



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 20, 2023

Day 21

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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

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Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)	Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)
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Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
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Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)	Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)	Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)	Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC), Government House Leader
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)	Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP), Official Opposition House Leader	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC), Deputy Government House Leader	Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
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Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
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Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC), Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader	Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
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Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
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R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

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

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Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

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

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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

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

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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

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

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

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

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

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

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

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

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

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

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

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

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

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

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

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

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

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 20, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and 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 interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

Members we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Joemy Joseph. I 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.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
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

#### Francophonie in Alberta

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this year marks the 25th anniversary of Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, a nation-wide celebration of French-Canadian language and culture. Today, on International Francophonie Day, we recognize Alberta's vibrant Francophonie community.

The French language was integral to the development of our province, and it remains one of the most important and prolific languages in Alberta today. French is the first language of an estimated 88,000 Albertans, and more than 380,000 Albertans are of French descent.

I had the honour of hosting an event earlier this afternoon to celebrate the Francophonie culture. I am sure the members who were able to attend or watch online agree that each performance illustrates that music is the international, universal language that speaks to us all; truly beautiful performances on this important day, including our national anthem today.

Please proceed to your seats.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this morning I also had the privilege of meeting a very special guest, who is now joining us in the Speaker's gallery. Please welcome the high commissioner for New Zealand, His Excellency Martin Harvey. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Speaker has a number of introductions today, as do many members of the Assembly. I will

remind members that introductions are to be no longer than 20 seconds until one of you becomes the Speaker, at which point you have some leniency to take some additional time.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery today is our very talented singer, who led us in the singing of the national anthem earlier. Mr. Joemy Joseph lives in the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud but was born and raised in Haiti, came to Canada in 2014 with his wife, Laura Westfall, who also joins us. He has been passionate about singing since he was a young child, having recorded several religious albums in English, French, Spanish, and Haitian. He's currently a software engineer, musician, and full-time father of two young daughters. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also seated in the Speaker's gallery, it's my pleasure to introduce perhaps my very best friend on the face of the planet. He is one of the few people that I can call at 3 a.m. when I need to get out of a jam. He is a resident of the constituency of Highwood, my good friend Mr. Stephen John Schaufele. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise to introduce the five most important people in my life. I ask that they stand when their names are called: my parents, Andreas and Maria Nicolaidis; as well, my amazing wife, Michelle; and my two beautiful daughters, Eleftheria and Christina. I ask that they rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture has an introduction.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly very special guests here: Pierre Asselin, president of ACFA, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta; and Amy Vachon-Chabot; with Rheal Poirier, the executive director of the Francophone Secretariat. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome from this House.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you one of my constituents from Edmonton-South West, who is a recipient of the Queen's platinum jubilee medal, Don Patterson, as well as my younger brother, who is visiting from Nigeria, Henry Madu. Please rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has a school to introduce.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my pleasure to introduce the students of St. Augustine school in Ponoka. With them today is their teacher Sharon Hackett and one of her colleagues. To the students and the staff of St. Augustine school: please rise as I welcome you to the Legislative Assembly today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Decore has an introduction.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 32 more of some of the brightest young minds in the province, in the constituency of Edmonton-Decore, from St. John Bosco elementary school. I look forward to meeting them later on this week at School at the Legislature. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly 24 students from, in their words, the most awesome and bestest school in the entire province, Waverley elementary school. They are accompanied by their teacher Don Douglas. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my good friend Cara Burtis, who has recently relocated from Calgary to Calmar, Alberta – go, Oilers – her daughter Julia Burtis, and her niece Chloe Weslowski. Unfortunately, Katie Burtis couldn't join us today. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you a real mensch, Jeremy Prete, and his amazing wife, Sarah, and their boys Jake and Tyler. Together the Pretes run Epic, which is a youth centre in Cardston that runs after school programs, everything from basic etiquette to mental health awareness. I invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce you to some of the members of the Edmonton Raging Grannies, who are here in attendance. Please rise as I say your names: Anna Novikov, Cassie Aziz-Few, Marilyn Gaa, Edda Loomes, Audrey Brooks, and Louise Swift. They're here to gather and protest in solidarity with other women from across the province and to stand up for Alberta families. Thank you so much for being here.

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

**1:40**

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to introduce to you and through you two constituents from the great riding of Leduc-Beaumont, Anna and Krystle Linic. If you could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Member Irwin:** On behalf of our fabulous MLA for Lethbridge-West I am so very happy to introduce the feisty five from the Lethbridge Raging Grannies. Please join me in welcoming Barb Phillips, Maria Fitzpatrick, Karen Gay, Judy Millard, and Gerry Dyck.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you councillor Sonny Rajoo from Two Hills; councillor Elroy Yakemchuk from the county of Two Hills; as well as Ruven Rajoo, former school board trustee; Jan Rajoo, St. Paul education trustee; and their girls: Xylia, Xaraya, and Xianna. I'd also like to note that Sonny, Elroy, and Ruven are all Queen's platinum jubilee medal recipients. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North has a statement to make.

### Premier's Summit on Fairness for Newcomers

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I had the honour of attending the Premier's Summit on Fairness for Newcomers. After the first launch last year the summit now provides an annual opportunity to connect, learn, and initiate positive action. Alberta has a rich and diverse cultural landscape, and we are proud to be leading the way in the important work of creating a more open, inclusive, and educated province. The government of Alberta is committed to ensuring that every newcomer can reach their highest potential and has access to the supports they need to help them integrate into this province that they now call home.

This includes the ability to build rewarding careers to support themselves, their families, and communities. This journey for newcomers comes with numerous struggles, many of which still affect many newcomers to this day. Eliminating barriers such as unemployment, underemployment, education recognition, and settlements is crucial to support newcomers' success and drive economic growth. Newcomers deserve reassurance that they are embraced and valued in the workplace and the community.

A key focus for this year's summit was listening. Throughout the program there were numerous opportunities to listen to each other. It is through listening, Mr. Speaker, that we better understand the perspectives of others. Every newcomer, regardless of their role, has something unique and worthwhile to contribute. Each one of us has the opportunity to listen and to learn. My hope is that we will enrich ourselves in knowledge and in awareness and be ready to act.

I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to the panelists, presenters, and participants for this year's summit as well as to the many staff and volunteers who brought this event to life. Your contributions are valued and help us to build a better ...

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

### New Democratic Party Policies

**Ms Sigurdson:** On December 14, 2022, something wonderful happened. I became a grandmother for the very first time. My grandson, Henry, was born to my eldest son, Maxwell, and his wife, Emily. As all grandparents know, a grandchild brings much joy to families. There are, of course, the jokes about just being around for the fun part of helping Henry grow. The parents are responsible for soothing him when he cries and getting up at night to care for him; grandmothers get to cuddle and play when he's in a good mood. Seriously, though, beyond the intimate connection I have with him, I want our society to be vibrant and caring so that Henry is supported to fulfill his dreams.

As a grandmother and a member of the Alberta Legislature I know the kind of province in which I want Henry to grow. In fact, I've worked my entire life to ensure all Albertans have opportunities to achieve their dreams. Creating a fair, inclusive, and equal society has been my life's work. Before being elected, I did this work through my profession as a social worker. For more than 30 years I worked to support vulnerable Albertans. However, there came a point in my career when I knew I needed to address the difficulties before me and my clients at a higher level. That's when I decided to seek public office.

I'm so proud to be part of the Alberta New Democrat caucus, a caucus that shares these values of fairness and justice. An Alberta NDP government will ensure that all Albertans have equal opportunities. We will protect and improve public health care so that Henry and all Albertans have a family doctor and never have to pay out of pocket to see a doctor. An Alberta NDP government

will help families manage the cost of living by getting their utility, insurance, and tuition costs under control. An Alberta NDP government will work with business and the energy sector to grow our economy with good jobs, more training, and more innovation. This spring election is an opportunity for Albertans to choose a government that will create a vibrant and caring society. Vote Alberta NDP for Henry and all Alberta's grandchildren.

### Women's and Girls' Participation in Sport

**Ms Fir:** Mr. Speaker, I am by no means a great runner, but on March 8 I was given an inspiring reminder of how I do have that right and ability. In many parts of the world women and girls are not able to go for a run outside. When Zainab Hussaini tried to go for a run in Afghanistan, people threw rocks at her, insulted her, and threatened her. They believed that because she was a woman, she should not be allowed to run outside. But Zainab had a goal to become the first Afghan woman to complete a marathon in Afghanistan. When she ran, she felt free, and she wanted every woman in Afghanistan to have that experience. So despite the challenges she faced, she trained for the marathon in secret in a small, enclosed courtyard not much larger than the average one-bedroom apartment, running in loops over and over so she could make a difference. Against all odds and facing threats to her life, in 2015 she became the first Afghan woman to run a marathon in Afghanistan and, in doing so, was an inspiration to so many.

Zainab and women like her are why the 93rd Girl Guide unit with Girl Guides of Canada chose to participate in the Secret 3K run, a Canadian organization promoting girls' participation in sport. By exercising their right and ability to walk and run freely within Canada, these girls honour those who do not have that freedom. I was happy to personally sponsor my constituency manager's daughter and her amazing Girl Guide group for the run. The event is an opportunity to reflect on the courage and determination of women and girls world-wide. Nations thrive when women are allowed to fulfill their true potential.

In Alberta our government is committed to uplifting female athletes. We support women in sport through the podium fund, through recreation grants, and by providing funding to organizations like the InMotion Network. To Zainab, to our Girl Guides, and to all female athletes who are paving the way for all girls around the world to participate in sport: Alberta stands with you.

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

### Government Record

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP opposition is at it again, this time claiming that crop insurance premiums will be increasing by 60 per cent. This type of fearmongering and misrepresentation of the facts is just one of many reasons why the NDP will never be able to provide stability or security to Alberta. But I'm not here to indulge in the NDP and their alarmist rhetoric. As a lifelong farmer and the parliamentary secretary for agrifood development I'm here to set the record straight about what our government is really doing for the agriculture industry.

Our government has spoken out against the federal carbon tax and federal fertilizer reduction targets. We've provided MELT exemptions to farms amidst driver shortages. We've negotiated millions in agriculture funding through a five-year sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. We've increased the feeder

association loan guarantee program from \$100 million to \$150 million. We've invested \$3.2 million into solution-seeking projects through Alberta Innovates, \$4 million into agrifood recovery support due to supply chain disruptions, \$3.7 million into agrifood education expansion, a projected \$150 million into the twinning of highway 3, \$933 million, Mr. Speaker, towards irrigation expansion and modernization, just to name a few.

As a result, we've seen major producers like McCain choose to double the size of their Alberta facilities. Alberta has attracted \$1.5 billion in new agrifood investment. We have created 3,000 agriculture jobs for Albertans. Mr. Speaker, we've proudly hit every expansion target that this administration set for the agriculture industry and then some. Building on this momentum, our government has projected the creation of 9,000 jobs and \$5 billion in agrifood investment. The agriprocessing investment tax credit will be instrumental in helping us achieve that goal.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

#### Misericordia Community Hospital CT Scanner

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day in Alberta when ER doctors are forced to beg this UCP government just to get one imaging machine fixed. Doctors at the Mis say that the CT scanner is so broken and unreliable, it means that hundreds of patients are being transferred every month it's down, causing both serious delays in treatment and more EMS transport calls that should be avoidable. ER doctor Jarrod Anderson says, quote: that in and of itself is completely asinine. End quote. UCP spokespeople say that the Premier won't fix it. A simple question to the Premier: why not?

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

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I learned when Dr. John Cowell was appointed the official administrator is, in point of fact, that there were a lot of things that we needed to fix in the health care system, and through the direction of the doctor, the Minister of Health, and our newly appointed CEO, Mauro Chies, we've begun addressing these issues one at a time. Part of the issue that we face, I think, is that there's sometimes miscommunication between the front line and the decision-makers, and I'm confident that we're going to be able to solve these issues as we go forward.

**Ms Notley:** Well, the solve would just be to say: sorry; it's going to get fixed.

Over the past year multiple staff at the Mis counted almost two months that the machine was not functional. Dr. Anderson says that even after the emergency room upgrades, without fixing this machine, quote: you're immediately going to hamstringing us from being able to do our job properly. End quote. So to the Premier: why is Alberta spending \$65 million to update the Mis emergency room and still not fixing the broken scanner? How does this make any sense at all?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we're working through the problems one at a time, and in point of fact we discovered that there were 55 operating rooms within our public hospitals that were not in operation, including one that was out of operation in Camrose simply because the HVAC needed to be fixed. These are the kinds of things that we're discovering now that we have got Dr. John Cowell in place as our official administrator. I work very closely

with him as well as the Health minister and the new CEO, Mauro Chies, and we'll be able to address these issues as we find them.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, these folks have been in charge for the last three and a half years, regardless of when Dr. Cowell showed up.

Now, Dr. Anderson said that it is difficult to get some patients the necessary CT scans within the recommended four-hour window for proper stroke care. This includes delaying treatments that would otherwise reverse the effects of strokes. Now, Mr. Speaker, if even one Albertan avoids lifelong disability, quite frankly, the investment is worth it. This is for a whole hospital. Will the Premier today reverse her decision and commit that this machine will be replaced?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, proper governance is that we let the CEO make decisions overseen by an official administrator, and the nice part about having an official administrator in place is that I and the Health minister are able to raise these issues. So I'll be raising the issue with Dr. Cowell. I'll be happy to get back to her.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Hundreds of doctors have been raising the issue, Mr. Speaker.

#### Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

**Ms Notley:** Now, meanwhile the Alberta NDP has recently proposed a life-changing policy for women's health care, universal access to contraception at no cost, yet for more than a week now this Premier has refused the idea, arguing that somehow it's about choice. Last week she said, quote: we want to make sure there's a full range of coverage, and that's the reason we continue to support choice. Mr. Speaker, if the choice is between free-coverage NDP and the pay-more UCP, why won't the Premier just admit that the best choice for Alberta women is to vote NDP?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said many times before, Alberta's government supports protecting choice for women, accessing reproductive health care services and products in Alberta. We have coverage for many contraceptive drug and health products. It's provided to Albertans who are enrolled in government-sponsored drug and supplemental health benefits plans. It includes oral contraceptives. It includes injectable contraceptives. It includes intrauterine devices and other support for women in their reproductive health care choices. We're quite happy to provide this level of support.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this goes to the heart of who this Premier is. She doesn't understand the conceptual difference between universal free health care and health care people pay for out of pocket. That's why she can't answer this question.

Now, Cathy\* says: I have a great plan, but it doesn't cover IUDs. Diane\* says: relying on private insurance will again leave out some of our most vulnerable women. And Joanne\* says: someone should inform our Premier that very few young women have their own private health plan coverage. Why is the Premier ignoring these women?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite well knows that the Canada Health Act ensures that no hospital services and that no doctor services are paid for out of pocket. We do know also

because she has a health spending account, along with all the other politicians who are in this Chamber, that covers all the variety of things that are not covered by health care. This is the reason why we support having lots of options. That includes both public as well as private so that women are covered in the full range of choices that they make, and we're going to continue to support that choice.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, for so many women the choice to pay is no choice at all. J.J.\* says: money should never be a barrier to accessing birth control. Rhiannon\* says: if it was free, I'd have saved enough to pay my student loans or put a down payment on a house. And Rebecca\* says: including contraception in health benefits is what true equity looks like; I can't wait for May 29. Me neither because that's when Albertans will get better universal public health care, no question.

**Ms Smith:** I didn't hear a question there, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago the Ontario labour minister announced that they were expanding WCB coverage of firefighters impacted by two specific types of cancer. What's more, Ontario made the coverage retroactive all the way back to January 1, 1960. This government now for weeks has been claiming that it is impossible to provide retroactive coverage specific to the heroes of the Fort McMurray wildfire. Now, this government has had a few weeks to look at what Ontario is doing. Will they follow their lead and support our amendment so that not a single hero from the Fort McMurray wildfire has to fear not being covered?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I'm tired of the member opposite playing politics with this issue. You know who was in power when the one member died in the Fort McMurray fire? That minister. That government was in power. That member was the minister. She had the opportunity then to make it retroactive. She did nothing. This government is actually doing the right thing. We're not going to follow Ontario and do the wrong thing; we're going to do the right thing. That's what this government is all about, being smart and caring.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, that minister has been part of this government for four years, and they have done nothing to support these workers.

