like to see. I certainly haven't heard from them that they were at the table to be consulted with when considering the designation of Alberta's official sport. That concerns me because we have a government that has been making decisions without robust conversation. It's troublesome when I'm hearing from community that their sport wasn't consulted with. So I'm curious how it came to be that rodeo and chuckwagon was selected as the official sport.

Now, when it comes to the way that this government has been introducing legislation, the other piece is: why wasn't this included in the Alberta emblems act? We've seen this government take pieces of legislation and put through certain pieces and have opportunities to really combine the intention of legislation, and I would argue that the official sport could have been included in the Alberta emblem act. This was an act that was introduced in 2020, and I think that it would have been well fit under that piece of legislation.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

We watched this government introduce a piece of legislation to support Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee, which we were one hundred per cent in support of. Yet they combined it with the same legislation that would allow all members who had . . . [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has risen.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'll rise to speak to private member's Bill 205, Official Sport of Alberta Act. Rodeo is an institution in Alberta. It's ubiquitous. It's spontaneous. It's history. It's culture. It's our Alberta identity. We celebrate our unique western heritage and culture by holding rodeos and chuckwagon races, where athletes can compete in their unique, exciting sport for the refinement of their skills and for the entertainment of spectators. Rodeo is intrinsic to the Alberta identity because of our history as an agricultural region, a ranching region of North America where wide open prairies welcomed farmers and ranchers who could settle the land, develop it into one of the most productive places on Earth. As hockey became Canada's national sport in large part thanks to the prevalence of ice in our country, so too did rodeo in Alberta because of the widespread agricultural and ranching economy that defines us to this very day.

Mr. Speaker, to make rodeo our provincial official sport will enshrine what we already know to be true. Our province hosts rodeos north to south, east to west. We draw competitors from across the continent to participate in those rodeos, including the world's largest outdoor show, the Calgary Stampede. Additionally, the Ponoka Stampede in my constituency is Canada's largest rodeo on the professional circuit, ranking in the top five for payouts to competitors in North America.

Beginning in 1971, high school students participate in official high school rodeos in May and June, and winners can then move on to the

National High School Rodeo Association level of competitions in July and August.

But it's not just the large official rodeos that define this wonderful sport and our province. The real essence and significance of rodeo is anchored in the small communities across our province. Smaller community organizations and municipalities are responsible for hosting hundreds of rodeos every summer. Children, seniors, and their families attend these events in community life. It's a rite of passage for rural children as they ride calves or chase greased pigs, meet friends, and teenage romances bloom at these events. That happens a lot. As spectators, volunteers, and participants, families from across Alberta enjoy the volunteer, smaller rodeos hosted in their communities, the large ones drawing competitors from as far away as Australia, but it's the small ones where the life really happens. Rodeo is a central community event in rural Alberta, a family event for all ages and all backgrounds.

The growing and historical diversity of this sport is testament to Alberta's welcoming and open-hearted disposition. One of the founding fathers of not just Alberta's rodeo but the ranching industry in general was John Ware, an African American who immigrated to Alberta more than a century ago. But more recently I find it fascinating that, in fact, the very idea of recommending rodeo as Alberta's official sport came from the Calgary-North member in the last couple of years, who first raised this issue, an individual from Pakistan who came to western Canada. His first job was out in Rocky Mountain House, and as he travelled around on weekends throughout Alberta, he just was taken with rodeo, and everywhere he went was able to participate. So actually this very idea came from a recent immigrant, a Pakistani Canadian, who saw what the rest of us just all take for granted. So congratulations to him and thanks to him, the Member for Calgary-North, for bringing this forward.

Young women will train for years with their horses, their friends, and their companions to prepare for rodeo. In the small rural rodeos women are equal participants alongside men, as is also true with agricultural farm businesses. My own granddaughter competed along with her friends in the Mirror rodeo last summer in nothing less than a real, flat-out horse race. She learns responsibility in caring for her horse 365 a year. She learns animal anatomy, she learns medical science, dietary needs, all these different things.

Mr. Speaker, this bill: on one hand it will show how our government embraces the culture and heritage of our great province, but on the other hand it also supports economic prosperity that rodeo brings to Alberta. Events like the Calgary and the Ponoka stampedes and other rodeos that have been mentioned, that occur across our province in towns large and small, bring immense economic benefits to the areas where they are hosted. Businesses in these areas benefit from increased activity and the people that rodeos draw.

No rodeo is complete without adjacent amenities like food and games for children and adults alike as well as performing opportunities for Alberta musicians at many of them. These events give an opportunity for businesses that provide these services to prosper. I should also mention that a great draw of Alberta's tourist economy is to come and to be able to see western culture and western events, so this is a part of Alberta's tourism industry as well, not to mention the fact that there are immense benefits that rodeo brings to the agricultural industry, specifically in livestock, feed, equipment suppliers, western ware retailers, saddlemakers, farriers, and the list could go on.

4:30

Horses bred to race chuckwagons, bulls for bull riding, horse training and trainers for all manner of events from roping to barrel

racing to all kinds of different things: the livestock industry in relation to rodeo is literally a world of its own, and until you've become part of it and begin to see it, you don't realize how great and important it is. It's a world that bolsters the grand Alberta heritage we should all be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, the social, the community, the economic benefits are absolutely crucial, but another aspect of rodeo is the display of competitive, frontier spirit, that built our province into one of the greatest places to live in the world. Exemplified at every rodeo is courage, physical prowess, precise animal handling, and an understanding of the relation between human beings and the animals that have been by our side for millennia. Rodeo shows us the camaraderie and the symbiotic relationship animals and humans share.

You know, I have to say that horses are extremely intelligent beings, and throughout our history horses have saved the lives of many, many people who got lost in a snowstorm, lost in the vastness of the country, and if they just give the animal its head, it will almost always just go home. They're smarter than we are sometimes.

As western Canadians rodeo represents a central aspect of our heritage and cultural identity. As human beings rodeo exemplifies the power, the beauty, the devotion of the animals we have been blessed to call our companions since the dawn of time. As Albertans we are privileged with the presence of these wonderful creatures. Some work with us, others provide us with devoted companionship, and others actually teach us a lot about life and how to live.