The UCP seems to think that it's a small number of firefighters who will not benefit from Bill 9 and that they've done enough. On this side of the House we believe that every firefighter who went to fight the Beast should be covered. The UCP talks about a fairness process, but real fairness would be to pass our amendment and ensure that not a single firefighter or their family is forced to fight a bureaucracy to have their claim covered. Is the Premier truly interested in fairness for firefighters, and if so, will she overrule this minister and make sure they get coverage?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the WCB in Alberta follows the principle that today's employers must pay for today's claims. Now, the issue is retroactivity, but the truth is that the solution is the fairness process in the WCB. The WCB there is for employers. This member is playing politics, and she knows that there is only one possible member that might have been covered by the retroactivity, and that member knows that that member died on her watch. Why didn't she come forward then and deal with

\*These spellings could not be verified at the time of publication.



retroactivity? She knew it was the right thing to do not to deal with it that way.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the Ontario labour minister said when announcing retroactive coverage that it was important that front-line workers get the care they need, and we agree. The Conservative government of Ontario has provided retroactive coverage going back 62 years, but this UCP government can't bring themselves to provide retroactive coverage for seven for a unique, catastrophic event. It's not too late to do the right thing. We can pass this amendment together. Will the Premier support our amendment to provide coverage for all of these brave Albertans, or does she think it's their fault for developing cancer?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we are a smart and caring government. That's why we're here on this side of the House. The people of Alberta rejected them because they had chances to make serious amendments to different pieces of legislation and they didn't. What they want to do instead is play politics with firefighters' lives. I'm not going to do that. We're going to make sure the fairness process is there. We're sending a clear message to WCB that they better cover these firefighters. They know it. We know it. Why won't they get onboard and cover it and support our firefighters?

#### 2:00 Energy Company Liability

**Mr. Schmidt:** I've heard loud and clear from Albertans that they don't want this Premier handing over \$20 billion to bad actors to clean up messes that they are already legally responsible to clean up. I know the Premier and every member of the UCP cabinet and caucus have been hearing this feedback from Albertans as well. I have a motion before the House later today, an opportunity for all MLAs to uphold the principle of polluter pay and to condemn any use of public revenue to pay off companies to do something that they're already legally required to do. Will the Premier support this motion?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I do support the concept of polluter pay. It's part of the reason why this government, starting this year, has required all energy companies to spend 3 per cent of their liability cleaning up their existing well sites, \$740 million, and it's going to be increasing year after year by 9 per cent per year. They're going to be spending their own money cleaning up their own liability. We know that we have a \$30 billion liability, and we've got to get started.

They had the opportunity to come through with a similar type of program when they were in power; they chose not to. We're going to make sure that we have the investment there so that we can clear the liability.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I'm quite proud of the fact that we didn't start a \$20 billion giveaway to oil and gas companies to clean up their messes.

The UCP has a nasty habit of refusing to debate issues that highlight how totally out of touch they are with regular Albertans. When my colleague brought forward a motion opposing separatism, the UCP used procedural tricks to make sure that MLAs never got a chance to speak to it. It's deeply antidemocratic and disrespectful to private members and the Albertans who sent us to the Legislature. Will the Premier instruct her House leader that there will be no procedural tricks this afternoon and that all MLAs will be able to vote on this \$20 billion giveaway to oil and gas?

**The Speaker:** I know that the hon. member knows that question period is the time to ask about government policy. This seems to be a question specifically addressing private members' business,

which isn't the purview of the government, but if the Premier wants to answer it, she's welcome to do so.

**Ms Smith:** I think debating the issue of the outstanding liability on our inactive well sites is important. I've been thinking it's important since I first started talking about it, all the way back in the 1990s. As a result, as a landowner lobbyist, you bet. As a landowner advocate, I think landowners deserve to have these well sites cleaned up. Landowners deserve to know that they're going to be investing year after year in making sure these inactive sites are finally taken care of once and for all. It's unfortunate that too often they've just been pushed forward decade after decade. We're not going to let that happen anymore.

**Mr. Schmidt:** It's unfortunate that this Premier wants landowners to pay oil companies \$20 billion to clean up the problem. On this side of the House we oppose the giveaway of \$20 billion of Albertans' money to a small group of the Premier's friends. But Albertans want to know where their UCP MLAs stand. They want to know which MLAs are in favour of handing over \$20 billion to a small number of bad companies who have failed to clean up their own messes. Will the Premier allow a free vote of all of her MLAs, including cabinet ministers, on this motion this afternoon?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, if you do the math on what it is that we're requiring energy companies to pay out of their own pocket year after year, \$740 million this year, increasing 9 per cent year after year, within 20 years, maybe 25, we should be able to address the \$30 billion inactive well site liability. The approach that we've taken as a government has been to make sure that we're holding these energy companies to account, and that's what we're going to continue to do. I think this is a very important issue to debate. I just wish they'd take yes for an answer. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge has a question.

#### Support for Newcomers

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Immigrants are key to continuing Alberta's economic success. They come to our province and bring skills that help labour shortages in key sectors and help local economies. Last week Alberta's government held the Premier's Summit on Fairness for Newcomers. At this conference immigrant-serving organizations and nonprofits gathered to discuss how we can better serve newcomers in our province. To the Premier: can you tell Albertans, especially new immigrants, what the government learned at this conference and how the government is moving forward to support newcomers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that great question. The member is correct to say that newcomers are paramount to Alberta's success. I heard from newcomers and immigrant-serving agencies how we can better support them when they arrive in Alberta and how the programs we already have in place are working to help these newcomers settle in our province. We are working hard to attract and retain newcomers in the province, and I have good news: it is working.

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

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Deputy Premier. Given that Alberta's government has made it a clear priority to increase immigration into the province through the

Alberta advantage immigration program and given that Alberta has received a substantial increase to the number of nominations through AAIP and given that newcomers are the key to Alberta's continued success, to the Deputy Premier: can you please inform Albertans what this government is doing to ensure that these newcomers have the tools and resources for Albertans?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, we are laser focused on helping newcomers settle in our great province. With the increase to AAIP nominations, we will need to continue to support newcomers as more of them make their way to Alberta. At the summit our government announced that Budget 2023 will provide \$23.8 million for vital settlement and language support. In addition, Budget '23 is providing \$27.3 million for displaced Ukrainians fleeing Putin's war machine, and for them, we have changed the AAIP program to prioritize newcomers with close family connections in the province to ensure that when newcomers come to Alberta, they have the support they need.

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

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Deputy Premier for the answer. Given that Alberta is a province where many people of all nationalities, cultures, and religions come together to create a province that truly embodies multiculturalism, once again to the Deputy Premier: can you please inform Albertans what is being done to tackle racism and hate in the province and what this government is doing to ensure that everyone, from all walks of life, feels welcome and safe in Alberta?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, we condemn all forms of racism, hate, and prejudice. We have done a lot to tackle racism. Let me list some of the things that we have done. We are working closely with the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council to help shape policy and learn from lived experiences. At the summit we announced \$8 million over three years for the new and groundbreaking ethnocultural grant, \$1.5 million over three years to fund the continuation of the multiculturalism and antiracism grant program. We are establishing the Premier's council on multiculturalism, and much more to be done.

#### Anaesthesia Care

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, surgeries are being cancelled and delayed across the province due to a shortage of health care workers. This is a crisis that's a direct result of the UCP's war on health care. The biggest bottleneck in the system is the ongoing shortage of anaesthesiologists, indispensable members of surgical teams that the UCP have made it harder to recruit and retain. Now, recently I've heard concerning reports that anaesthesiologists are being sent out of public hospitals to go work in privately run clinics. To the Health minister: is he aware of any plans whatsoever by the government or AHS to pull anaesthesiologists out of our hospitals to work in private surgical clinics?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We have one public health system. Alberta Health Services has contracted with a number of chartered surgical facilities to continue to be able to provide surgeries. The most recent example is in regard to hip and knee surgeries in Calgary. AHS assigns the doctors to do them – so they may be at the Rocky – as well as the anaesthesiologists. Anaesthesiologists are being assigned to chartered surgical facilities, but this is part of our overall approach to get caught up on surgeries.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that I'm hearing these plans to pull doctors out of Alberta hospitals are driven by contracts that guarantee a certain number of cases and the staff to perform them if needed and given that that type of contract would provide all the reward to private clinic owners and pile all the risk and delay onto our hospitals and Albertans waiting for surgeries, can the Health minister tell Albertans if he has approved such contracts, contracts like that, that would result in private operators getting rich at the expense of Albertans left to wait longer for their surgeries?

2:10

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, the assumptions that the hon. member is making are simply incorrect. This is one public system. It is publicly funded and publicly administered. We have made agreements with chartered surgical facilities to expand the capacity to be able to do surgeries. We've had success in doing this with ophthalmology. We are having success in driving down the times in waiting for hips and knees. We are assigning the same doctors, whether they're at the Rockyview, the Foothills, or a chartered surgical facility in Calgary, for example. It's the same doctors, the same anaesthesiologists, and we're getting success for . . .

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that I didn't hear a no and given that contracts like that would be designed purely for private clinics to profit from and not to promote the health of Albertans and given that one of the ways that's done is by sending only the simplest, lowest risk surgeries to private clinics, leaving the most complicated and hazardous procedures for the public system, and given that Albertans have a right to know how their health dollars are being spent, a simple question for the Health minister: will he commit to releasing all of the contracts signed with these private surgical clinics? Yes or no?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, sadly, that question demonstrates a lack of understanding by those on the other side in terms of how our surgical system works. This is a single public system. It's publicly paid for, publicly administered. Even though we're using chartered surgical facilities, that's to expand capacity to get surgeries done, because, quite frankly, Albertans are waiting far too long, but we're making progress. In fact, by using chartered surgical facilities, not only are we reducing the wait times, but we're actually reducing the costs. But it's the same doctors, the same anaesthesiologists in our entire system. We're making progress, and we're going to continue to do so.

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

#### Content on Somalia in Educational Curricula

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few hours ago we announced that, if elected, Alberta's NDP government will create a Somali curriculum for Alberta schools. The Somali community is growing significantly in Alberta, and we want to make sure Somali students have an opportunity to learn their language and culture in Alberta classrooms. I am so proud to be an MLA with a party that acknowledges and values creating and championing diverse curriculums and cultures for Alberta students. To the current minister: why didn't the UCP?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to announce to all of the Assembly here that that's what our school authorities do each and every day. They have the ability to react and

to promote the languages that are within their schools. In fact, in my former school division we had over 53 different languages being spoken, and the school authorities themselves, when there's a large community, will actually introduce language instruction, language culture. They're announcing nothing, really.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that that's false and given that creating a Somali curriculum is about celebrating the vibrant language and culture of Somalia while ensuring that youth are supported in their learning in Alberta schools and given that we in the NDP are committed to making sure that all students in Alberta schools have the tools they need to be supported and given that that clearly hasn't been a priority under the UCP, we are committed to offering a Somali curriculum. Why didn't the current Education minister or anyone in the UCP make this a priority? They've had four years.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, school authorities have the flexibility to develop or acquire locally developed courses to address particular student and/or community needs, including language and culture courses. We do that on an ongoing basis in education each and every day. We celebrate every community: the Somali community, the Filipino community. The member opposite made an announcement a week or so ago on the Filipino community, but you know what? I had an opportunity to speak to the consul general of the Philippines. We had a great conversation about what we can do.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the UCP's curriculum set off alarm bells for students, staff, and families due to its Eurocentric approach to history and its lack of cultural diversity and given that Alberta's diversity is our greatest strength and should be reflected in our curriculum and given that we are honoured to work with educators, parents, and community leaders to ensure that Somali customs, traditions, language, and song are taught in Alberta schools, can the current minister explain why she would rather spend time defending Chris Champion and his backwards curriculum instead of offering students a chance to learn about the many cultures and languages and histories that make Alberta such a great place?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll defend our curriculum any day of the week, because it is knowledge rich. It allows for students to learn. They want students learning from decades-old curriculum. The science curriculum: 1996, for heaven's sake. That's what they want. Our curriculum, in fact, had more to address antiracism. The previous draft from the previous government: zero on antiracism. We actually have more to celebrate communities. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.  
The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Rural Mental Health Services

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every young person in Alberta deserves the opportunity to access mental health supports, access treatment, pursue recovery, and live a healthy life. Since being elected as the MLA for Livingstone-Macleod, I frequently hear of the struggles that rural Albertans, especially students, are facing when trying to access mental health supports. To the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction: how will Budget 2023 increase

accessibility to mental health supports for rural Albertans and ensure that more families will get the help that they need and deserve?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supporting all Albertans in their pursuit of recovery from mental health challenges is a priority of my ministry. We're supporting funding to Counselling Alberta to expand mental health services so Albertans, especially in rural areas, can get accessible and affordable counselling services. We've also increased funding to 211 to better connect callers to locally relevant supports, including in rural communities. We will continue to expand services to support more Albertans in their pursuit of recovery.

I want to thank the hon. member for the timely question given the fact that we have the Rural Municipalities of Alberta spring convention on . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for his answer. Given that the government will invest \$92 million over three years to provide critical mental health supports for children and youth across Alberta in partnership with CASA Mental Health and given that the Livingstone Range school division in my riding recently received a grant to provide students in southern Alberta with a new and innovative mental health pilot program, what other approaches is the government taking to address the mental health needs of young rural Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2023 contains record-level investments for my ministry, \$275 million in total. Contrast that with – in 2019, when we came in, that was only \$87 million according to the line item under them, so huge gains to fix problems that were left behind courtesy of the NDP. However, I do want to mention, as spoken by the hon. member, that, yes, just recently we announced \$92 million in funding for CASA Mental Health to expand youth mental health supports to ensure youth across Alberta can receive treatment closer to home.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that students in rural communities have a hard time accessing mental health supports in their communities and given that our teachers often bear the burden of trying to provide mental health supports in our schools, to the same minister: how will pilot projects like the one in Livingstone Range school division be evaluated and implemented in other schools across the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Over the next two years Alberta Education is supporting close to 60 mental health pilots across the entire province to improve K to 12 student well-being. Each of these community-based projects is unique and will bring school authorities, mental health service providers, and other local organizations together to directly address the underpinning issues. I look forward to reviewing the outcomes of these pilots along with

the Minister of Education, and I just want to say that this is a perfect example to underscore just how important youth mental health services are to this government.

### Small-business Support and Employment Training

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, this government claims that they are investing in the economy and boosting job growth. While we see millions and millions in corporate handouts to big businesses, the UCP budget shows that their actions don't match their words. We all know that the backbone of Alberta's economy is actually small business, and the lack of support this government is providing to support Alberta small businesses is appalling. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development: why are you leaving small-business owners behind?

**Mr. Jean:** Interesting question coming from this particular member, Mr. Speaker, and his creativity with small-business enterprises.

But, Mr. Speaker, 97 tax increases in four years from the NDP, a carbon tax – a surprise – on everything: I don't think this member or the party that he used to belong to until he was removed have anything to talk about on small businesses at all.

2:20

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister clearly has nothing to say about the issue with any substance and given that small-business owners continue to say that there isn't enough support, that costs such as inflation continue to threaten their livelihoods and families, to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development again: can you explain to small-business owners why more funding and resources aren't being invested into expanding programs like the Alberta jobs now program, which is actually aimed at creating jobs?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the member may not be aware. If he came to the House more often . . .

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jean:** . . . he would recognize that the parliamentary secretary of small business is actually doing a tour across Alberta to find out exactly what small businesses need right now, Mr. Speaker. What they don't need more of is the NDP. Let's be clear; 97 tax increases along with that special surprise called the carbon tax on everything did not help at all. What is helping is a government that is laser focused on making sure that there is enough labour here in Alberta to fill the jobs, and there's just not. We need more people. Come on out to Alberta; there's a job waiting for you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister is a learned member of this Assembly, and he'll know that referring to the presence or absence of any member is wildly unparliamentary, and I think it may be possible that an apology will be coming later.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has his third question.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government seems more focused on spending millions of dollars buying advertising space and injecting jobs into downtown Toronto than Alberta – we know that Albertans who are already here want real opportunities for skills training. Can the minister explain to this House why there isn't a plan in place for skills training, upgrading, and support for a larger workforce?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. We have the lowest corporate tax in Canada. We have received the highest grade from the CFIB on red tape reduction. We have no PST. We have the lowest personal taxes. We have some of Canada's lowest urban housing prices. We have so much to offer here in Alberta. We need more people. We need more people to fill the jobs. There are 100,000 jobs right now in Alberta waiting to be filled, and that includes in the small-business sector. That's what we're trying to do. That's why we invested over \$600 million in creating jobs and training people here in Alberta. We're getting the job done.

### Delton Elementary School in Edmonton

**Member Irwin:** Delton elementary in my riding is a fabulous school with great teachers and students, but it's currently bursting at the seams. Due to three previous school closures in the area, Delton now takes in students from all over central Edmonton. The library has been cut in half, and the daycare has been displaced to make room for all the kids. Delton has also been slated as the catchment school for the new Blatchford development, which is expected to bring hundreds of new students into the community in coming years. It needs to be replaced, so I just ask: will the Education minister please do the right thing and prioritize a new school for the Delton community?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. The member opposite should know, if she doesn't know, that, in fact, it's school authorities that prioritize the schools that are needed. In fact, Edmonton public school did get all five of their top priorities in the capital plan. As Edmonton public continues to put forward their school authorities, of course, they do look at all the metrics. There is a very, very detailed gated process that it has to go through.

**Member Irwin:** That's a no for Delton. Not only is Delton dealing with space issues; the school is also inaccessible, with access to most of the nearly 80-year-old building not possible for those with mobility challenges, and the school is aging, no longer meeting modern health or safety standards. In the past year they've experienced basement flooding, rodent concerns, and challenges with temperature control. The conclusion from all assessments is clear: a full replacement of the building is the most cost-effective approach for Delton. Given these serious concerns, a replacement is absolutely needed, but the Education minister, as you just heard, won't commit. So will the Infrastructure minister please do the right thing and step up for the Delton community?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, just to detail the gated process, it is a 10-step process. School authorities gave us their top asks. It goes through the process. It is determined whether it is a health and safety issue, whether it is an enrolment growth issue, whether it is a legal issue, whether there are additional measures that need to be looked at. It is the school authority that has the ability to put forward its top asks, and this has not risen at this time.

**Member Irwin:** A whole lot of mental gymnastics from that Education minister, because we know the cost of a replacement school for the communities that I represent is but a fraction of this government's budget surplus and but a fraction of the \$20 billion

that this Premier plans to give away to already profitable oil and gas companies. Albertans know that an Alberta NDP government will prioritize good schools, good schools for kids in all neighbourhoods, mature or otherwise. Can the Premier just explain for all of us why she's forcing kids to learn in overcrowded classrooms in old schools so she can just help her Premier's friends get a handout to clean up their messes? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. member certainly knows the stretching of boundaries when it comes to a preamble. For future reference we will use that question as a perfect example of what is not allowed.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that in the past the Edmonton school district had put that as one of their asks, but when it was evaluated, it was not a health and safety issue, it was not in a high-growth area, so it did not rise to the top. In fact, Edmonton public school has prioritized its high-growth areas, and they did receive their top five asks.

**Some Hon. Members:** No, they didn't.

**Member LaGrange:** Yes, they did.

Whether they tend to say it or not, they did receive them. Mr. Speaker, under the NDP, only four schools in Edmonton; under us, 16. Sorry; eight schools . . . [interjections]

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

### Crop Insurance Premiums

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks the opposition has fuelled much confusion and misinformation about crop insurance premiums, and farmers in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville are worried by rumours of a 60 per cent increase in premiums. Since I know this number is incorrect, can the minister of agriculture please set the record straight and inform the Assembly of the actual change to crop insurance premiums?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'm happy to continue to debunk these myths that are out there. The budgeted change from last year's actual will be about 22 per cent. It will align closely with the year-over-year changes in the crop values – for example, hard red spring wheat, 17 per cent increase; canola, 12 per cent; barley, 9 per cent; yellow field peas, 2 to 3 per cent – as it always does.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, given that crop insurance premiums are meant to reflect the value of crops and given that the average 22 per cent increase in premiums this year seems like a much more reasonable number than the 60 per cent that some opposition members have been pushing, can the minister please explain how crop insurance premiums, including the 22 per cent average increase this year, are determined?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. The formula is set. It includes your area risk rating, which does change year to year over time; your own individual historical yield data; the premium rate; your elected coverage – you can choose between 50 and 80 per cent coverage – and the crop price. I just would like to say for the House that coverage has increased

from \$4.8 billion to almost \$10 billion over the last two years, and \$4.1 billion has been paid out by this program over the last two years to Alberta farmers.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, given that our farmers are the backbone of not only Alberta's economy but our very sustenance and given that Alberta's government stands with our farmers and our agricultural sector, can the minister of agriculture please share with this House some of the many steps this government has taken to support our farmers?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. If you ate today, thank a farmer.

We've done many things for the agriculture industry. One thing we're all very proud of is the ag processing investment tax credit, which hopefully over the next two weeks will be passed by this House. I think it'll do some great things to level the playing field with some of the jurisdictions next to us. I should point out another \$49.9 million to continue the expansion and modernization of our irrigation network; \$58.5 million for the first year of our new five-year partnership with the feds, the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. The list is long.

### Digital Media Tax Credit Policy

**Ms Goehring:** In the UCP's most recent and, hopefully, last budget they completely failed the digital media sector in this province despite promising to restore the digital media tax credit after cancelling it in their first budget. The sector was left empty-handed. On the very same day the UCP's budget was tabled, B.C. extended their tax credit for another five years. Why is this government risking our competitiveness by not restoring the digital media tax credit?

2:30

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, what does risk our competitiveness as a province is an NDP government. We had four years of their leadership showing us exactly how detrimental that would be to our entire economy. We saw 183,000 jobs lost under their leadership, and it comes as no surprise given their attachment to the federal carbon tax. If they really cared about business and investment in this province, they would stand up to Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh and demand that they rescind the carbon tax and put Alberta back into the most competitive position it could possibly be in.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that a report from the Entertainment Software Association of Canada showed Alberta only received 4 per cent of national investment into the industry while Quebec captured 43 per cent of investment and British Columbia received 27 per cent and given that Quebec and B.C. have their own digital media tax credit and given that the report also showed Alberta is missing out on investment by not implementing a digital media tax credit, why is this minister so determined to send job-creating investment to other provinces?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, if there's anyone who has a track record of sending investment out of Alberta to other provinces, it's the NDP. Look at what they did in their four years in power, chasing tens of billions of dollars away from Alberta. When we were knocking on doors talking to Albertans, you know what we heard? We heard grown men crying because they had lost their jobs and lost their ability to provide for their families. That is what the recipe

of the NDP will bring back to Alberta. We won't stand for it. [interjections]

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

**Ms Goehring:** Given that a digital media tax credit could also support a wide variety of other work for talented Albertans in the film industry and given that Alberta has seen major movies and TV shows such as *Brokeback Mountain*, *Ghostbusters*, and *The Last of Us* filmed here and given that many people who have jobs in the interactive digital media space also work in film and television – so these talented Albertans may be losing other opportunities – I will ask the minister again: why hasn't he gotten the job done, and why is the UCP sending these jobs out of province?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite highlighting our success in Alberta under our leadership. We've gone from a hundred million dollars a year in film and television investment to almost a billion dollars this year in film and television investment. The choice for Albertans in May is clear. Do they want another NDP government that will make everything more expensive through the carbon tax and through their partnership and cozy relationship with Justin Trudeau and shutting down our energy industry and chasing investment away, or do they want responsible, fiscally prudent management from a Conservative government that is compassionate and will deliver jobs for the future? I know which way I'm voting, and I know which way the majority of Albertans are most likely to vote. [interjections]

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

#### Government Adviser Contracts

**Mr. Bilous:** David Knight Legg is notorious for his lavish expenses while working in the Premier's office. He billed taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars to stay in the finest hotels that included marble bathrooms, vitamin showers, and an art nouveau champagne bar. He is a symbol of all the waste and entitlement of the Jason Kenney government. In estimates we found out that Mr. Knight Legg is still being paid almost \$10,000 per month by Albertans. Mr. Knight Legg no longer works for the government nor Invest Alberta, so can the minister please explain why Alberta taxpayers are paying him this generous salary?

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, in a globally competitive environment it's important to get the Alberta brand out there to generate leads and build the relationships and, ultimately, close deals. That is the work Alberta was created to do. Mr. Knight Legg has been helpful in his advisory role during the evolution of Invest Alberta, and he's also been working on investment leads, including the EV battery manufacturing, family office investments, and energy companies and private equity firms, just as examples.

**Mr. Bilous:** Given that Mr. Knight Legg was earning almost \$200,000 as a principal adviser to the Premier while expensing tens of thousands of dollars to Albertans and given that all we know is that he stayed in a boutique hotel which promises a one-of-a-kind luxury hotel experience at a home to aristocrats since 1867 and invites guests to release your inner bon vivant and given that it's not clear what Mr. Knight Legg accomplished in his role besides racking up points on his credit cards, what exactly has Mr. Knight Legg delivered for Albertans for the hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars he's received?

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that our sponsorship with Alpine Canada was a three-year agreement, and it started in 2021, and it's in its last year now. This agreement provides advertising, branding opportunities for Invest Alberta at key Nordic events. These opportunities are aimed at attracting attention from European businesses and audiences overseas watching the events. They're also opportunities to host events, with some citing Alpine events as their catalyst for finally deciding to come to Alberta.

**Mr. Bilous:** A \$750,000 boondoggle is what Alpine Canada investment is.

Given that Mr. Knight Legg left the Premier's office to become CEO of Invest Alberta, where he got a pay bump to \$250,000, and given that he left that role after less than a year but stuck around as an adviser to the board and given that he's still being paid by Albertans while living in Singapore even though Alberta already has a trade office in Singapore, why is the UCP still shovelling cash at someone with such a terrible record of abusing taxpayer dollars?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I find it really rich coming from the members opposite concerned about . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Whoa. Whoa. Whoa.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, it's ridiculous hearing from the members opposite about their concern for taxpayers' dollars. When they were in office, they didn't respect Alberta taxpayers for one minute. They raised taxes. They brought in regulatory burden. They chased tens of billions of dollars of investment out, with it 183,000 jobs, and perpetual deficits. We've done better. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East has a question.

#### Homeless Supports

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy is thriving, with more families working better jobs and more revenue into our province. This has allowed Alberta's government to support the most vulnerable populations, which includes those experiencing homelessness. In Calgary a recent decline in homelessness is showing that our government's efforts are working. To the hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services: what has our government done to support Albertans experiencing homelessness?

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Unfortunately, homelessness is a devastating reality that too many Albertans are facing in our communities. It's a complex issue, and it's an issue that this government has taken seriously. It's why we've significantly increased funding in this most recent budget but also over the last three years to help make sure that we have more resources and supports for our homeless-serving agencies and those who help people overcome the experience of homelessness. It's why we've also significantly increased funding for building and expanding more affordable housing as well as put more funding into our rapid rehousing programs. It's working.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that there are thousands of Albertans living with addiction

who are also experiencing homelessness and given that this has significantly increased the need for recovery supports across the entire province, what supports are being provided to those experiencing addiction in Calgary, and how is this government's approach different from the previous government's?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Addiction and homelessness have affected every community in Alberta, and Calgary is no exception. In Calgary, as part of the \$187 million commitment to address addiction and homelessness, there will be a series of initiatives, including further increasing addiction treatment capacity, expanding medical detox services, and, of course, services that reduce harm. Albertans experiencing addiction or mental health challenges can contact 211 for information on services within their community. Again, if passed, Budget 2023 will add \$275 million to . . .

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. minister. Given that here in Alberta our winters bring an immense amount of danger to those experiencing homelessness and given that the challenges being faced are extremely complex and require significant supports, including emergency shelter, can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services tell the House: what have you done and what are you going to do to provide warmth and safety to those experiencing homelessness in Alberta?

Thank you.

2:40

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. Of course, as I've already mentioned, we're investing in increasing affordable housing as well as our rapid rehousing program to make sure that people experiencing homelessness have a home as well as what the Mental Health and Addiction minister just talked about, filling out that continuum of care so people with addictions and mental health concerns are able to find the appropriate supports within their community. We're also working at expanding out services in communities outside of Calgary and Edmonton so that people can get the support that they need in their hometowns. We're also working to partner with Indigenous communities to make sure that we have culturally appropriate supports as well.

Thank you.

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

## Members' Statements

*(continued)*

### Journée internationale de la Francophonie

**Ms Renaud:** C'est avec grand plaisir que je prends la parole devant vous en cette journée spéciale pour célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie en Alberta. Comme nous le savons, la Francophonie n'est pas seulement la langue française

mais plutôt une communauté de personnes qui partagent un lien, des valeurs et des traditions communes qui ont été transmis de génération en génération.

De la France à l'Afrique en passant par l'Asie et l'Alberta, la Francophonie a enrichi le monde de la littérature, de la musique, de l'art et de la cuisine. Ici en Alberta nous avons le privilège d'avoir une communauté francophone florissante qui incarne l'esprit de la Francophonie.

Ici en Alberta aussi l'éducation en langue française est devenue une partie de plus en plus importante de notre système d'éducation. Que vous soyez étudiant dans une école d'immersion française ou quelqu'un qui a suivi des cours de français jusqu'à l'âge adulte, la langue française a ouvert de nouvelles possibilités et expériences pour beaucoup d'Albertains. Nous savons qu'il faut que l'éducation de la maternelle jusqu'à la 12e année et l'éducation postsecondaire soient accessibles en français à tous les Albertains.

Souvenons-nous aussi des personnes qui ont travaillé si fort pour préserver la langue française et la culture francophone en Alberta. Des enseignants et éducateurs qui inspirent nos jeunes aux leaders communautaires qui organisent des événements et des activités culturelles, nous avons une dette de gratitude envers ceux et celles qui ont contribué à soutenir notre communauté francophone.

En terminant, je tiens à féliciter tous les francophones de l'Alberta et du monde entier en cette journée spéciale.

Merci beaucoup, et joyeuse Journée internationale de la Francophonie!

### Mental Health and Addiction Strategy

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, did you know that I went from the most trusted profession to the least trusted profession? Before the glamour of all this – that being a legislator – I was a paramedic firefighter. My job was to help people. The emergency calls that I hated the most, though, were the calls for the homeless and the drug addicted. Over the years responding to so many, I found those incidents to be the most frustrating. I was cursed at, and I was spat at. I'd pick them up soaked in urine and covered in feces. I've had these customers take swings at me, threaten me, beg me for drugs, fake an injury for a shot of morphine, and I'd lost all sympathy for them. I was bitter, and I was jaded.

Interestingly enough, it was this job working as an MLA where I learned a different perspective. I still remember walking into the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction, where I was surprised by the ex-addicts working in there. They took the time to tell me their stories. Then I was visiting my local shelters, meeting the staff and, more importantly, their clients. I was introduced to a whole different world, where people are trying to break free from a terrible cycle.

I realized with pride what our government was doing, and it was doing good. From thoroughly investigating the concept of safe supply to creating recovery communities to provide long-term treatment to addiction, I can say that it's all been honest and noble. The fact that our government has been focusing on recovery and treatment, doing things like creating 8,000-plus treatment spaces, removing user fees for addiction treatment, developing drug courts as an alternative to simply jailing addicts for their petty crimes, and so much more, demonstrates the real desire demonstrated by government to truly help the most vulnerable.