It's an honour and a blessing for our province to be the central hub of rodeo, a competition that portrays the unbreakable bond between us and the animals that have walked by our side for countless centuries. The community benefits of rodeo bring us closer together and strengthen the bonds between families and the culture they have inherited from their forefathers.

Economically rodeo bolsters our businesses that focus on festivity and has created an entire economy based around the animals that compete alongside the cowboys and the cowgirls in the many events we see every year in every corner of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support this bill. To the many Albertans who live and breathe rodeo: this bill is for you. We love and support rodeo for many reasons, and making it the official sport of our province is long overdue and only natural. Spring is coming soon, and with it we will get to enjoy the wonderful animals and amazing competitors who travel to this province from across the world to participate in what can only be described as the legendary rodeo industry. Personally, I can't wait.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and speak to Bill 205, Official Sport of Alberta Act. I appreciate all the comments that all members of the House have been speaking to in regard to rodeo, and I believe that, you know, having rodeo acknowledged in Alberta is an important step in helping to build and even expand the rodeo networks that we have here in Alberta. I know that COVID was extremely hard on many of the smaller rodeos that were happening across the province, so that actually impacted the number of people that were able to go and see and be able to experience the sport.

In talking to some of my stakeholders, because I am, obviously, the ag critic, one of the things that has come up in regard to this piece of legislation is actually just: how do we encourage and expand access to rodeo so that more people are participating in the

sport, so that more people have access to being an athlete in this area? What are some of the things that we could do?

I heard the hon. member in her opening comments around the bill, the Member for Camrose, speaking about the importance of the ag societies and how many of the ag societies are actually the ones that host many of these events and are the ones that understand the community and are able to be that liaison between introducing people that have never been introduced to rodeo as well as supporting those communities in having their own rodeos. I will say that I was pleased to see in this budget that there is infrastructure spending going towards ag societies to be able to upgrade and build on some of the infrastructure that exists, so that rodeos are able to build bigger grandstands and things like that are able to happen, and I think that's very important to see as a sign from this government that they are committed to supporting the sport.

Now, the downfall of that, Mr. Speaker, is that in the budget there was no money put in for ag societies to actually deliver any of these supports. The infrastructure will be there, but being able to fund and being able to deliver the services that ag societies do deliver in their local communities actually was not increased as requested. I find it a little bit disappointing, because I look at this piece of legislation and I look at what the government is saying in regard to wanting to support rodeo. Well, the smaller ag societies that put on these rodeos don't receive a lot of financial support from the government. The big 10 do – the big 10 ag societies do – but it's those smaller, local communities where we really want to be able to see the sport be supported and expanded. I've been to the Ponoka rodeo. It's a great event. It's very established, and it would be great to see some other communities around Alberta, that may not be as big, that may not be as established, be able to do that.

So I would hope that the government would reconsider in their budget making sure that ag societies actually have the assistance that they need to be able to provide those supports, because the infrastructure is not enough. They need the additional financial assistance to be able to put the event on. That would be one feedback that I would encourage the government to look back at and take back to their colleagues so that this can be a successful event across the province.

The other piece – I really agree, actually, with the hon. member that just spoke before me – was about the financial and the economic drive that many of these rodeos have for communities. I believe that being able to have these events go on brings people into smaller towns and communities and is able to help stimulate the economy in those areas. I'm a big believer in that, and I think that it's important that that continues to happen and that we're able to support those events and talk to the communities about what other opportunities there might be to be cohosting around those rodeos to bring in even more attraction and opportunity for that rural economic development.

I do believe that it's a good tool to start with. You have a rodeo, but then you look at: what else can we bring? Can we be supporting a local powwow, or could there be an opportunity to have a bigger, expanded farmers' market to support our local food and our producers in those neighbourhoods, in those areas? What other opportunities can we be doing to create – similar to what we see in some of the bigger and established rodeos, where they have the week-long events, are we able to support some other communities that are doing that, and what do they need to be able to make that happen? How do we expand the network, and how do we repeat or emulate the things that go on at the Ponoka Stampede? Obviously, we can't compete with Calgary's, but there are opportunities to be able to look at supporting other areas to be able to do the same thing.

Those would be some other things, I think, as consultation continues to go on. I don't think that, you know, introducing this

bill and just saying, "Well, this is our provincial sport," if this bill were to pass, is sufficient. I think that if the government is serious about introducing a piece of legislation that makes rodeo the official sport, then we need to make sure that we are introducing and supporting that sport. It has to be able to be expanding the sport, making sure infrastructure is there, providing education to people that may not have been exposed to rodeo before so that they want to attend and that they understand the history of rodeo, that they learn about the fact that the whole reason rodeo started was so that we could see the expertise that was used when handling animals and things like that, so that people who are from the city understand what is going on and that then they want to attend.

4:40

Looking at our 4-H clubs and being able to ensure that they are also supported through many of these ag societies, that they are receiving the support they need to support our younger people in still being involved in rodeo, and being able to get the experience and the access to even have an animal I think is very important. So there are many things that are connected to Bill 205 that can't just be simply: the official sport is rodeo. As my other colleagues have mentioned, there are other sports in the province, and their ability to, I guess, promote their sport is more accessible. I think there has to be a move by the government to figure out how they're going to promote rodeo.

Like, the Calgary Stampede is amazing. I spent 10 days there last summer talking to investors, talking to the athletes, talking to the veterinarians that work there about how well they take care of our animals and about all of the good things that come out of that. But what needs to happen is that we need to be able to make sure that it's not just the Calgary Stampede, that it's all the smaller communities that are doing this. It's making sure it's no different than the movement that's happening right now around the agrifood industry and agritourism. Rodeo could be built into that conversation around the agritourism, but it needs to be supported by the government to be able to do that.