Though politicians might be perceived as the least trusted profession, I can say that being an elected official taught me the most about having compassion for the most vulnerable. I hope that people respect their elected representatives just a little bit more, because the work they often do goes unheralded and does truly impact so many.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## NDP and UCP Policies

**Ms Ganley:** An election is a conversation about the future. Albertans have a choice between two starkly different visions of that future. One vision is the UCP vision, where we seek the future in the past; where our curriculum teaches children all the skills they need to survive in the 1920s; where we deny science, whether it's vaccines or climate change; where we scorn or hide our differences rather than celebrating them; where we pit the economy and the environment against each other and fail at both; a future where we survive by being at one another's throats; where a child's potential is determined not by her ideas or her effort but by her parents' bank balance; a UCP future where seniors can't be sure if the pensions they paid into will be there; where we give \$20 billion away to insiders while people struggle and their government muses about making them pay for a doctor and tells them to get a better job. It seems pretty bleak.

But there's another way, a better way, a better future, a future where we move forward together; where we invest in the technologies that we need to grow our economy and protect our environment; where we invest in people and in their skills through postsecondary; a future where each and every child gets a world-class education; where cancer is something we treat you for, not blame you for. The Alberta NDP has a plan, a better plan to create a resilient economy and good-paying jobs, to create a better medical system, where Albertans can see their family doctor within 48 hours.

In just 70 days Albertans will have a choice. We will pick a vision of the future: one where we look to the past, where insiders get rewarded while everyone else gets left behind, or one where we look with hope to the future, where we invest in each other and build a better future together. I think we all deserve a better future, and I believe that on May 29 that's exactly what Alberta will get.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:22 the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of a Member

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit of the House, I'll try to keep my comments brief. I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development made a statement during question period similar to: if he spent more time in this House.

Now, I would draw your attention to chapter 13 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, where it's referenced: "Allusions to the presence or absence of a Member or Minister in the Chamber are unacceptable." I'd also further refer you to a ruling that was made on December 3, 2020, which is in *Hansard*, page 3783, where the former Deputy Government House Leader argued that it was well established these allusions were prohibited by clear precedent. Mr. Speaker, in that case you ruled that it was indeed a member from the opposition caucus who had made a comment alluding to the presence or absence of a member and that they had to withdraw and apologize.

I'd also further refer you to *Hansard*, page 2049, on July 15, 2020, where you rejected comments from the former Government House Leader where he argued that referring to someone "while he was away" was still unacceptable. You ruled in that case that despite not including the words "while he was away from the Chamber," this allusion was still inappropriate and demanded a withdrawal.

In this case I believe it is clear the minister referred specifically to the presence or absence of a member in the Chamber without even the allusion that it could have been at other times. I'd ask that you find this to be a point of order and the minister be asked to withdraw and apologize.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Those sound like good rulings.

The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say how pleased I am that the member is following rules and pointing out rules that this House should follow.

As a member I want to withdraw and apologize for that comment. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Ordres du jour.

2:50

## Orders of the Day

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

#### Bill 203

### Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Madam Chair, every day Canadians across the country tragically lose their lives as the consequence of unsafe driving. Oftentimes those who perish as a result of their own unsafe driving are our youngest drivers, testing the limits of their vehicles in an attempt to impress their friends. We had an excellent exchange in the House regarding this bill, and in light of the concerns raised, I'm proposing an amendment.

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge, just wait till I have a copy of the amendment, and then we'll have you read it into the record.

Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge, please read it into the record.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 203, Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022, be amended in section 5 in the proposed section 88.21 as follows: (a) in subsection (1) by striking out "If a peace officer has reasonable grounds" and substituting "Subject to subsection (2.1), if a peace officer has reasonable grounds"; (b) by adding the following after subsection (2):

(2.1) A peace officer may not take the actions referred to in subsection (1) in respect of a contravention referred to in subsection 2(b) if

(a) the contravention occurs on a portion of a highway immediately following a decrease in the maximum speed limit on that highway, and



b) the driver of the vehicle did not have a reasonable opportunity to decelerate in consideration of the amount of the decrease in the maximum speed limit.

(c) in subsection (3) by striking out “in accordance with the subsection (1)” and substituting “in accordance with subsection (1) in respect of the provision referred to in subsection 2(b).”

This does two things. It ensures that people in transition zones aren't considered to be stunting because they are 40 kilometres per hour over. The other thing it does is that it ensures that the stiffer penalties apply to excessive speeding and not to the things that are stunting but not less safe.

This heartbreaking reality is something that we as elected officials should do more to prevent. Vehicle stunting is a criminal act that does not only endanger the drivers themselves but all other Albertans who use the roadways where the crimes are being committed. In order to protect the people of this province from needless, preventable traffic accidents, we must act. Therefore, I am pleased to introduce private member's Bill 203. This proposed bill would strengthen the penalties in place for stunting in Alberta so that would-be reckless drivers are more thoroughly deterred from endangering themselves and others while those who still violate the law are punished more severely.

Alberta, quite frankly, is lagging behind other provinces. When it comes to pursuing more severe penalties for vehicle stunting, other provinces have rightfully strengthened their laws surrounding these crimes, and it is time for us to follow suit to help prevent any more needless injuries or deaths. If passed, Bill 203 would make going 40 kilometres per hour over the speed limit in urban areas stunting and increase the fine for stunting to \$5,000 and introduce an automatic seven-day licence suspension for anybody caught stunting. Additionally, there would be the option of a seven-day discretionary impound, to be decided by law enforcement on a case-by-case basis.

The time to implement these more severe penalties is now. In the past few months alone there have been high-profile incidents in both Calgary and Edmonton. The two cities are plagued the most by stunting and street racing that involve avoidable situations or collisions. At the beginning of September an Albertan was killed in a single-vehicle crash that authorities believe to have been the result of a street race. Even more recently, in October, two vehicles crashed right next to us on the High Level Bridge here, both of which were involved in street racing. The saddest thing about crashes like these is that they are entirely avoidable. They're caused by reckless bravado, specifically amongst our youngest drivers. My top priority as an elected official is ensuring the safety of Albertans, and it is my conviction that passing this bill would greatly improve road safety in our province.

I'm proud to say that despite incidents like I previously mentioned, Alberta has the lowest road fatality rate of any province in Canada. Most Albertans are committed to road safety as they know that acting responsibly on the road keeps us all safe. A notable exception to this rule involves those who stunt, race, and otherwise drive recklessly. It is important that these people receive the punishment they deserve when they commit these crimes. Through mandatory licence suspensions and discretionary vehicle impounding, drivers who commit these needlessly dangerous acts will be prevented from doing so again in the immediate future. Their friends will hear about their fine and suspension and will think twice before going 40 kilometres over the city speed limit.

Deterrence is extremely important, Madam Chair. It is much better to prevent drivers from doing this in the first place than it is to give them serious penalties. On top of this, the increased fines will further contribute to deterrence so that these drivers will not act

so dangerously again after their licences and vehicles are returned to them.

As stated earlier, this bill would bring Albertans' penalties for stunting more into alignment with other provinces. Ontario's stunting penalties are similar to these changes proposed by this bill. Additionally, these penalties have been requested by the police chief association. Those who have committed their lives to protecting Albertans in all areas of life, not just on the road, believe that increasing the severity of these penalties will improve road safety. When organizations like the police chiefs' association make requests like this, I as an elected official do not take it lightly. According to research done by this association, a large portion of speeding drivers, 40 per cent to be exact, is between the ages of 16 and 24. Evidently, this same age group also has the highest traffic casualty rate of any age group.

3:00

This same age demographic is most likely to engage in vehicle stunting. When these young people engage in stunting, they endanger themselves and others. In their silly attempts to impress their friends or show off, Albertans can be severely injured or even killed. These drivers need to learn to respect the power they have when they get behind the wheel. Without more severe penalties for acts as dangerous as stunting and street racing, these people may continue to take these unnecessary risks. Parents would agree that oftentimes it is important to be strict with your children.

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to join debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Pleased today to rise to speak to the amendment brought forward by the hon. member regarding a transition between highway speed and a speed that one is required to slow down to after leaving a highway, presumably at an interchange, for another roadway where the speed limit may be increased.

But during these periods of transition between one highway to another, precisely an example that I brought forward, Madam Chair, in previous debate about the shortcomings of the bill – and I referred to my experience driving in Australia, where indeed I did suffer more than one speeding ticket while driving in exactly this situation, where immediately upon exiting the main highway onto a ramp to interchange to another directional highway, I was recorded going highway speed in that transition zone and, of course, not having had time to slow down, ended up with a ticket upon my return back to Canada. I brought this example forward, and I thank the member for recognizing it as something that should be addressed in amending the act. I plan to support the act because I think it's a reasonable amendment. We always want to make sure that people are driving safely, but we also want to avoid unfair or unjust speeding tickets while we're doing so.

But the amendment that was brought forward, Madam Chair, doesn't go anywhere near far enough to address some of the other things that this bill has. There are many sins of omission in the main bill which I think could have been addressed by this member's amendment, not just simply looking at the unfairness of issuing tickets in a transition zone. A glaring example of what could have been done and, we think, should have been done on this side of the House to embellish the bill, improve the bill would have been a coexisting amendment to define stunting, to give a more clear definition of stunting, with better examples of what that offence would entail such as those found in the B.C. legislation.

Unfortunately, the member has decided to limit his amendment to a very narrow scope, which albeit is an important and, I believe,

necessary and useful amendment that does improve – the legislation could have at this point in time, while the legislation is open and before the House, been improved even more had the member decided to take suggestions that have been raised also during the debate on this legislation, Bill 203, had they taken the opportunity to look at giving enforcement officers better direction by properly defining the term “stunting” or what a stunt might be.

I said previously that the legislation in B.C. precisely took pains to do this, and it ended up with, I think, a much better piece of legislation and was a better tool for enforcement officers in the field who were not making discretionary judgments on what a particular activity might be defined as, stunting or not, but they had clearly defined examples, that could be used in the field by an enforcement officer – police officer, peace officer – who was enforcing traffic regulations, to specifically point to and charge an individual with a specific stunting offence that was defined in the legislation.

While indeed, Madam Chair, I stand in support of the amendment that the member has brought forward to make sure that speeding in transition zones is not something that is commonly catching people who are innocently not slowing down as quickly as one would hope but not doing so unsafely – those people are not going to be captured by speeding tickets that really are not deserved or truly are not fair. I speak from personal experience about the fact that this can happen and is a surprise, I’m sure, to drivers who are receiving tickets in these transition zones from one highway to another in an interchange, that they sense the same injustice that I felt when receiving such a ticket.

The number one problem that I have with the amendment, Madam Chair, is that the opportunity was missed to go even further to, as I say, define the term “stunting” and provide specific examples of what a stunt might be so that an enforcement officer in the field would have a better, a more clear direction on what exactly stunting was and to point to a specific behaviour that was taking place in front of them and then charge accordingly in the information contained in the stunting charge. If indeed that would have been included as part of the amendment, a charge might be more easily prosecuted in the courts.

So an opportunity missed, and it’s an omission that I’m sorry exists with this amendment that was brought forward by the member. It would have been nice to see that. I would have loved the opportunity to perhaps bring forward such an amendment myself, but I don’t think that that would be permitted given that the member has brought forward an amendment of his own under the same area of the piece of legislation. Not sure if that was the member’s intent, but certainly it was an opportunity that was missed in bringing forward this particular amendment.

I think all Albertans who’ve had the experience of listening to somebody performing a pretty disturbing act, whether it be squealing tires or doing U-turns in the middle of the roadway or any number of types of stunting behaviours that we’ve witnessed on our highways, unfortunately won’t see them stop. I think that rural Albertans particularly – and some intersections in the city but primarily rural Albertans – just after school is out, after graduation, will find doughnut marks on their highways outside the local intersections on many rural Alberta highways because it’s considered to be a rite of passage for, I would say particularly, young males driving their vehicles. And they’ll spin their tires and do doughnuts and smoke their tires and create a circle on the highway in a stunt that is potentially very dangerous.

There are incidents that could be described pretty clearly and would have been nice to see in this legislation had the member seen fit to go beyond what he’s doing simply by coming forward with an amendment that talked about eliminating tickets and giving greater

discretion to enforcement officers when they’re talking about speeding in transition zones. I hope that it was not a calculated effort on the member’s part to thwart any effort on our part on this side of the House to bring forward more detailed amendments on stunting, but it certainly feels like that.

**3:10**

When you are in a position, whether you’re in a motorhome or a passenger vehicle, at night or wintertime, no matter what the conditions are, I think it’s incumbent upon the department of transportation to take into account some perhaps testing data that will show whether or not there’s enough time, from the time you exit the highway itself into the transition period, to actually slow down safely until there’s an enforcement zone that is capturing people who are going above the speed limit.

While I support the effort by the member to bring forward this piece of legislation, I think there’s also some study that needs to be done to make sure that the individuals who might actually be breaking the law and creating a safety hazard in a transition zone are not lost from enforcement by this amendment, because there are differences in our exit ramps and our entrance ramps on our highways in their transition zones. Some are extremely long; some are pretty short. There may be ample opportunity for an enforcement officer to legitimately charge somebody with speeding even in one of these transition zones, but it depends upon how long it is, whether it’s a circular, short cloverleaf or whether it’s a long, median-style runway or exit ramp. I’m not sure if this amendment takes that into consideration. It might actually hamstring an officer from making a decision to actually charge somebody in a transition zone. We’ll see.

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

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A1.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill in Committee of the Whole, Bill 203. Are there members wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate to stand and speak to the main bill, Bill 203. As mentioned in previous debate, the intent, of course, of the amendment act, Bill 203, Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022, is, one, to improve public safety on our Alberta roadways, and it’s, of course, something that on this side of the House we definitely support. We’re always looking to improve our roadways’ safety.

We always should be taking into account, though, when we’re drafting legislation, Madam Chair, that affects our traffic laws and regulations, that proper input is had from all those who are affected, whether they be the police, who have to enforce the laws, whether they be our traffic department and experts, who would speak to the relative safety of different measures that might be proposed, and, of course, the public. I think that on some matters we’ve heard loud and clear from the public about what they think speeding enforcement laws should be.

There seems to be a little bit of confusion on the other side of the House about whether they are on the side of caution and ensuring public safety. When we look at this particular piece of legislation, Bill 203, of course, is looking to provide a bit of relief by the amendment, but the main bill looks to properly enforce those who break the law and speed. But there was another measure that another member from the government party brought forward, and it looked to actually increase the speed limit on two-lane highways in the province in certain areas to 120 kilometres an hour versus 110.

There seems to be a bit of a Dr. Dolittle approach on the other side of the House, a pushmi-pullyu kind of a situation, where in one case they're looking at increasing highway speeds because of some pressure from members of the public on the government to do this, and in this particular case, with the Bill 203 we're talking about, the other side of the coin is to actually ensure public safety and err on that side and make sure that the excessive speeders are prosecuted and, hopefully, deterred from speeding. I kind of wish the government would decide which direction it wanted to go in. Hopefully, in the future we won't be seeing efforts to increase speeding limits in the province, whether it be on two-lane roadways or smaller Alberta highways. They always should be erring on the side of public safety and consulting properly with all the stakeholders involved.

The public certainly doesn't want to see excessive speeding. We've all experienced a situation where somebody has just completely blown by us on the highway. It's a pretty scary thing to happen, and that's something that we hope and expect to be stopped by our enforcement agencies, and that's not always the case. There are means of perhaps taking a look at enforcement that are not contemplated by Bill 203, which, of course, looks to provide tools to enforcement officers to deter excessive speed and to penalize those who do speed excessively.

I'd posit, Madam Chair, that one way of doing it might be with a timed device, particularly on roadways such as the Calgary-Edmonton corridor. For example, once again, driving in Australia, I experienced a situation where it had a certain speed limit – it was a reasonable one – and if you went from point A to point B, though, you weren't necessarily having photoradar regularly. What it did was that it actually timed the distance from point A to point B, and if you got there faster than you should have according to the speed maximum that you were allowed to go, you actually got a ticket based on that time frame. Of course, it would be doing a photoradar photograph of your licence plate at point A and then again at point B and calculating the time.

Believe me, Madam Chair, something that was very startling while driving in Australia on roadways that had this timed photoradar: nobody speeded because there was no point. I mean, you knew you were going to get caught, and there was no escaping it. It was pretty safe, and it was certainly most impressive when you would see a group of people on large motorcycles happily motoring along at the speed limit and not daring to blast over it because they knew for sure that if they got to point B before they should have, because they were driving faster than the speed limit, they were going to get a ticket. There was no escaping it.

There are other enforcement measures that this bill could have contemplated in an amendment or in the main bill if indeed the members had done their homework and would have perhaps consulted more widely on it. I'm sure Albertans would have brought forward more suggestions. I can tell you that I'd be surprised if law enforcement wouldn't have had some more suggestions as well that would have improved the legislation and done a bit more of a comprehensive job while the piece of legislation is open.

I think it's incumbent upon us, Madam Chair. When we do bring forward changes to legislation, whether it be a traffic safety amendment act or whether it be on any type of issue, it's important to have a wider lens and to look at what things could be done to improve the legislation and improve the health and safety of Albertans when a piece of legislation is open. Unfortunately, that opportunity was missed by the government member on that side in this private member's Bill 203. It really was a narrowly scoped piece of legislation, and even though it is a private member's piece

of legislation, it is something that could have been much more comprehensive.

I hope that the member feels that he has solved the issue that he wanted to solve with respect to excessive speeding, but when one gets the opportunity to move forward with a private member's bill, one would hope to do as much as possible to benefit Albertans when you have that opportunity, which is pretty special. We all know that many members have served a career in this House of three, four, or more terms and have never had the opportunity for a private member's bill to be given to them by way of a draw. I suggest to the House that much more could have been done by this member to take advantage of that very special opportunity to bring forward a piece of legislation by way of a private member's bill, and it was, unfortunately, an opportunity missed.

3:20

I don't plan to oppose the legislation because, of course, the small changes that were brought forward by the member certainly are going to, I believe, improve safety on our roadways. You know, it's just law enforcement, but they don't go anywhere near as far as they could have, and it's not anywhere near as comprehensive a piece of legislation as one would hope a private member would bring forward when dealing with something as important as safety on our roadways.

It affects every age group in our population, from young drivers to our seniors. Everybody is concerned about safety on the roadways, and the opportunity that we had here to really take a more comprehensive look at how indeed we could improve safety on our roadways in a more comprehensive way, even by way of a private member's bill, Madam Chair, is something that I think was unfortunate. I won't belabour the point, but I'll suggest that this private member and other private members, even those on our side of the House, when given an opportunity to bring forward a piece of private member's legislation, really look more broadly at how wide a benefit they could have for everybody in the province by increasing the scope of the legislation that they bring forward.

With that, I'll take my seat.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 203 as amended in Committee of the Whole? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this bill. Of course, I think one of the things we often hear about as members in our community, from different folks in the community is people speeding, particularly in playground zones, where, you know, children are present, or really on any road where children are present. I think this is a fairly major concern, so I'm glad to see this bill brought forward to address it, because I think a lot of people are worried about this.

Honestly, you know, when you talk about dangerous activities, actually getting behind the wheel of your car is one of the most dangerous activities in which most people regularly engage in their daily lives. In my former role when we were in government, I had the opportunity to speak to a number of parents who had lost children, whether to impaired driving or excessive speeding or a number of other things. I mean, it's heartbreaking. It doesn't have to happen, it's easily prevented by simply not doing those things, and it's very troublesome.

You know, in terms of increased penalties for these sorts of activities I think that this is definitely the right call. I do think that there are concerns potentially with this bill, in part because what we're doing here is sort of increasing the penalty and also adding on the ability to do certain other things like seize vehicles and

operators' licences. It's a pretty heavy hammer. Generally when we use heavier hammers, we want to make sure we have the necessary administrative protections in place. Sometimes that's in a courtroom. Sometimes that's an administrative tribunal. It just sort of depends on the situation, but I think the more harsh the penalty is, the more important it is to have in place clear abilities to deal with it.

I think the concern is that in the act there isn't a definition of stunting, so the result is – what this does is that it changes the penalty, and in this case it's for section 115(2)(f) and 115(2)(p) under the Traffic Safety Act, and (2)(p) specifically is if it's at least 40 kilometres per hour over the maximum speed limit that is 80 kilometres per hour or less. Essentially, excessive speeding is (2)(p), and then (2)(f) is stunting. The challenge is that it's not totally clear what will or won't be caught, so that's sort of actually problematic on both ends in terms of ensuring that we're preventing the behaviours we want to prevent and ensuring that we're providing the appropriate procedural safeguards. That's a bit problematic, and it's unfortunate because I think that's an amendment we would have liked to have seen.

This is not a weird procedural thing, but for the tens of people watching at home, one of the procedural things we have going on in the House is that once a section has been opened to be amended in a bill, another member can't reopen the same section. Because we have this amendment, that has now been passed, having to do with speed change zones, we would have to open the same section, potentially, in terms of making other changes, so that sort of becomes out of order, if you will. I think it's unfortunate to see that that amendment isn't able to go in because I think, again, it's important both to make sure that we're preventing the behaviours we want to prevent and to make sure that we're not catching things we maybe didn't intend to catch, which are both important things in the law.

I think, though, generally I remain supportive of this bill because I think it is a good bill. It does do a really important thing, and it is something that is, in my opinion, very much on the minds of Albertans and particularly Alberta parents. I think, you know, people stunting or driving too quickly is extremely problematic, and it has impacts not just on, like, people being worried about what will happen but on the lives of people in Alberta. Those traffic accidents can be some of the most horrific things to respond to. They can be incredibly tragic. They can be life changing for folks. I happened to once, long ago, volunteer at a hospital, and, yeah, some of the people had – it was a neurorehabilitation ward – their lives sort of permanently altered by the poor driving behaviours of others. It's not intentional, but it only takes a second to destroy other people's lives.

So I think that this is very good. I think that there is an enormous amount of evidence that this is the sort of penalty that sort of impacts on people's brains. It's like people don't – yeah. I don't really know what the psychological mechanism behind it is. People don't think that a tragedy will happen to them. They don't think that they'll wind up in a position where they have injured someone and they're facing criminal charges and jail time and that sort of – like, people just don't seem to think that's going to happen to them.

For some reason these sorts of penalties – and we have a lot of evidence of this from across the country – seem to have a greater impact on people's behaviour. They can more easily see, I guess, maybe more easily envision the scenario in which they are caught by the police and they receive this penalty, so this alters their behaviour in a way that perhaps the potential of injury to themselves, to their loved ones, or to others doesn't. Again, I don't really understand the psychology fully behind that. It's actually a little bit counterintuitive although, as it turns out, most things about human psychology are a bit counterintuitive.

Yeah. I think it's a good bill. I think it will have a positive impact. I do wish that it was a little bit better in this way, but I think that as far as it goes, I am supportive of it, and I think it's something that will impact the lives of Albertans, which is something very, very positive.

3:30

I imagine the member, like all members of this House, has heard from constituents about this. I know that probably one of the most well-attended town halls I've been to in my role as an MLA was specifically about people speeding too much. It included law enforcement and the community association and members of the community. People are really concerned. They want their children to be able to play outside, and rightly so. They want their children to be able to walk down the street. We have had a number of very public, very tragic instances in Calgary, you know, where someone's car went through the window of a restaurant, people driving into houses, all sorts of things. There's often alcohol involved in those incidents, but sometimes it just is excessive speed and excessive silliness, and no one should ever lose their life that way. No one should ever be permanently injured that way. It's entirely preventable and easily so.

I guess over here we don't often say, "Good job," but for, again, the tens of folks watching at home, we can occasionally agree on things, and in this instance I think we absolutely do agree that this is a step in the right direction. Good job to the member for bringing this forward. I know private members' bills can be a difficult thing, to sort of come up with a concept and translate the concept into actuality and that sort of thing.

I haven't actually personally had conversations, but I assume there have been some conversations with law enforcement across the province. My recollection from, admittedly, three and a half, almost four years ago now is that generally a lot of services were looking for this sort of thing, the ability to hold people more accountable for speeding, because officers see this every day, the sort of tragic results of what really is an act that doesn't intend to injure but has the serious potential to injure others.

Yeah. I guess that sort of covers the points I want to make with respect to this bill. I would say that I will be supporting. I would urge all members to support it. I imagine that most folks will.

With that, I think I will take my seat. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 203 as amended?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 203 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

**Mr. Schow:** Madam Chair, I rise to request unanimous consent to waive standing orders 8(7)(c) and 9(1). I'm looking to revert to Committee of the Whole on Bill 204.

**The Chair:** We will need to rise out of committee.

**Mr. Schow:** Yes. I understand.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead. Please proceed.

**Mr. Schow:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report Bill 203.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Long:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 203. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

**Mr. Schow:** I rise to request unanimous comment to waive standing orders 8(7)(c) and 9(1) in order to proceed immediately to Committee of the Whole on Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

*(continued)*

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

#### Bill 204

#### Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Private member's Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, was originally the idea of a former legislative co-ordinator I had by the name of Maureen Gough. In 2016 Maureen was one of the primary caregivers for her elderly mother, and she approached me with the idea of creating an Amber Alert for seniors. It was under her guidance and hard work by the two us that the private member's Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017, was put before this House and passed.

As one of the members stated in second reading, private members' bills do not have the underlying infrastructure of researchers and legal advice that a government bill would have, so after private member's Bill 210 was passed, it was discovered that there was a conflict between the Missing Persons Act and private member's Bill 210 regarding how information would be released to the public and would be handled during a silver alert. This explains why private member's Bill 210 had been passed by the Legislature, but it was never proclaimed and therefore could not benefit a senior that had gone missing.

It also explains why this private member's Bill 204 is necessary, as private member's Bill 204 is designed to make amendments that address the shortcomings in private member's Bill 210 and to provide police and Albertans with another tool to use in order to

help find and protect a senior that has gone missing and is deemed to be at risk.

During second reading of Bill 204 a member had asked the question: why have these amendments not been brought back into the Legislature before this year? It's a good question. The answer to that question is that I had to find out exactly what the conflicts were that had created the problems between private member's Bill 210 and the Missing Persons Act. Then a solution had to be found. Finally, since this was a private member's bill, I either had to wait until I was drawn again for a private member's bill or see if I could find a private member willing to pick up this idea and propose the amendments. As luck would have it, I was once again drawn for a private member's bill in my last sitting in this Legislature before I retire as an MLA.

**3:40**

As this House considers the amendments brought forward in private member's Bill 204, it must be understood that a great deal of effort by the Ministry of Justice and all of the stakeholders that were interviewed has gone into addressing the shortcomings in private member's Bill 210. The amendments in private member's Bill 204 were designed to both address the privacy concerns as information was released to the public but also to address some of the other insights brought forward by stakeholders. Some have been concerned that introducing a silver alert may create alert fatigue, so several elements were built into private member's Bill 204. Firstly, private member's Bill 204 follows the same pattern of thresholds as an Amber Alert before it can be activated.

A police service may activate a silver alert when an individual is reported missing to the police service [and only] if the police service determines that the following requirements are met:

- (a) the individual is [indeed] a missing person,
- (b) the individual is a represented adult under the Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act or an adult with a cognitive impairment, mental disorder or medical condition that may render the person vulnerable,
- (c) the individual's safety and welfare are feared for given the individual's cognitive impairment, mental disorder or medical condition, and
- (d) there is information available that, if disseminated to the public, could assist in the individual's safe recovery.

Madam Chair, as you can see, not every senior that goes missing will result in a silver alert. They must be a represented adult or cognitively impaired or have a medical condition that would make them vulnerable enough to fear for their safety. Any information put out in a silver alert must be capable of assisting in a safe recovery.

Finally, the police are the ones that determine if the issue of a silver alert will be of benefit in helping to return a missing senior that is at risk. When discussing this with stakeholders like the Calgary and Edmonton police services, it was determined that if the police remained in control of when to call or when not to call a silver alert and if we built into the legislation a geospatial element where police would determine the geographical extent of a silver alert, this would reduce the chance of alert fatigue.

It is also the case that private member's Bill 204 allows the police to decide the extent and the means of the distribution of the information. The police service could decide to limit the alert to a posting on the Internet or to Twitter. They could decide that the circumstances of the missing person – for instance, if the individual did not have access to a vehicle or public transportation, they would then limit the alert to a particular geographical area. All of this will combine to reduce or eliminate alert fatigue as a silver alert is actually implemented.

During second reading the question was asked: will private member's Bill 204 allow for sufficient collaboration with other local agencies on the ground? I believe that private member's Bill

204 will do exactly that. Firstly, it will allow police to collaborate with the families, institutions, TV, radio, Internet, and agencies in the dissemination of the necessary information that could help save a missing senior's life. Secondly, it has already helped to connect some of the local police services with other seniors' organizations.

In meeting with stakeholders for this bill, I met with the Calgary Missing Older Adult Resource Network, and they have produced a resource for families with vulnerable seniors called the Resource Guide for Older Adults at Risk of Going Missing. This is an excellent resource that helps families prepare ahead of time should their loved ones go missing.

Part of that is called the Herbert protocol. The Herbert protocol is a form that details the important information that could be used by police should they believe it is necessary to have a silver alert. The Herbert protocol helps families gather the information police will need, like photographs, personal details, contact information, personal circumstances, general health information, et cetera. The use of the Herbert protocol would be an example of how local agencies like the Missing Older Adult Resource Network could help both police and families when their loved ones go missing. I would highly recommend that all families concerned about a senior's potential of going missing should access the Resource Guide for Older Adults at Risk of Going Missing. Reading through and filling out this resource before your loved one may go missing will be of great use as you begin to contact police and your local community networks.

One of the questions that has been brought forward revolves around the cost of the silver alert. When I talk with stakeholders, especially the police services, costs were not thought to be a concern. I've asked the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services whether or not the cost of implementing a silver alert would be prohibitive. After much digging and further conversations with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency it was determined that at present there would be no additional cost because AEMA co-ordinates with the national agency that oversees national alerts, and the app that the provinces and the national alert system interface with is free. So if there are any costs, they will presently be picked up by the federal agency. However, even if that were to change in the future, it was felt that the cost would be minimal. Last week at budget estimates I was able to ask the minister a question on this, and the head of AEMA outlined that the entire alert system costs Albertans about \$180,000 a year. To add in a silver alert, it was his belief, would not be a burdensome cost as the individuals and the systems are already there.

Lastly, it must be remembered that before any silver alert can be implemented, it must meet the criteria outlined in private member's Bill 204.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It gives me great pleasure to stand up and support this bill. I think that when we are concerned about individuals that fit the criteria that the previous speaker was talking about, they need help, and that's what the silver alert intends to do. It intends to disseminate information – and the previous speaker kind of talked about things like geographic activations and where the postings might occur – to ensure that a targeted approach is being undertaken to find that person as quickly as possible.

Maybe I should back up a little bit. Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022: we're seeing this for the second time in this Legislature, and the mover was talking about why we're

seeing it here for the second time. It's totally understandable, I think, that members, particularly members who don't have a lot of research support, who do not have the background that researchers, that drafters of legislation can give them, that the government does have, are working with a bit of one hand tied behind their back. They're trying to do the best job they can, but there may be things missed. From listening to the mover talk about the previous bill that was before this House and the challenges it had and why it wasn't proclaimed, it's understandable, as I was saying, that it wasn't proclaimed, and we're back here today to try to address that in this Bill 204. For instance, if you're a member that doesn't have a party, if you're sitting as an independent, you have some resources but not the full resources that opposition does, perhaps, or the government. I think that this bill in that respect addresses those shortcomings as we understood them, told to us just a few minutes ago.