Again, I would encourage the government, if this bill were to pass, to make sure that they come up with a plan and that they are supporting the sport, as we say, because the last thing we want to do is have our official sport not grow and expand and be the economic driver in these communities that it can be and ensure that people understand the sport and that all of those things happen. So there is a responsibility on the government to make sure that that happens, and I'd be very interested to hear from the members opposite about what conversations have happened within the government, what plans they have to support the economic driver, how they're going to promote the industry and make sure that people feel that they can access it, and then wrap around that economic potential that rodeo provides and grow it in working in partnership with our local communities around the farmers' markets and things like that.

Again, I think this is a good bill. It's just that I have a lot of questions about how it's going to be supported if it were to pass. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Other members? I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul has risen.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start by congratulating the member for being chosen for this bill, Bill 205, and having an opportunity to put it forward. I'd just remind the folks opposite that it is a private member's bill, and it's open to that member to choose what topic they would like to see put forward.

I'd like to thank the folks up in the gallery. I haven't seen this many cowboy hats in here since the Bill 6 debates back in the NDP days. It's great to see you guys here in the crowd.

I'd just like to take a minute to talk about my area, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, a big rodeo area. St. Paul on the long weekend in September: a shout-out to anybody that wants to come up and enjoy the Lakeland finals rodeo. It's a week-long event. There are pancake breakfasts. The community just gets onboard. Community businesses are all decorated in rodeo regalia. Like I say, there are pancake breakfasts. There's a beer garden on Saturday night that's – well, it's a bit of a riot; let's put it like that. One of the biggest parades that I attend as a rural MLA – and I probably hit eight or nine, sometimes 10 parades a year. At the one in St. Paul literally thousands and thousands of people line up there, and the rodeo folks get involved in it as well. It's a big thing. It's huge for our area.

The Bonnyville Ag Society as well: they have the rodeo and chuckwagon association that performs up there, and they put on a really good show as well.

Cold Lake and St. Paul both have bullaramas. Actually, you know, getting chosen for a private member's bill is kind of like pulling the right bull at the rodeo. I've been an MLA for eight years, and I've never made it to the top 10. It's really good. Again, congratulations on that.

Stony Lake Rodeo as well: these are really big things that have been in our communities for a very, very long time. I remember going as a kid. One of my fondest memories was going with my Uncle Ray to a rodeo in Spedden. I'll never forget it. They had a fellow there demonstrating. He had a bunch of sheep, and he came out there with two or three sheepdogs with little monkeys saddled and, obviously, tied on, because, boy, they could hang onto those sheepdogs when they were herding those sheep. It was the most entertaining thing I think I've ever seen. It should have been on film.

Ricky-Ticky Wanchuk, a rodeo clown from out in the St. Paul area: everybody knows him, and he's a highlight. He comes out to the rodeo there at least every year that I've been there, puts on a show. He's got his kids involved and family involved in it.

This is a big thing. Like I say, you know, for anybody in Alberta that doesn't think rodeo is a big sport and is something that should be recognized – and like I say, yes, hockey is big in my area, too. So is soccer, baseball. They're all huge. But this is a private member's bill, and I congratulate this private member, and I'll be supporting Bill 205.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Others wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 205? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 205. You probably don't want me to do it, and it might get me in trouble for unparliamentary language, but I was tempted to break out into *The Rodeo Song* here today, but I won't do that because I'm sure that you would be chastising me for some of the language in that particularly famous piece of musical work.

But what I did want to talk about a little bit was *Cowboy Ethics*. It's a book by James P. Owen, which is a great read, if anybody hasn't read it. It's a book, really, about principles and some issues that I'll address here. In fact, I know that this book is used by corporate Calgary in many cases to talk about how to conduct business in a way that, I think, you'll see reflected in what is known as the code of the west, that's embedded in that book and in many other things. There may be some lessons in there for us in this

House as well: how we conduct ourselves. The code of the west says: live each day with courage; take pride in your work; always finish what you start; do what has to be done; be tough but fair; when you make a promise, keep it; ride for the brand; talk less and say more; remember that some things aren't for sale; know where to draw the line.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we'll all reflect on that. These are principles of life that come from the cowboy and the western heritage that we're so proud to have in this province. As a proud born-and-raised Albertan myself I embrace, respect, and celebrate our western heritage and the cowboy culture. Full disclosure: I'm an urban cowboy but one who has been blessed to grow up, spend my whole life in Alberta and spend much time on many ranches in the Calgary region for brandings, horseback riding adventures, and – more full disclosure – shooting the odd gopher in some of the vast prairies and beautiful foothills of our province. I'm proud to have the much-storied Bow Valley Ranch, of William Roper Hull and Pat Burns fame, right in the heart of my constituency, in Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to wear our much-coveted and iconic Calgary symbol, the white Smithbilt hat. I've been proud to wear it around the world, in fact, and delighted recipients from Hong Kong to Washington, DC, quite recently, from Sydney, Australia, to Halifax, and from Bali to Boise with a gift of the same. Now, I use a little bit of a mythical hook. I say, "Once you put that hat on, it is a must – in fact, good luck – and an expectation that you are then committed to come to the Calgary Stampede," so I guess I'm doing a little bit of tourism boosting while I'm at it. However, I do guarantee them that if they come, they'll have a great time and enjoy this incredible spirit that we have of our western culture, western heritage, and, of course, the greatest outdoor show on Earth.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge those who suggest that we should get rid of it. I think there was an article in the paper recently talking about the hat, the white hat, as a symbol. But I defy anyone the power of being proud owners of such an iconic, global brand that is highly recognized around the world, coveted by leaders and dignitaries around the world who wear it and look pretty darn good in it as well.

Mr. Hanson: As long as you don't put it on backwards.

Mr. Gotfried: As long as you don't put it on backwards. Good point.

But it speaks volumes about who we are, where we came from, how we live, and the western, pioneering, agripreneurial spirit that we should all be proud of, not trying to distance ourselves from. These are things that we should be proud of. In fact, I talk about agripreneurial. We talk about being entrepreneurial in Alberta, but – let's be honest – it came from the agricultural sector, because when you couldn't fix something, you found the guy down the road who could, and next thing you know, he had a new business because he could fix your tractor and you could fix something else for him. That was the spirit of entrepreneurial. There was nowhere else to go than down the road to the neighbour who had that skill or developed that skill. That spirit is actually taken on into Alberta and into the culture that we have as entrepreneurs.