3:50

I want to say that I think the intent behind this is to focus attention and try to get resources marshalled so that people who do go missing – and the bill talks about the kind of criteria those persons have to fit before a silver alert is triggered. If a person does go missing and they have those kinds of challenges – they're missing, they're a represented adult being looked after by other individuals, they're vulnerable in some way or in some medical condition – then we know that their safety and welfare are potentially at risk if they are not identified, found, and brought back to where they can be safely cared for. That is something that I think this bill tries to address and does.

It's a good thing, because we have in Canada, Alberta times of the year where inclement weather can put a person's life at risk. We see far too often people who go missing – young people, older people – found in dire situations and sometimes even to the point where their life has ended because of exposure to cold, or in many parts of this province we have significant wilderness areas or geographic parts of the landscape where a person can get injured. If that person is represented in the kind of criteria that's identified here, then they will not be looking out for their own best interests, and they need to be identified and found, as I say, as quickly as possible.

It's good to know that there is a trigger in the sense that police will be the ultimate decision-makers on when to issue an alert, how broadly to issue the alert, how much effort to put into the alert, all based on an understanding of the situation of the person who has gone missing. I believe, too, that there'll be sufficient collaboration by a number of stakeholders, agencies on the ground once an alert has been triggered so that that person can be found, hopefully, as quickly as possible and returned.

I, too, was in the estimates for Public Safety and Emergency Services last week and heard the discussions about the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and understand that, you know, there wouldn't be a significant incremental cost on issuing these kinds of alerts on – we don't know on how regular a basis, but we do know that when it is necessary, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency can be a partner in making that judgment call about police personnel issuing the alert.

There, of course, is a history of these sorts of alerts being put into place across the United States since 2005. It's been legislated in almost all states in the U.S., and there's some experience with Canadian provinces, not territories yet, doing the same thing and having legislation in place.

Things that improve the quality of life that older persons can continue to have if they're found, if they leave their places of care without the knowledge of caregivers, is a good step to take, because it's been pretty challenging for seniors in this province over the last

three, almost four years. We know that many are not doing as well as they could in the sense that they don't have the support brought on by having more money at their disposal as a result of some of the decisions of this government. Bill 204 will go some way to assisting those seniors most in need who have left their safe place to be, and organizing a way to let the public know that there are missing persons who need to be returned to their loved ones, often, is a really good thing.

The number of people who are experiencing cognitive difficulties, we know, is increasing. We probably would do well as a government to participate with other governments to spend more time and energy on research around how to address those cognitive impairments so that there'd be fewer people who might get into difficulties, as is proposed in this Bill 204. I think adult citizens who need our support – we should not feel like the effort to . . . [Member Ceci's speaking time expired]

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** I just thought I would rise and make a few comments with regard to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Thank you for standing up and supporting this bill. You know, you were talking a little about who some of these seniors could be and where they could come from. I think probably every one of us in this Chamber has somebody that we've loved that has fallen into this category and could've gone missing. I know that in my life it was my mother-in-law, just how much concern my father-in-law had as she battled with Alzheimer's, trying to make sure that he was awake literally 24/7 so that she wouldn't go wandering and leave. This would've been something that very well could've been used in our family as we moved forward, and they lived in the city.

I can remember meeting with a constituent a few years ago who was talking about driving down a country road and seeing a car being driven at slow speed rather erratically. He followed this vehicle for many miles because he was worried about the old gentleman that he saw in the car. Didn't know him; wasn't a neighbour. Eventually, he got on his phone, phoned the police. The RCMP came, pulled the car over, and they find out that the gentleman had come from Red Deer. He'd gotten lost, and he didn't know where he was. This can happen to anybody, whether you're rural or whether you're urban.

Private member's Bill 204 had to be flexible enough to allow the police to be able to make judgment calls as to how wide a scope they would spread a silver alert or how narrow they would keep it and look at the situations and look at the cognitive impairments that may be there and address them. So I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for bringing forward the whole issue of, you know: well, who are we talking about, and where are we going with this silver alert?

4:00

The member brought forward the idea of being able to compare provinces and that there are other provinces in this country that are moving forward with silver alert legislation. We know that right now in Quebec there is a pilot project going through – I believe it started in January – so, you know, there are other provinces that are moving forward on this. I think this piece of legislation will move us forward, and I think it's a good piece of legislation that deserves the support of this House as we move forward.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to begin by thanking the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for bringing this private member's bill forward not once but twice, actually. It shows a true commitment to this issue, and it's very clear from the member's comments that he is quite passionate about this. I do very much appreciate that he has, you know, seen an opportunity to make some change that would make a difference in people's lives, and he has pursued this with this private member's bill both in a previous Legislature and again in this Legislature.

I know how it's by chance, really, that any of us as private members get an opportunity to bring forward motions and bills. I have not had the opportunity, and it doesn't look likely that I will have the opportunity in this Legislature to bring either a motion or a private member's bill forward. I do think it is, you know, incumbent upon us as a Legislative Assembly to treat the private members' bills that are brought forward, particularly over and over again, as, really, somebody's truly trying to make a difference and trying to make an impact.

I do have to say that I am disappointed, as we draw close to a close on this Legislature soon, that we have not had the opportunity for any private members' bills from the opposition side to have been brought forward and to have been passed in this Chamber throughout this entire Legislature. I don't mean to bring that up to take away at all from what the member here has brought forward, but it does speak to many members on all sides of the House that come to this Chamber with issues that they are quite passionate about, and we do all enter into this public service with the goal of making some change.

It's disappointing when, I believe, politics – as we know, we all engage in politics in this place and outside of this place as well – prevent private members from bringing forward changes that they are quite passionate about, either because they were affected by it personally or they've seen people close to them affected or they've had some constituents who brought forward something that is very meaningful to them. I do hope that in the future, whichever members of us are here again in the next Legislature, we are more cognizant and respectful of the importance of private members' work, because it can be really important things that may not make the light of day in other cases, so we should treat it with respect.

When it comes to Bill 204, I'm proud, like my colleagues, to offer my support for this bill. I did not have the opportunity to sit in this Legislature when it was first brought forward by the member but certainly have listened to the thoughtful discussion and debate and the reasons as to why this was perhaps not proclaimed the first time around and why it was brought back again, and it is a testament to the persistence and the commitment of the member that he did make the changes and seek out with the ministry what changes were required in order to make it a private member's bill that would hopefully be passed and proclaimed by this Legislature.

I also take to heart the member's comments about that we all know somebody, a senior, who this could apply to. I'll begin by saying, of course, I know how valuable Amber Alerts are. As all Albertans know, that's critically important, and we've come to a consensus around the importance of coming together when there is a child at risk, and I believe it is right that we do the same for when there is a situation where a senior is at risk as well. It is part of those moments where we remember that we are a community, that we are collaborative, that we do work together for common good. Certainly, protecting the health and safety of somebody who is vulnerable should be something we can all get behind, and I'm sure we have and we do.

When I saw this private member's bill, I actually thought of a story that happened in my neck of the woods in south Edmonton, which was just last summer. I want to give my respects to the family

of Hongsang (Howard) Rho, who was a 64-year-old gentleman from south Edmonton, lived in the Twin Brooks area, which is not part of my riding but is very close to where I am. It's in the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. Mr. Rho was a retired transit worker and an avid outdoorsperson. He went missing in August of 2022, and I believe it was well over a week before the information of his absence and that he was lost came to get any sort of media attention. I remember seeing the pictures. It was suspected that he might have been hiking in Blackmud Creek ravine, which is an area that I know well and a lot of, you know, families that I know know very well. There was also concern, because he was a retired transit worker, that he might have gotten on to transit, so he might have actually been quite far out from where his home was.

I'm very sad to report that he was found over a month after he went missing, and he had passed away. Of course, we'll never know with retrospect whether or not a silver alert would have made a difference, but certainly his family was really beseeching people to keep an eye out for him and to report, and I know people were doing that. It is very possible, one could hope, that had a silver alert system existed at that time – who knows if the outcome would have been different? But, certainly, it doesn't take much for most of us to think of an instance like that, even if it's in the news.

Also, I am a daughter of an aging parent, and I know very well that – they call it the sandwich generation, right? We're caring for children; we're caring for parents. You know, my mother is experiencing health issues as well, and I certainly know what it's like to worry about a senior. I think we all have that experience of knowing somebody in our lives that we would worry about, so I think this is certainly something that all of us have some personal contact with and some personal affiliation with and can certainly see that.

One of the things I have to say, Madam Chair, is that I think about the community that I live in. When we first moved into the community many years ago, we were the only family with young kids. There were a lot of, actually, seniors in our little cul-de-sac that we live in. At first, I was like: oh, who are my kids going to be friends with? There were a lot of seniors who didn't answer their doors on Halloween. I was like: come on; they need some candy on Halloween, and nobody is answering the doors. But it's quite remarkable how that community of seniors has become part of our community and part of our family that we care for very much.

There are lots of young families that have now moved into the cul-de-sac but still a lot of seniors, and it's actually – you know, I see them walking around in our neighbourhoods. One of my neighbours down the street was struggling to find a knee replacement for quite some time; another was struggling with a hip replacement. We just kind of collaborate and come together. When I think about the purpose and intention behind a silver alert, it's really about being a community, and it's really about keeping an eye out for each other and looking out for each other and reminding ourselves that we all are kind of responsible for each other. We are responsible for ensuring that we're safe and protected.

I listened carefully to the member's comments about the requirements of, you know, what standards would have to be met, and I do believe that it is appropriate for the police to have the discretion about when to use this kind of silver alert. We want to make sure that it is – yeah; that people do not become immune to it. We want people to take it seriously, just as we want people to take Amber Alert seriously. I just want to say that there aren't as many opportunities as we would like in this Chamber for us to agree on certain things, but I do think this is something we have been clear in this House that we do have consensus around.

We always want to make the legislation as good as possible, as precise as possible. We want it to work the way it's intended to

work. We want it to have the benefit for the highest number of people as possible. I can appreciate and I believe the member has worked very hard to do that and that we can have some consensus around here to come together and make that happen. I do hope that this private member's bill has the opportunity to get to third reading, as it may not.

I know that the esteemed member – we will not be seeing him in the Legislature again because of his decision not to run again, so I do hope that if by some chance this is not – and I would never presume the outcome of the Legislature, but if it were to not pass this Legislature, that perhaps that work can continue on and somebody will make sure that it is done in the next Legislature, because I think, as we've heard from the comments from the members of the Assembly, there is pretty much consensus that this is a good thing to do, and we want to do it well.

With that, Madam Chair, I'll take my seat.

4:10

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased today to rise and speak in support of this bill. I think, I mean, we're seeing fairly wide-ranging support with respect to this, as my hon. colleague just mentioned. You know, I think it has a lot to do with the fact that we all have in our lives some experience with this, a person that we would be worried about under these circumstances. I think this definitely fixes a piece of the problem.

I do think we've seen a number of tragic circumstances. Certainly, I know that down in Calgary we've had a few high-profile instances, and I have talked to a few folks who have been, unfortunately, in the position of having a missing loved one, and that is – yeah; it's really hard for them. It's hard not knowing what's going on, it's hard not being able to do anything about it, and I think this would help in a lot of circumstances, so that's good.

I think, you know, it's worth discussing the fact that as demographics change, as populations age, and as we expect to see a bit of a shift here, or we're seeing a trend in demographics here, this becomes, potentially, a bigger issue. A lot of folks in health care or in seniors' care will refer to the possibility of sort of a dementia crisis – right? – more and more people coming forward with these challenges. It creates challenges for the whole system, and this is definitely one of them, so I'm really glad to see this come forward.

I would congratulate the member on that because I think as private members it's rare; it's rare to get a bill, it's rare to get the opportunity to bring something like this forward. It is, of course, somewhat rarer now that we have a committee that will prevent these bills from coming forward to the floor, which I think is problematic. But yeah. I mean, in terms of this bill, it's a real opportunity, and I think it's something that we can support on all sides.

Obviously, the member wouldn't be able to do this, but I think that going forward as legislators, governments are really going to need to be investing in this problem. I think, you know, as we see more and more people with dementia – and it can be extremely challenging to care for someone with dementia.

I think most families would have a preference to care for a person at home, but that can be extremely challenging. I think most members of this Chamber probably have experience with this. You know, especially as dementia progresses, it becomes extremely challenging because it can bring with it not only sort of confusion and a failure to remember but also a level of anxiety and fear that can prompt violent behaviour, that people aren't always able to



cope with. Having a loved one – whether they're a parent or a grandparent, an aunt or an uncle, a spouse, even – with these sorts of challenges can be very, very difficult for the family, and it can be increasingly difficult for the family to care for the person, depending on the circumstances.

I think we will need to see more and more dementia-care beds coming on stream, and I think that requires investment. It requires investment in the public system. The reason I say that is because, you know, we do hear a lot about private systems, but they do tend to be those lower level of care beds, and there is a big difference – a big, big difference – between levels of care. In fact, this bill itself, I would say, addresses an issue that can arise both at home and in a care setting.

Usually in care facilities they do a pretty good job of streaming people and making sure they get to the right level of care, but sometimes, you know, someone can start in one facility, and then they will need a higher level of care as that progresses. It can be challenging to move the individual, so sometimes you'll have people sort of trying to manage individuals that require a higher level of care, that require – I keep saying “a higher level of care”; a higher level of care is essentially more staff. The staffing ratio changes. When you have your basic-level-of-care bed, you could have a staffing ratio of even, like, 1 care provider to 10 or 20 people, and by the time you get up to a dementia-care situation, you're talking about maybe 1 or even 2 people to 1 individual being cared for, depending on what their behaviours are.

I do think that this is a very important thing. I think it will help families a lot. But I do think that the government as a whole and we as legislators do need to concern ourselves with this challenge, that it is coming.

Returning somewhat to what is before us, this is a good piece of the puzzle, and potentially, you know, for those situations where – and, again, as I was discussing, people will need a higher level of care over time. It doesn't take much to find yourself in a situation. If you are trying to find care at home, it doesn't take much in terms of turning around for a minute or forgetting to lock something for this sort of thing to happen, or people can be in a position where they're fine to go out for a walk by themselves and they just get confused, right? Dementia sort of has a tendency to come and go. People are not always at the same level of ability. It tends to sort of vary, sometimes over the course of a day, sometimes over the course – but it can change quite quickly, so this will provide families with sort of a level of assistance they need.

I do think it is right to leave some discretion with the authorities to determine what exactly is going on because we don't, obviously, want too many of these going out, not just because the public sort of becomes desensitized to them but also because it's very important to bear in mind that these are still people, and they have privacy interests. You know, obviously, a safety interest would trump a privacy interest, but there can be circumstances in which it's very scary for the family members, but the person was fine and they don't necessarily want their name and their information to sort of be spread across the province. I think that that's a very, very good feature of this bill. I think the member has done a lot of work on this over a number of years, and I think that's important.

A lot of people who watch politics sort of watch it at this very high level, the fightiness of it, I guess, for lack of a better term. I'm not necessarily even against that. You know, politics at the end of the day is a conversation about values, and sometimes values are pretty fundamental, and people have very strong opinions about it. But something like this can sort of bring people together, and this is something that politics does, too. That's the thing people ask me a lot of the time, especially as a woman, why on earth it is that I

would do this thing. This is one of the reasons, because you can have an impact on the lives of the people around you in a way that you never otherwise could.

You know, when I moved from being a lawyer to this job, as a lawyer, at best, you're advancing the cause of an individual case or a group of people. You can win some big victories. I think of the Vriend decision, for instance. You can, like, move the world forward. But in this job you can have the ability to affect the lives of people that you will never even know that you've touched. This bill could save a life, and the member won't know whose life, might not even get thanked, but it is very important, that . . .

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

4:20

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill. This particular bill on silver alerts is, I would say, an essential step towards improving the way that we care for Alberta's seniors and vulnerable adults. Amber Alberts, as I think most if not all of us are aware, can be a really effective way of finding young people during periods of time when they need to be found, they need to be cared for. In the rhythm and full circle of life sometimes older people get to the point where they could use a similar service.

I don't think I'm quite there yet, but I will be a senior this year, and for everybody else that's smug right now because you're so much younger, remember that there are only two kinds of people in the world: seniors and those that hope to be. I know no one was unpleasant with me, but that's what I try to remind people. There're only two kinds of people in the world: seniors and those that hope to be. And when our turn comes, we want to look after ourselves for as long as we can, perhaps for the whole distance, but sometimes, again, life is such that some of us will need more care along the way than perhaps we anticipated and perhaps than we hoped.

Sometimes one of the most important measures that you measure society by, of course, is how we treat the most vulnerable. It's our government's commitment to ensure that Alberta is a place where everybody can rely on each other for protection and help in situations when it's needed. I would compliment our Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for his commitment to caring for other people, as reflected in the bill before us right now. Thank you.

Now, silver alerts, of course, will work towards shoring up the protections we provide our seniors and vulnerable adults and the families of at-risk individuals, and the emergency services that we all rely on in one form or another are made just that little bit stronger. Of course, it could happen to anybody, that they could need this service.

Madam Chair, I've had some experience with this. My own father, who is no longer with us, actually made it pretty far. He made it to 93, and about the time – part of the reason I don't remember exactly when the dementia in some form started to affect him is because I lived about 2,500 miles away from where I grew up. But, fortunately for me, I have four amazing sisters back there that helped look after mom and dad when they were around, but I will say that it was – it's pretty hard on the senior when they go through the part of their life where they might need a silver alert.

I remember a few years ago my son and I went back to where I grew up, and we spent three days with dad, and it was three completely different events. The one day it was like old times, just like everything was great. One of the other days he drifted in and out of lucidity: you seem like a nice young man, but why are you buying me a hot chocolate, and who are you? Then on another day

he had no idea who my son or I were, and it wasn't because he didn't want to know, and that is the hard part about it. Now, there were a few – I'm certainly not making fun, but there were a few fun events that cropped up as a result.

I know a friend of mine whose father was going through the early stages of where he actually could've used a silver alert, because he was just at the point where he would drift in and out. He still had a driver's licence, and the reason that – I'm not sure he got his driver's licence taken away, but one day, miraculously, the vehicle didn't work anymore and just nobody got around to getting it fixed. In other words, somebody had taken the cable off the battery because it was time.

He, the friend of mine, lived in south Calgary. His father was missing for six or eight hours until he phoned from his cellphone somewhere on the side of the road on the other side of Cochrane. He had no idea where he was, and he finally had to admit defeat in terms of, you know – to find his way home. It was a little bit sad, but that was one of those situations where if a silver alert was available, even having the person's licence plate number might have helped to stop him. I guess none of us will ever know, at this point, whether he drove perfectly or some way other than perfectly, but just to prevent injury or death or damage from happening, the ability to have a silver alert system would have been very valuable back then.

Should the House see fit to pass this before the election is called, then I think we can all feel good about putting that service in place for seniors now. And, as it goes, it could be some of us that need the service; I would say that almost for sure somebody in this room will need that service at some point in their life. Won't it be nice if it's actually there because of the good work that we're able to do in this place?

Madam Chair, silver alerts help every Albertan with a cellphone to become a watchful protector who is given a little more power to look after our fellow human being. So many situations and examples, some of which we've heard in wonderful debate from other members on this bill, seniors – and you know what? I'm sure we've all heard it. I have heard it. I guess it's not a silver alert, but sometimes you'll hear it on the radio where somebody's family member is missing. It always concerns me because, of course, while there are a lot of happy endings where somebody was found, there are other endings, too, where somebody was walking between places when the temperature was cold and they just froze to death or drowned or fell and hurt themselves or some other thing. All those people are loved by somebody, and those that love them will be very, very relieved if a silver alert was in place to bring them home safely to where they belong. And in some cases it's people that – as we get older, more of us need medication on a regular basis, and it could be somebody not back in time for their medication, and that could have a detrimental effect on their lives.

I guess I could go on for hours, and you'll all be glad to know I won't, but the fact is that I think that we're doing something good here if we pass this. I think the bill is intended to be structured in such a way that the private and personal information of people that are subject to an alert is largely protected, at least to the extent that it can be after allowing the public to identify them to bring them back to where they're safe. I think it's also intended to avoid an excessive number of alerts over a larger area; in other words, I think, hopefully, to have the ability to be targeted to the area that an individual may well be capable of travelling to, and of course part of that would be whether they're driving, whether they're walking, whatever it happens to be. So I really think that there was some good thought put into it.

I know that there's legislation in some American states as well as the province of Manitoba, and in all those places a silver alert type system has saved lives before, and I have no doubt – in fact, I'm very sure – that it will save lives here in Alberta.

Madam Chair, I'm grateful for the opportunity to talk about something so positive and something that it sounds like all sides of the House can perhaps get behind and something that, since there's no guarantee any of us will be back after May 29, if we get this done, we'll all be able to look back at, I think with some pride and satisfaction, saying: there's definitely one good thing. There are lots of good things that happen in here, but this will be one more good thing that happened during this term of office. I certainly support the bill as before us. I hope and expect that other members will. I think that might well be the case. Let's get one more good thing done before we're finished.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

4:30

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, and commend the member for bringing it forward. I know that, as has been mentioned in this House before, most of us have some connection, either direct or indirect, with seniors, elderly individuals in Alberta who may be at risk of actually requiring a silver alert to be called if they go missing. Most individuals in this province wish to continue living at home as long as possible, but of course many of us will need to be in a long-term care facility of one kind or another, and our seniors will go missing from either a home location or potentially from a long-term care, private or public, facility.

This piece of legislation will allow authorities to alert the public to engage in a search that will help find the missing person as quickly as possible and give every opportunity for that individual to be found safe and healthy and returned to either home or the facility from which they went missing. Of course, Madam Chair, it's all of our hope and wish that every senior doesn't have to see the protection of this silver alert and that they are able to live at home as long as possible, but indeed if somebody does go missing as a result of their confusion or their dementia, this legislation is something that will assist authorities to find them and, hopefully, have a good result in returning them to their home or the facility that they went missing from.

The one thing that I wanted to mention, of course, was that all of our seniors deserve to be supported no matter whether you're in a long-term care facility or living at home. As had been mentioned briefly by the Member for Calgary-Hays, who talked about Alberta seniors who have drivers' licences and may actually go missing while driving their vehicle and perhaps, as a result of this, end up losing that driver's licence, well, Madam Chair, what happens in that situation and others is that the remaining spouse, should there be a remaining spouse, is the one who has the driver's licence and becomes the caregiver who is responsible for getting that individual with dementia to their appointments, to doctors' appointments, and even just to go out on outings to enrich their quality of life.

One of the things that this government has done, Madam Chair, is make it more expensive for that remaining senior to keep their driver's licence, to renew their driver's licence, and it behooves me to wonder why indeed they did take the measure to force Alberta doctors to charge seniors for required, mandatory, drivers' medical examinations to keep their licence, \$85 to \$150 in many cases, so that they can maintain their driver's licence, in many cases in a

situation where they're struggling with extra costs already of a family member who has dementia.

[Mr. Turton in the chair]

There are many, many costs associated with that, whether that be bringing in respite care to a home or whether it be other pseudomedical needs, whether it be incontinence issues or whether it be bringing bars and walkers and so forth into the home to help. There are a lot of costs that add up to thousands of dollars a year, Mr. Chair, for a family member looking to keep a spouse or an elderly family member in-home under their care. That responsibility is a big, big burden, and almost everyone in this Chamber will know somebody, if not themselves, who is undertaking to look after an elderly loved one in-home or even during a stay in long-term care, because there are costs involved, and there's a huge time commitment.

The difficulty is that, you know, the government, on this hand, looks to pat themselves on the back for looking after seniors and providing an opportunity for seniors at risk who may be even going missing to be found more quickly using a silver alert – that's certainly commendable – but on the other hand they neglect to really look at the harm they're doing by causing a senior to have to pay 85 to 150 bucks to renew their driver's medical exam when, in fact, they may be caring for a senior who they want to remain in their own home or visiting a senior in a long-term care centre that may or may not be close to their own house. That extra burden on a regular basis of \$85 to \$150 is something that this government could easily have dispensed with, but they neglected to do so and ignored the pleas of seniors to have this cost eliminated.

That's another reason, Mr. Chair, why a Seniors Advocate is a good idea in this province, so that individuals' voices, the seniors' voices would be listened to so that a cost like that, an expense like 85 to 150 bucks for a driver's medical, would be avoided if indeed they had their voice listened to. A Seniors Advocate would help do that so that a senior who is looking after a spouse or partner who's living in long-term care or at home, who actually might end up being at risk of drifting away or wandering away from their home or long-term care facility, would actually have the benefit of a caregiver with a driver's licence who could actually afford to keep it.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

You know, it may seem like a small burden, but if you look at \$85 to \$100 on a regular basis, it could take a chunk out of an individual's income. I mean, many seniors are operating under pretty low incomes already, and you're looking at \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month. By the time you deduct utilities and heating costs and maintenance and groceries, especially now, that \$85 to \$150 that they have to fork out for a driver's medical so that they can keep their driver's licence and actually look after their loved one, who may be a senior in long-term care or living at home, is an unnecessary burden. It was a bit of a slap in the face, Madam Chair, for the government not to recognize that and to eliminate that driver's medical exam fee for our Alberta seniors.

I think that I can safely say that it's something that we would look at doing promptly should we form government after the next election. I think Alberta seniors can look forward to that small measure to improve affordability in their lives in the province.

Certainly, the legislation before us, Madam Chair, is a very worthwhile expenditure of this Legislature's time and, of course, of the member's effort to bring it forward as one of his last acts in this Legislature before he retires from this career. It's commendable that he spent the time that he has on it, but I'm saying to this House and

to Albertans that it's incumbent upon the government to have a consistent approach to seniors' care and that everything they do has to be able to be reflected in that approach. The matter of the charging for a driver's medical for our seniors isn't indicative of that. Whereby, on one hand, the member will claim that this is a measure that's going to assist our seniors – and that's something he can rightfully claim – the government's approach is not reflected in this private member's bill when one looks at the cost of maintaining a driver's licence. Requiring doctors to charge \$85 to \$150 for a driver's medical is inconsistent with this private member's bill's approach to seniors and caring for seniors.

If you add it up, it's certainly something that anyone on a fixed income, any seniors on a fixed income, without, you know, benefits beyond the regular ones you might receive through Alberta health care, would find a burden on a biannual basis or however often they need to go ahead and renew their driver's licence.

That's just one example, Madam Chair, of the extra costs that seniors have had to pay that this government has neglected to cushion them from, especially during a time when we're seeing the cost of living so high, when everything has gone up, including the cost of groceries, the cost of fuel to keep that car operating, the cost of caregiving materials, that every family is kind of shocked to learn that they might have to pay. Wheelchairs, for example, are not something that are provided to seniors free of charge.

4:40

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

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and add some comments to Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. I see this is very similar to an Amber Alert but for missing adult citizens, generally focusing around senior citizens with dementia. As many of my colleagues already mentioned and the member who moved the bill also acknowledged, this bill makes changes to Bill 210, that was passed in 2017. It was not proclaimed due to some issues.

Looking at this, first of all, I just wanted to congratulate the member for bringing this kind of piece of legislation to the House. I think this is a privilege, whenever we as legislators or public representatives get a chance to do something to help people, specifically, particularly those in dire need, you know. That needs to be appreciated, and I do.

Looking at the bill, a few questions that are in my mind – a lot of feedback and many personal experiences I had in my mind. I don't know how much time I will have to share those, as my dear colleagues also have a lot to say on this. As I read the bill, it says Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, when it was initiated. The scope of the bill seems a bit narrower. It's basically limited to senior citizens, as it says, the age of over 55. I think, from my personal experience – I don't know what kind of feedback the member had before bringing the bill into the House. There was scope to expand, actually. There was an option to expand the scope of this bill. I see many, many individuals struggling and suffering from mental disorders or mental health issues dealing with similar issues as well. Those people are under the age of 55. Sometimes they're very young; they're youth.

I lived in a complex. I witnessed those issues. I have my own special-needs son. I've heard many stories, and I experience this issue myself. These people, the patients with dementia and mental health and many different types of disabilities, are very lovely people. They need extra care, more than an ordinary patient will probably need. Many times that is 24-hour supervision. You cannot even, you know, just ignore them for a second sometimes. They

don't do anything intentionally. They don't know what they're doing. They're lovely people. Sometimes they think they're trying to do something best, but they don't know, like: what is the risk in this? The risks are, like, huge.

There was a time – I think it was two years ago – when I was in the house of a constituent to pay condolences to the family member that he lost. He was pretty healthy, I think in the range of 60, 70 years of age. Two months later I heard that he got a severe dementia condition. They could not believe it. How could it trigger like this? More unfortunately, three or four months later than that, we found out that he was missing. It took a few days. It was good that he was recovered safely, but he didn't live very long, unfortunately. You know, he passed away. It got very severe.

I heard from back home, experience in my country, and I still think, when I'm looking at this bill, that if there could be a system or options and reasons to help or support like this, then young individuals could have been saved. By seeing many members and my colleagues, including yourself, I think you do understand issues with people supported by home care and many other things. Particularly when I represent many of those communities – they speak different languages. Not only do constituents come to my office; also, those Albertans feel they can easily communicate with me in their language on their issues. The biggest problem is that, you know, we do not have culturally delivered home-care support services at all. It doesn't exist. There are a huge, huge number of communities and people and citizens that need it.

The language barrier. I don't know how much you can do without language communication, how much you can help that individual that is in critical condition, who can't do much for him- or herself, and how much home support can help if they do not know their cultural backgrounds and they don't know their cultural food and the other stuff. Those kinds of problems: it's beyond explaining how critical it is.

Unfortunately, I was not one of those members, you know, that had the opportunity where I could bring forward this kind of motion. I still appreciate that you are doing something and that we have something to discuss, but there is a lot to do. A lot to do. I often talk to the home-care service providers. You know, they're lovely people. They try to do their best, whatever they can. The majority of the time in critical, critical health they are allotted the maximum of, like, a half-hour. Their people come in to help for 10 minutes, 15 minutes. Sometimes, if there is some time, giving a bath or doing the extended duties, they're allotted, like, a half-hour time. Out of those half-hours, they are given just 10 minutes for travel time, only 20 minutes to spend on the individuals.

They're also not, you know, paid enough, almost minimum wage, \$18. There's huge talent in the province that exists. I speak of all those professionals and skilled individuals that are moving into our province from abroad with professional degrees in health care and all that. You know, they are not being used. They're not being used. They're being wasted.

There is a lot to say. I appreciate and I support your bill, but I had hoped it would have been, like, a bit expanded, you know, in scope. That's all I wanted to see. I hope I have the opportunity, once again, maybe sometime in this government session or maybe the next – definitely, those are very serious concerns, and we need to take a look at them as legislators collectively.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Being cognizant of the time here, I will keep my comments brief. This is an important piece of legislation that I do thank the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for bringing forward. I also appreciate his tenacity for making sure that we keep this bill in front of us.

As was mentioned, Bill 210, unfortunately, tripped literally at the finish line, so, you know, if I could take an opportunity, Madam Chair, to make a shameless plug towards private members' bills, perhaps the Legislature in the future could look at some kinds of resources for private members, sort of on the back end, in terms of looking over legislation, any potential conflicts which, hopefully, might have then prevented Bill 210 not being proclaimed.

4:50

I wish the government had been able to identify that, maybe taken it under their wing as a government bill. Then, you know, we could have gotten this through a lot sooner. But it is what it is. Hopefully, now that we've gotten all our ducks in a row, we will be able to get this through. As the Member for Calgary-Hays had mentioned, maybe we can even get it through before the end of this session, because I'd hate to see it again almost trip at the finish line now that, fingers crossed, we've got it right and all the language lines up.