4:50

A little reminder for everyone. Everybody talks these days about certain brands and branding, talks about all that as if it's some highfalutin Wall Street kind of thing, but I would suggest that the makings of a global and societal obsession with the power of brand have maybe forgotten that it all started with a hot branding iron and

the smell of burning cowhide. Brand: that's what we have here in Alberta, and we should be darn proud of it.

Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to take representatives of our world-renowned rodeo and exhibition the Calgary Stampede along with Premiers, mayors, and economic development representatives from across our province to Hong Kong for the Chinese New Year parade in 2000-2001, and I can tell you that we had a heck of a time there: western heritage, spirit, hospitality; Alberta beef on a bun for 38 people one year; stampede breakfast for 10,000 people the next year. I can tell you that the representatives of our Calgary Stampede, our western heritage, and our First Nations were there in celebration of that time-honoured culture and our western culture and spirit as well. I can tell you that it was a pretty neat experience walking down Nathan Road, called the Golden Mile, in Hong Kong with my cowboy boots on and with some of our First Nations friends in full regalia walking down the street. I felt like I was in some kind of a weird movie. Maybe it was just after *Shanghai Noon* came out, I think. We had some fun with that.

A reminder again to consider the highly exotic and huge draw for visitors from around the world as witnessed by our demand for farm, ranch, and Indigenous tourism-related experiences. What we think of as everyday life here across the prairies is highly exotic to people from Europe and Asia, and we should not forget that we are exotic in our own right.

Further, and for the record, I'm personally a big fan of Calgary's old brand, the Heart of the New West, because I think that we are the heart of the new west, not just the geographical heart but the emotional heart, which I think speaks volumes about who we are in western Canada, here in Alberta, and with the roots that we are so proud to have. Now, that decision – that's my personal opinion – is up to city council and the citizens of Calgary, but I'm a Heart of the New West guy all day long.

Mr. Speaker, you may have guessed by now that I'm a fervent and proud supporter of Bill 205, the Official Sport of Alberta Act. As a lifelong fan of the rodeo, from its anchor position at the greatest outdoor show on Earth, the Calgary Stampede, of course, to the rodeos across Alberta, referenced by some of my esteemed colleagues here, from Ponoka to Pincher Creek, Strathmore to Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie to Teepee Creek, all across this province, I'm also proud to share my own personal favourite event. I was talking to some of the members in the lounge earlier. I've been attending the chuckwagon races since I was knee high and kind of sneaking back there as I got older, and I still love going to the chuckwagons. You know what? I guess, you know, in the rangeland derby, as we – those of us that are fond of that. That's turned into a huge event. Of course, the chuckwagon auctions are coming up, I think, on April 15 or something like that. That's always a spectacle, in fact, the barometer of Calgary's economy in many ways.

Bull riding is a close second. I love all the sports, so thanks to our visitors today for representing that great sport.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for Camrose and also the Member for Calgary-North for bringing this forward in the past. I strongly encourage all members of this Assembly to support this private member's bill, to remember where our roots are in this great province, and to put on our hats and our boots and our blue jeans and head off to the rodeo.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to Bill 205? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity just to say a few words around Bill 205, the Official Sport of Alberta Act. I just want to thank all of the presenters here today around this bill.

Certainly, it brings back lots of fond memories for many of us, myself included, growing up here in Alberta and participating as a spectator in many rodeos and gymkhanas over the years. You know, that's just part of a culture to look forward to in the summer, especially when you're young. I certainly did do lots of that and still do today here, mostly with the Calgary Stampede, I guess, but that's the biggest one of all, as far as the people of Calgary say. I think it's true. Probably I would say that the world rodeo competitions in Las Vegas are certainly, you know, one of the big ones as well. I know about all of these things.

I had a close relative that worked for the Calgary Stampede for quite a few years. He certainly kept us abreast of what was going on in rodeo not just in Alberta but right around the world as well, and certainly when we were younger, he kept getting us the odd ticket to go to the stampede, which was nice, and we always appreciated being able to do that as a family.

Also, of course, I mean, there's not just straight-up rodeos, Mr. Speaker, here in the province of Alberta, but you also have some individual rodeo events that take place as part of the agriculture shows that take place around the province. Perhaps the best known one is, of course, the pony chuckwagon races that will tour not just rodeos across the province here in Alberta but agriculture shows as well. Certainly, that was another highlight for my own family, going to the Vermilion Fair every year and watching the pony chuckwagon races and cheering on our favourite teams.

You know, I picked up a habit there, Mr. Speaker, and I didn't know – you can always plead innocence somehow – that apparently it's against the law to gamble on pony chuckwagon races. But, sure enough, that's kind of how we made the afternoon a little more exciting and did make some small wagers on the pony chuckwagons. I did take that same habit to the Calgary Stampede when I've been going back there as an adult and was surprised to see that people are not gambling for money in the grandstand of the Calgary Stampede quite as much as we did along the rail at the Vermilion Fair for the pony chuckwagons, but so it goes.

You know, I think it's important for us to always look at ways by which we can support the proclamations of something like an official sport – right? – which is one thing, but as my colleague from Edmonton-Manning mentioned, it's important to support these things in a broader context. I mean, like I said before, you have individual rodeo events at agriculture shows across the province, and we need to make sure that we are supporting those agricultural societies properly so that they can continue to host the various fairs that take place across the province and have a circuit by which not just rodeo events can follow but other bits of commerce as well like midways and people selling things at fairs and so forth.

You know, I've noticed in the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, that some of the pieces that make up a circuit are starting to be in jeopardy, right? And it's important that if you're missing one piece – for example, you're going from the Vegreville fair to the Vermilion Fair and something is missing in between or what have you – then you put all of the string of those events in jeopardy because you're missing one or two pieces along the way. I think it's incumbent upon us, if we are supporting an official sport like this in rodeo, that we're also putting something behind it, which is, of course, to ensure that these events have a venue and that those events are sponsored and supported and that you have a circuit that can function together as a whole, not just singularly, with rodeos and agriculture fairs in general.

Yeah. I mean, we have had a number of tries at an official sport for rodeo here in the province, in this Legislature, and, you know, I'm glad that the hon. Member for Camrose has brought this back to our attention. I definitely am supportive of this concept. I mean, we can do lots of ways by which to have different elements of a unique culture and sport sponsored and endorsed and promoted here in the province of Alberta, and it's sometimes good to reach back and see – something like rodeo has a combination of a cultural significance with rural roots but with lots of urban connections as well.

Of course, we had the rodeo here in Edmonton for quite a number of years. I was sad to see that, you know, it did get lost, but lo and behold it has popped back up in Red Deer now, so it lives well and will live on well for now and for the future. We still have the Farmfair here in Edmonton. Again, you know, it's good to remind ourselves what the agricultural roots are of some of these larger urban celebrations that we have in Edmonton and Calgary. I'm always pleased to note that the Calgary Stampede, which is at the heart a rodeo, is also an agricultural fair, and they've managed to maintain the agricultural element . . .

5:00

The Acting Speaker: I hate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, but the time for consideration of this item has been concluded.

If the members could just indulge me, we've had a request to return to introductions, so I'm going to look for unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek with introductions.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you some special guests today in the Chamber from Edmonton's and Alberta's Jewish community. I would like to read all the names, and after that if I could ask you to rise, that would be wonderful. We have representing broadly the Jewish Federation of Edmonton: Stacey Leavitt-Wright, Jacqueline Medalye, Doug Wolch, David Aaron, Abe Silverman, Benaron Glieberman, Liran Levin, Gillian Horwitz, Adam Zepp, Josie Coutain-Segall, Orkhan Shirinov, and Daniella Asbell. If I could ask you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Chamber.

Thank you.

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek on behalf of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Condemning Anti-Semitism

504. Mr. Gotfried moved on behalf of Mr. Yao:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly condemn anti-Semitism as defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary on May 26, 2016, with the Lieutenant Governor in Council adopting that definition on September 23, 2022, through its making of Order in Council 317/2022, to mean a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews along with rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals or their property or toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities; and be

it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to provide clear direction that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary's definition of anti-Semitism, along with its illustrative examples, be adopted by all ministries, publicly funded school boards and postsecondary institutions, public agencies, boards, and commissions, and other publicly funded, legislated, or regulated entities under the authority of the province so that these entities may better recognize and act against any instances of anti-Semitism as defined; and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the minister responsible

- (a) to prepare a report on an annual basis following each calendar year that sets out the level and extent of anti-Semitic acts that have been publicly reported to have occurred in the province during that year, and
- (b) to table in the Legislative Assembly, at that minister's first opportunity, the report referred to in paragraph (a).

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to move on behalf of and with gratitude for the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism.

Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, as an Albertan raised as an Irish Presbyterian but of proud Jewish heritage, I am perhaps well placed to be a champion for this motion. Indeed, in Nazi Germany, where the most heinous example of anti-Semitism reared its ugly head, resulting in the hateful murder of over 6 million men, women, and children, both I and my children would have been Jewish enough for a deadly one-way trip to the gas chambers, which was indeed the tragic fate of all my known relatives in German-occupied Poland. A cryptic knock or an SS boot on the door tore families apart and cruelly ended entire bloodlines forever, a reminder that fully 75 per cent of Holocaust survivors were the only members of their families that survived. Never again.

This reminds us that it is the responsibility of us all to combat a concerning surge into anti-Semitism and indeed other forms of racism. Hence, we must begin by clearly defining it. Because anti-Semitism knows no borders, it is important that Canadian institutions at all levels embrace the same definition to facilitate collective efforts to combat it. Significantly, over the past year Canadian governments and institutions continue to embrace the most authoritative, comprehensive, and representative definition of anti-Semitism that exists today, the IHRA, or International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, working definition of anti-Semitism, specifically to enhance education and awareness about the Holocaust. Mr. Speaker, to ensure the heinous crimes against humanity, perpetrated now almost 80 years ago by the hateful actions of cold-blooded murderers and, sadly, by the inaction of silence of so many who remained silently complicit, will never be forgotten now and by future generations for eternity because of the adherence to this definition.

Mr. Speaker, the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba all officially adopted the definition in 2022 while the government of British Columbia has expressed support for the use of the definition in B.C. These governments join Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick as well as the government of Canada, which all previously adopted the definition.

Today is our opportunity to add the voice and democratic will of this Chamber and the people we represent to this all-important initiative and to be sure we empower, enable, and encourage our government to ensure that the adoption of the IHRA definition carries the weight it deserves across our province, with particular

focus across all government departments and publicly funded legislated or regulated entities, as noted.

Mr. Speaker, 2021 saw a large spike in anti-Semitic incidents across Canada. The Statistics Canada 2021 report on police-reported crimes noted there were 884 hate crimes targeting religious minorities in the country, a jump of a shocking 67 per cent over 2020. Of that number, 487, or 56 per cent, of all police-reported hate crimes were aimed at Jews, who comprised slightly more than 1 per cent of the Canadian population. Anti-Semitism is on the rise in Canada, and new tools are needed to aid decision-makers, civil servants, and law enforcement officials to allow them to better recognize and react to acts of anti-Semitism. In fact, B'nai Brith Canada recorded 2,799 incidents nationally in 2021, the highest number since they began auditing anti-Semitic activity in 1982. Unfortunately, Alberta contributed significantly to the increase in anti-Semitic incidents in 2021 with the number of recorded incidents in the province rising from 95 in 2020 to 148 in 2021, a 55.8 per cent increase. Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, this is deeply concerning.

I'm grateful for the early outreach and initiatives of Michael Mostyn, chief executive officer of B'nai Brith Canada; Marvin Rotrand, national director, League for Human Rights, B'nai Brith Canada; and, locally here, Abe Silverman, manager of public affairs for B'nai Brith in Alberta; and the support received from Adam Silver, chief executive officer of Calgary Jewish Community Campus Corporation and co-president of the Calgary Jewish Federation; Jared Shore, president of the Calgary Jewish Federation; of course, our own Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton; Steven Shafir, director and past president of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton; and Rabbi Menachem Matusof of Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta.

And, of course, a list of supportive individuals and organizations too long to mention, but I will: Alberta Jewish program Edmonton; Alberta Jewish Pipeline; Aviv Israeli Folk Dance Association; Beth Israel synagogue; B'nai Brith Canada, Edmonton chapter; B'nai Brith Youth Organization; Camp BB Riback; Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University; Edmonton chapter, Canadian friends of Hadassah-WIZO; Chabad of Edmonton; congregation of Beth Shalom; Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation; Jewish Free Loan Association Edmonton; Edmonton Jewish Baseball League; Edmonton Jewish Hockey League; Edmonton Jewish seniors' centre; Edmonton Talmud Torah Society; Emunah women of Edmonton; Hillel of University of Alberta; Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta; community centre of Edmonton Jewish Family Services; Jewish Federation of Edmonton; Jewish National Fund, Edmonton chapter; Maccabi Edmonton; National Council of Jewish Women; ORT Edmonton, and I'm sure there are more.

On September 23, 2022, Order in Council 317/22, with thanks to then Premier Kenney and our Minister of Justice, the current Member for Calgary-Acadia, we enforced that Alberta is committed to defending human dignity and opposing racial, religious, and ethnic hatred in all its forms and recognized anti-Semitism as the most durable and pernicious form of hatred in human history. Therefore, the government of Alberta then endorsed and adopted the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism and noted that remembering the Holocaust is a moral obligation and that anti-Semitism, like all forms of racism and prejudice, has no place in Alberta.

In endorsing this internationally recognized definition, Alberta is doing its part to make sure we continue to learn from the painful history and promise never to repeat it. Our Minister of Justice reminded us at that time that Alberta's government is endorsing this definition of anti-Semitism to let the Jewish community know that

we stand with them against discrimination and will not tolerate hate in our communities. Further, the minister invited all Albertans to speak out against this hatred and help foster a more accepting province.

5:10

Rabbi Menachem Matusof reminded us that naming the hate we experience and standing together against it will make Alberta an even better, more welcoming place to live and worship.

Mr. Speaker, Adam Silver, the CEO of the Calgary Jewish Federation, noted that "with antisemitic hate crimes on the rise across the country, fighting antisemitism [should be] a priority – not just for the Jewish community, but for all Albertans and for all Canadians." We must be able to clearly define anti-Semitism and Jew hate in order to fight it, and the IHRA definition underpinned by its examples is a highly effective and well-respected tool that equips policy-makers, organizations, and those working to combat discrimination and racism against Jews with a usable, gold standard definition to guide their efforts.

Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, states that Alberta's order in council sends "a strong message that antisemitism has no place in society."

Hon. members, today is the day that we add each and every one of your voices and the 4.3 million voices of those we represent with encouragement for broad application across government and the public sector through your support of this motion to add to the weight of the strength of the IHRA definition.

Mr. Speaker, hon. members, I would like to conclude my opening remarks on behalf of the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo by thanking him for his commitment to the importance of this motion, by thanking all of the many members of Alberta's Jewish community and B'nai Brith Canada that both supported this motion and encouraged our efforts and patience to bring it forward for debate and hopeful passage, and by thanking all members of this Chamber in advance for their earnest and heartfelt support in our shared, nonpartisan fight against anti-Semitism, hatred, harassment, discrimination, and gratuitous violence in all its forms on behalf of Albertans.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Others wishing to speak to Motion 504? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anti-Semitism has no place in Alberta. In 2018 there was a string of swastikas painted across my riding in Edmonton-McClung, including one spray-painted at the Talmud Torah school. The swastikas spray-painted across west Edmonton inflicted fear and insecurity throughout the Jewish community. I heard from community members that they feared for their safety within their community and their children's safety at Talmud Torah school. Just a few days later I joined over a hundred community members with various religious beliefs who stood in opposition to this abhorrent, hateful act. This rally showed everyone in Alberta that we do not stand for the anti-Semitic hate held by a small number of people.

Unfortunately, acts of hate are only increasing and have become more brazen. The latest data shows a 47 per cent increase in police-reported hate crimes against Jewish people. This includes an incident of two Nazi flags flying on private property just outside of Boyle. We must do better to tackle anti-Semitism and hate, including calling out hateful rhetoric and radical conspiracies perpetuating hateful stereotypes of the Jewish people and making them targets of violent attacks.

Those who fly a Nazi flag or spray-paint a swastika at an elementary school do not choose to do this overnight, but it is from

being indoctrinated slowly through radical ideology. This hateful path may start by engaging with a Facebook post that contains dangerous rhetoric or a YouTube video shared by a friend. As people slowly consume more content focused on radical, anti-Semitic ideology, it empowers some to act out violently.

The non legally binding International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism is a good tool to help identify many forms of anti-Semitism. However, we need to use it appropriately. We should not impede or condemn comments against the actions of the state of Israel or an individual's belief in a two-state solution. I believe in a two-state solution, and the Alberta NDP supports a two-state solution.

We also need to make sure that if this definition is adopted across all ministries and publicly funded bodies, there is a prior consultation to ensure a broad understanding of what is and what isn't anti-Semitism. The IHRA definition is a non legally binding tool, and we must consult to make sure the tool is effective.

That is why we asked for unanimous consent for the ability to amend this motion. It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that consent was not granted by the Assembly. Had it been granted, the amendment would have ensured that prior to implementing this non legally binding tool across public bodies, this Assembly's recommendation would call for a comprehensive process of open discussion and consultation. This consultation would have provided opportunity for the public at large to feel confident that the IHRA definition was being properly implemented. While the motion will continue without that recommendation, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the government takes heed of the need to consult prior to a broad implementation, as urged in this motion.

We all agree that no longer anyone, anywhere wants to see Nazi flags and swastikas, and we need to work with the Jewish community so they feel safe in every corner of the province. As we affirm Alberta's support for the IHRA definition, we need to make sure it doesn't silence legitimate concerned voices while tackling hate speech, nor should it silence those who criticize a foreign government as they would criticize any other. We must allow people to speak out, but we cannot support those who turn that criticism into hate speech that can lead to violence. This will be a tough balance to maintain, but, Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe Albertans can make it work.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly humbled today to stand and speak in support of my colleague from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo's private member's Motion 504, Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism. I'm also grateful for the efforts of the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek in bringing this forward to the Chamber, and I'm grateful for Premier Kenney, whose inspiration brought this forward last fall as Order in Council 317/2022. I am proud to stand with the Jewish people across our province and with my friends and neighbours in Calgary-Glenmore against Jew hate.

The adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism: Alberta joined three other provinces – Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick – that have also done this. Just as a reminder for the Chamber, the working definition of anti-Semitism is: a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews; rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

But I also want to look at the word “anti-Semitism” and how many or most people understand it. The word “anti” – it's pretty obvious – means against. “Semitic” means relating to a family of languages that includes Hebrew and Aramaic and certain ancient languages such as Phoenician. Mr. Speaker, we can understand that when we speak of anti-Semitism, we are speaking about so much more than just language. That is one of the reasons why this working definition is so important. This definition speaks to a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews.

Now, when one goes to the website of the IHRA, the first thing at the top of the page is the name of the organization, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. What is this organization? IHRA, formerly the task force for international co-operation on Holocaust education, remembrance, and research, or ITF, was initiated in 1998 by former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. Today the IHRA membership consists of 35 member countries, each of whom recognizes that international political co-ordination is imperative to strengthen the moral commitment of societies and to combat growing Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism.

The IHRA's network of trusted experts shares their knowledge on early warning signs of present-day genocide and education on the Holocaust. This knowledge supports policy-makers and educational multipliers in their efforts to develop curricula and inform government officials and NGOs active in global initiatives for genocide prevention. So we see, Mr. Speaker, from the name of this organization that worked so hard to create this definition and its adoption across so many governments that it's very much rooted in the horror of the Holocaust, or the Shoah, and also the phrase: never again. You see, this definition is really about identifying anti-Semitism in an effort to assist individuals, citizens, and others in recognizing hateful behaviour and acts today that were the drivers for the Shoah 78 years ago and that act as warning signs for present-day genocide.

5:20

One might wonder, Mr. Speaker: why in today's day and age is this so important? Have we learned nothing? Well, I'm sad to tell this Chamber that in 2019 a survey conducted by the Azrieli Foundation reported that 1 in 5 youth in Canada had not heard of the Holocaust or did not know what happened in the Holocaust. One in 5. Further, B'nai Brith Canada, in its 2021 annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents, reported record numbers of anti-Semitic hate incidents in Canada, including beatings, vandalism of synagogues, and swastikas in school: 2,799 incidents – 2,799 incidents – an increase of 7.2 per cent from 2020.

How does this definition help to combat this? First, let's look at examples that accompany the definition. I think this is really important to understand, that this definition comes with examples to really illustrate what this actually means. Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel conceived as a Jewish collectivity; however, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic. Anti-Semitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for why things go wrong. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms, and action and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of anti-Semitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include but are not limited to calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion; making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical

allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a collective, such as especially but not exclusively the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy, or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government, or other societal institutions; accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group or even for acts committed by non-Jews; denying the fact, scope, mechanisms – for example, the gas chambers – or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II, also known as the Holocaust; accusing the Jews as a people or Israel as a state of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust; accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel or to the alleged priorities of Jews world-wide than to the interests of their own nations; denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, for example by claiming that the existence of the state of Israel is a racist endeavour, applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded by any other democratic nation; using the symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism – example: claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel – to characterize Israel or Israelis; drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis or holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel.

Anti-Semitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law; for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of anti-Semitic materials in some countries is criminal. Criminal acts are anti-Semitic when the targets of the attacks, whether they are people or property such as buildings, schools, places of worship, and cemeteries, are selected because they are or are perceived to be Jewish or linked to Jews. Anti-Semitic discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

When we adopt the IHRA definition and work across all Alberta public institutions, we are ensuring education and awareness around anti-Semitism, Jew hate, and the Holocaust. We are standing with the Jewish people of Alberta and everywhere, and we are setting an example and encouraging other jurisdictions to undertake the same. The unanimous support of this important definition will send a clear message that hate and anti-Semitism have no place in this or any society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Turton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today we gather to discuss this important motion that reinforces the Alberta government's commitment to supporting the Jewish community and fighting against anti-Semitic hatred, harassment, and incitement of violence. This is a crucial moment in our history as we are witnessing a rise in anti-Semitic incidents across the globe, including here in Alberta.

Last September Alberta's government endorsed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism, which describes anti-Semitism as a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews; rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions or religious facilities. This endorsement is a significant step in raising awareness on this issue and promoting a broader understanding of what constitutes anti-Semitism.

The motion we are discussing today is designed to further increase awareness of anti-Semitism and support the province's

Jewish community. It also aims to promote robust bipartisan debate on the issue while supporting broad dissemination of the definition amongst all publicly funded entities. Some of this work has already begun, for example, via Advanced Education to postsecondary institutions. It is important to note that this motion sends a clear signal to Albertans that anti-Semitism will not be tolerated.

All forms of racism are unacceptable, and Alberta's government and its agencies more broadly need to be committed to combatting racism, supporting racialized communities, and promoting a safe and welcoming province for everyone. As a society we have a responsibility to ensure that our communities are inclusive and safe for all. No one should be subjected to harassment or discrimination based upon their religion, ethnicity, or any other factor. We must stand united against hatred and bigotry in all of its forms.

The Jewish community has been subjected to persecution and violence throughout history, and it is unacceptable that this is still happening today. We must work together to combat anti-Semitism and create a more tolerant and inclusive society. The motion we are discussing today is an important step towards achieving that goal. It is a further signal of our government's commitment to providing understanding and tolerance to communities and to supporting those who have been affected by racism and discrimination.

According to a recent report by the Anti-Defamation League incidents of anti-Semitic harassment and violence in the United States have surged to unprecedented levels. The report states that there were a record number of incidents of anti-Semitism reported in the U.S. in 2020, the highest annual total on record since the ADL began tracking the data in 1979. The incidents included physical assaults, harassment, vandalism, and online attacks. Also, in Canada the number of anti-Semitic incidents reported in 2020 reached a record high according to a report by B'nai Brith Canada. The report found that there were 2,610 reported incidents of anti-Semitism in Canada in 2020, which is an 18.3 per cent increase from the previous year. The incidents included vandalism, harassment, and physical assaults as well.

Now, these alarming statistics highlight the urgent need for action to combat anti-Semitism. The endorsement of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism for all of Alberta's government agencies is a positive step in the right direction. It will help to raise awareness on the issue and promote a greater understanding of what constitutes anti-Semitism. Moreover, the motion to increase awareness of anti-Semitism and support the province's Jewish community is also an important initiative. It will help to ensure that the issue is taken seriously and that appropriate action is taken to address it.

According to the ADL report social media platforms were responsible for a significant proportion of the anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. The report found that there were more than 900 incidents of harassment and vandalism that were attributed to social media platforms. This highlights the importance of ensuring that social media platforms are held accountable for hate speech and other forms of online abuse.

The motion to support broad dissemination of the IHRA definition amongst all publicly funded entities is also crucial. It will help to ensure that public institutions are equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to identify and address anti-Semitism.

In addition to these initiatives, there are other steps that can be taken to combat this issue. For example, education plays a key role in promoting understanding and tolerance. Educational institutions can play an important role in promoting awareness of the issue and fostering a culture of inclusion and respect.

5:30

Furthermore, there is a need for greater collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector to address anti-Semitism. This can also involve initiatives such as joint advocacy campaigns, public awareness campaigns, and community engagement programs.

Now, in conclusion, the motion to support the Jewish community in fighting against this anti-Semitic hatred, harassment, and incitement of violence is an important initiative that is urgently needed in the current climate. By working together to combat anti-Semitism, we can create a more tolerant, inclusive, and safe society for everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Other members wishing to speak to Motion 504?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to close debate.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise before the House to give my final comments in support of Motion 504, Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism. I am proud to say that this motion reinforces our government's already strong commitment to fighting hatred and harassment in this province. Anti-Semitism, irrespective of however minor it is purported to be, hints to a sentiment that has led to countless acts of violence and discrimination against Jewish people and their communities and is something that has no place in our province or any society. Alberta's Jewish community should have no reason to be subjected to treatment that is at its core inexcusably reprehensible and dangerous.

The United Nations General Assembly designates January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as international remembrance day, but we must do more than honour those that lost their lives to hatred for one day. We must always remember those 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. We need to remember; otherwise, we risk reliving those horrors another day. Too often history repeats itself.

We currently live in an era where history is being erased by those that think they know better, erased by people who are of privilege, who stifle debate and discussion and, ultimately, understanding. A culture of wokeness exists that would deny the lessons of history, who attempts to erase the harsh realities where man has demonstrated traits that we do not wish to reinvigorate in the population. We need to be vigilant of those that would erase these hard memories. These deniers need to be stopped so that we can remember the horrors, so that we can assure that these atrocities never ever happen again.

This motion increases awareness of anti-Semitism to support the province's Jewish community and allow for robust, bipartisan debate on the issue while supporting broad dissemination of the definition amongst all publicly funded entities. This awareness will create a more inclusive and welcoming province for everyone, where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. By endorsing the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism, we are taking a critical step towards identifying and combatting anti-Semitism in all its forms. Mr. Speaker, our government's endorsement of this definition sends a clear message to Albertans that anti-Semitism will not be tolerated. We must work together to eradicate it from our society. By recognizing and confronting anti-Semitism, we can create a province where everyone can feel safe and welcome.

I want to emphasize that this motion is not only about the Jewish community. It is also about all forms of racism. We need to stand

up against all forms of racism, whether it be against the Jewish people, Muslims, Indigenous, Black, or any other racialized group. All forms of racism are unacceptable and have no place in our province or our society.

As someone of Asian descent growing up in communities where there were not many of said ancestry, it was at times difficult. Being on the receiving end of name-calling, bullying, prejudice, and, ultimately, discrimination is not a pleasant experience. It does impact a person's life; that much I can guarantee you. It is for reasons of my own personal experience that I can easily stand up for the Jewish community and denounce the racial hate that they endure.

As elected representatives of this province and our communities we have a responsibility to ensure that all feel safe and supported. It is our job to create policies and laws that promote Canadian and fundamentally Albertan values of acceptance and decency. We must do everything in our power to combat anti-Semitism and discrimination to create a more inclusive and just society for everyone.

I should also note that our good friend the Minister of Advanced Education, the MLA for Calgary-Bow, also encouraged our postsecondary institutions to embrace this policy. And I do wish to thank my good friend and colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for his devotion to this House and for all of his fine work in this Legislature. This piece, Motion 504, Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism, is his final statement and mine to the Alberta Legislature, a statement that demands that prejudice, racism, and discrimination have no place here in Alberta, no place here in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that this government and all its members are committed to combatting anti-Semitism, supporting our Jewish communities, and promoting a safe and welcoming Alberta for everyone. We will continue to work together to fight all forms of hate, including anti-Semitism, and to build a province where everyone feels valued and included.

With that, I would like to formally end this discussion on Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism and look forward to a strong, positive future in this province where Alberta's Jewish population can live in peace. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 504 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:36 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Hunter	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Issik	Schmidt
Carson	Jones	Schulz
Dach	Long	Singh
Feehan	Lovely	Stephan
Fir	Madu	Turton
Gotfried	McIver	van Dijken
Hanson	Milliken	Walker
Horner	Neudorf	Yao

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 0
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 carried unanimously]

Mr. Rutherford: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 14, 2023.

The Acting Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

Legislative policy committees will convene this evening and tomorrow morning for consideration of main estimates. This evening the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates of the Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta and Red Tape

Reduction in the Grassland Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:54 p.m.]

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