I'd just reconfirm my commitment here today to Bill 204, as I did for Bill 210. I do appreciate that the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon did manage to answer some of my questions, too, that I had originally had in second reading around any potential costs. My hope is that should there be any additional costs, we won't see Bill 204 perhaps fall to nickel and diming. We have seen a few instances where that has occurred by the government. Hopefully, that's not the case with Bill 204. They'll just simply look at it, and it will just be the right thing to do.

As I had mentioned in second reading, I too have seen a couple of cases where seniors in north Edmonton had gone missing. One of the things I forgot to mention was that I even went driving for half an hour or 45 minutes around Edmonton-Decore to see if perhaps I noticed something. The good news was that in those cases it was a happy ending, and those family members were able to get their way back home. But in the case when it's not, this system, I believe, could be the difference between life and death. There's no doubt about that.

From the speakers that I've heard today and throughout debate, I suspect that we will see this bill pass Committee of the Whole and on its way to third, and hopefully maybe we can get this over the finish line.

With that, just on the off chance, I'll make that plug to every single member. As I will be supporting this piece of legislation, I certainly urge you to support this piece of legislation. Let's do what's right for our seniors, make sure they're protected, make sure they get home safe when maybe they are, you know, unfortunate and find themselves somewhere else.

**The Chair:** Are there other members wishing to join the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I, too, wanted to just get on the record today. It has been really nice to see the unanimous support – well, so far – in the House on Bill 204. Of course, I must note that I, too, am disappointed that we haven't had an opportunity to debate private members' business from members on this side of the House. That is certainly a shame. But, like I said, I want to get on the record just to thank the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for his work on Bill 204. From some of the really moving stories that we've heard today and in previous debate on

this, you know, I think the Chamber can agree for once on one thing: we can agree that we're doing the right thing.

With that, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the House for the wonderful debate.

**The Chair:** Are there other members wishing to join the debate?

Seeing none, I will call the question on Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022.

[The clauses of Bill 204 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 204.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 204. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I ask for unanimous consent from the Chamber to recognize the time as 5 o'clock and move immediately to Motions Other than Government Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Motions Other than Government Motions

### Abandoned Oil and Gas Well Cleanup

505. Mr. Schmidt moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) endorse the principle of polluter pays; and
- (b) oppose the use of government revenue to incentivize the cleanup of abandoned oil and gas infrastructure by companies that are legally responsible for that cleanup.

**Mr. Schmidt:** If you make a mess, you clean it up: it's a rule that all of us were taught to live by by our mothers, a rule that our spouses or significant others reinforce every time we leave a pair of dirty socks on the floor or dirty dishes in the sink, and a rule we remind our children to follow every time they walk through the house with their dirty shoes on or leave garbage lying around on the floor in their rooms. When the rule is followed, people generally live pretty happily together, and when it's not, conflict arises.

Taking responsibility to clean up your own messes is an obligation that we all believe we should take on, and we've enshrined this obligation as the polluter-pay principle in federal and provincial environmental legislation. The Supreme Court said that it's a well-recognized tenet of environmental law. For the oil and gas industry polluter pay means that oil and gas companies must pay for the environmental costs of their activities. That's been part of the social contract between the oil and gas industry and the Alberta public since the start of that industry in our province.

The sad truth of the matter, though, is that those responsible for enforcing the contract, this UCP Premier and her government, want to rip it up and write a new one, a contract that will make Albertans pay \$20 billion to oil and gas companies to clean up oil and gas wells that they are already legally obligated to pay for. It's a bad deal for the people of Alberta, and by voting in favour of this motion, members of this House can show the public that we are standing up for them.

When we raise this issue in the House, the Premier and her government deny it. "It's nowhere in the budget," they say. But the evidence that the UCP is intent on fulfilling its commitment to developing this massive corporate welfare scheme couldn't be more clear. The Premier herself was a paid lobbyist for the program. Kris Kinnear, also a paid lobbyist for the program, now works in the Premier's office to develop the program and is still, at least on paper, a director of the organization who lobbied for the program.

The Energy minister shilled for the program when he was a private member of the government caucus, and I have no doubt that it was his enthusiasm for the program that was a key factor in his appointment to that post. His mandate letter specifically mentions the creation of an incentive program as a key responsibility the Premier expects him to fulfill. To that end, he's held invitation-only meetings with supportive stakeholders and made comments to the press committing to a \$100 million pilot program.

The Premier herself has defended the program on her own radio show. Currently, if the UCP were to deny they were doing the thing that they were doing, I'd accuse them of having a hidden agenda, but their agenda to pay \$20 billion to oil and gas companies to clean up messes that they're legally required to pay for is out there in the open for all to see. The only place it's hidden is in the budget, and I think that should give all Albertans reason to be skeptical about what the UCP has put forward in the budget documents.

It's also plain for all to see that this \$20 billion giveaway is a rip-off for the Alberta taxpayer. You don't have to take my word for it. That's what Scotiabank had to say about the program. They said that "the program goes against the core capitalist principle that private companies should take full responsibility for the liabilities that they willingly accept."

Paul McLaughlin of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta has said that the program is exactly how a fox would design a henhouse. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said that he's a hundred per cent against R-star because it's corporate welfare. Political scientist Duane Bratt says: it's a disgrace on so many levels; you've got the corporate welfare element, but you also have the corruption element. Even the now environment minister rejected the idea when the Premier was lobbying for it, saying that it went against the polluter-pay principle and didn't align with Alberta's royalty framework. It seems she's now changed her tune, just to add to the list of the Premier's bad ideas that she was vocally opposed to back in September but proudly supports now that she's back in cabinet. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I hadn't heard a single Albertan speak out in favour of this program unless they personally stood to gain financially from it.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, in recent years the people of Alberta have already picked up the tab for billions of dollars' worth of the oil and gas sector's environmental liabilities. In 2020-2021 we paid over a billion dollars in grants to companies to clean up their wells. The bulk of that money went to companies that were already massively profitable. This government spent \$1.5 billion on trans-Canada's pipeline to nowhere. We've loaned the Orphan Well Association hundreds of millions of dollars and are still waiting for those loans to be paid back. There are hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid municipal taxes that have to be covered by residential property owners. The government has paid out more than \$60 million in surface lease payments that were owed to landowners, and they've recovered less than 1 per cent of that money from the companies that should have been on the hook. When I asked the environment minister about this in estimates, she just shrugged her shoulders and basically said: what are you going to do?

At a time when the cost of living is going through the roof and oil and gas companies are raking in record profits, regular Albertans look at what they've already given to the oil and gas industry and are asking how much more they have to pay. The Premier's answer: \$20 billion more. It's clear that the Premier is out of touch with regular Albertans, who don't want \$20 billion of their money spent to clean up someone else's mess. We here in the Alberta NDP stand firmly and proudly with those regular Albertans against this \$20 billion giveaway. This is money that belongs to the people of Alberta, and it should be spent on their priorities.

We've been listening to their priorities and are committing to getting the job done. What would we do with that money, Mr. Speaker? We'd build the south Edmonton hospital. We'd build the Red Deer hospital. We'd reopen the X-ray clinic in Morinville. We'd widen the ambulance bay doors in Innisfail. We'd put a CT scanner in the Misericordia hospital. We'd make sure that a million Albertans could finally see a family doctor with the creation of family health teams, and as an added bonus Albertans would never have to pay out of pocket to see that family doctor, unlike what the Premier has in store for them. We'd build way more than one school in Calgary, and we might even build some schools in Cochrane and Airdrie, too. We'd bring down the cost of living for Albertans, reducing the cost of their energy bills, their car insurance bills, tuition. We'd tackle the high price of groceries. We'd invest real money in the revitalization of downtown Calgary. Those are the priorities that Albertans tell me they have every day, and those are the priorities of Alberta's NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the difference between the government and the opposition on this issue could not be more clear. The UCP wants to pay \$20 billion to their friends and donors to do the thing that they should already do. We in the Alberta NDP say no. We know that money should be spent on the things that matter to Albertans: better public health care, making life more affordable, and good jobs for working people. I encourage all members to show that they stand with regular Albertans and show that they stand with their priorities as well and vote in favour of this motion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Motion Other than Government Motion 505 is before the Assembly. Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak to this motion, and I thank the member very much for bringing forward this incredibly important motion. This motion essentially calls on us to endorse the principle of polluter pay, which I think all members should be willing to do, and to oppose the use

of government revenue, in specific royalties, that are meant to belong to all of us and to all Albertans, to incentivize the cleanup of abandoned oil and gas infrastructure, particularly because companies are already legally obligated to clean up that mess.

What, Mr. Speaker, is the problem with the UCP's \$20 billion handout? Well, the first problem is that, I mean, they're giving away royalty money, money that belongs to all Albertans, money that ought to go to support all Albertans, to private companies who already have those obligations. The contract that those companies signed to get a drilling licence obligates them to clean up their mess after they are done. It's part of the cost of doing business. This is essentially the government paying people to not break the law. It's as if the government were to begin paying private citizens not to speed. It makes no sense because if you could get paid not to speed, who's going to do it just of their own volition?

That's exactly the problem with this program. It creates what lawyers and philosophers would probably call a moral hazard, but essentially it creates a problem wherein: why would anyone fulfill their obligations just because they're obligated when they could instead choose not to fulfill their obligations in the hope of getting a giant taxpayer handout? That's a huge problem. It's a waste of money, it's not fiscally responsible, and there's no guarantee that it will actually sort of result in additional cleanup. That's the thing.

You know, we saw the Premier stand up today and say: well, we're obligating these companies to do \$740 million in cleanup. Okay. Well, I mean, \$740 million sounds like a lot of money, doesn't it? Not compared to \$20 billion, it isn't. We're talking about kind of far, far more money, more than twice as much money, being used to incentivize this – “incentivize,” scare quotes – relative to what's being required. That's extremely problematic, and I think Albertans object. I think they object because it violates their basic sense of fairness. We all are expected to fulfill our contracts. We all are expected to uphold our obligations, especially those obligations we have voluntarily taken on, you know, without being paid to do so. Albertans don't like things that aren't fair, and this is not fair. So that is highly problematic to begin with.

I think the other problem with this is that it doesn't really pass the sniff test. The Premier lobbied for this program before she became the Premier. Suddenly it's getting pushed through with very little consultation. The head lobbyist for this, one who has, according to them and no one else, resigned from his position, now works in the Premier's office. That person is still listed, incidentally, as a director on the corporate registry, and here's the thing. It's not that hard to amend a corporate registry, and it doesn't take that long. You file the paperwork, and then it gets amended. We pulled a search on that corporate registry just recently, and there's his name in black and white, Kris Kinnear, still listed as a lobbyist there. That's wildly problematic in terms of actual conflicts of interest. You know, on things like this even the appearance of a conflict like that is highly problematic.

Albertans deserve to be able to know transparently, without going to a great deal of depth, that their government is acting in their interests, not in private interests. We should be able to know that without having to pull registry searches, so this is incredibly problematic. The refusal to address it publicly is incredibly problematic. Add to that the fact that the other head of this same organization – one head is now in the Premier's office, still listed as corporate director – runs an anti-NDP PAC. That is extremely problematic, right? It's extremely problematic to see these sort of interties between groups that are ostensibly unassociated groups, that are ostensibly, you know, not affiliated, running these advertisements, lobbying for a thing, a thing which the public hates, which is not in their interests, and which is being rammed through the government. Is it a smoking gun? Maybe not, but it sure doesn't

pass the smell test. I don't think anyone would look at that and be like: that set of facts seems fine to me. I think anyone who looks at it would be troubled, deeply troubled.

5:10

Now, if there were some sort of argument that this was in the public benefit – sorry. If there were some sort of credible argument that this was in the public benefit, perhaps that sort of weird interaction between people and lobbying and government wouldn't seem quite so problematic, but there isn't. There really, really isn't. The Premier talks about the worst of the wells that haven't been reclaimed, but the thing is that to get a royalty credit, there's still an owner. These aren't orphaned wells. These aren't wells that have moved to the Orphan Well Association, because those have no owner. The company has gone bankrupt; it's defunct. Honestly, without making allegations, it feels a lot like the government is really taking some big steps not to clarify that distinction, not to clarify the distinction between wells that don't have an owner and wells that do have an owner, because only wells that do have an owner, that have a company that is still solvent, that is probably generating an enormous amount of profit, who is legally obligated to clean them up, can generate royalty credits, because you have to be getting royalties. So I think that that is wildly problematic.

I think that the people of Alberta are strongly against it, and I think when you see politicians pushing ahead with something this wildly unpopular, it raises some questions. I think that when you add those questions to the ties between these lobbying firms and the Premier and other members of the government, that all becomes super problematic.

What I think is fantastic about this motion is, because we know that there are members of the government who have stood for the polluter-pay principle – we had an Energy minister who was replaced by this Premier, a UCP Energy minister, who publicly said: I don't support this program; it violates the polluter-pay principle. I would be very, very interested to see if we can see some members of the government standing up against this because I think it is the wrong thing to do and I think that their constituents are watching and will hold them accountable for this. Yeah. I think that this program is incredibly problematic. It is problematic ethically. It is problematic in terms of responsible governance, and I'm not the only one who thinks that. The RMA thinks that. Scotiabank thinks that. They called it a violation of basic capitalist principles.

I think the government can do better. I hope to see government members stand up against this because I think that there's a far better use for \$20 billion. It's almost the entire health care budget. I think there are a lot of things that a government should be able to do with this money that aren't this. I believe that the government – well, I believe that Albertans can do better, and they have the opportunity with a new government.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? Motion Other than Government Motion 505.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, I'll speak happily, Mr. Speaker, to this Motion 505, which is a pretty shocking motion to most Albertans, who believe that historically we would expect companies to be cleaning up their own messes, and that's what one would have thought would be the so-called Alberta way. I've worked in the oil patch and spun my share of wrenches on service rigs and moved service rigs. If indeed there was a spill of some kind that was caused by the company I was working with, we cleaned it up, and we admitted responsibility and took efforts to make sure that the damage that we did was taken care of.

It wasn't any effort; even back then, in the '80s, it was a matter of respect for our small business that I worked with to admit fault and pay for it. That's a principle that's enshrined not only in the ethics of individuals and small businesses in the province but large corporations the size of – the Bank of Nova Scotia has seen fit to come forward, Mr. Speaker, to reinforce the principle that if you make a mess, you clean it up and you pay for it, that you undertake to claim responsibility for the obligations you have that you've willingly undertaken. It shocked the business community that the government would be seemingly willing to shirk this responsibility by somehow circumventing this principle and allowing, by way of a royalty rebate program, handing over \$20 billion of the Alberta treasury's money to companies so that they could be compensated for cleaning up the messes that they were already legally obligated to pay for.

Believe me, Mr. Speaker; when I mentioned this at the door – it may be shocking to you, but when you say the word "R-star," it gets people's dander up. They recognize what it is, and the issue was on the table and on the doorstep in this province. It is something that people are keenly aware of, and when they sense an injustice, when they sense that there's an irresponsibility undertaken by corporations with the complicity of the government, they are not happy about it. Albertans are very much aware of this issue. They're seized with it. We're bringing it forward in the House not because it's some minuscule issue that deserves to be brought to the public light; it is already under the spotlight in this province, and Albertans are keenly aware of it.

We are rightly proud of our oil and gas industry in this province, and one of the things that we expect of that industry as well as any others is that if there are environmental concerns or issues that are the responsibility of an oil company, they will undertake to clean up the messes that they've made. You know, the now Premier, who previous to her undertaking that role was the lobbyist who promoted this R-star scheme so that energy companies could be compensated by receiving a royalty holiday in exchange for cleaning up messes that they already were obligated to undertake – now, having assumed the Premier's role, it appears as though the current Energy minister is wildly in approval of it. It seems to be a team effort to double down on this scheme to have oil companies compensated from the provincial treasury to do what they're already obligated to do from their own pockets, and Albertans are not amused. They're actually shocked and they're angry about what this government is trying to do.

I think the only disbelief, Mr. Speaker, comes from the fact that many people at the doorstep just can't believe that the government is trying to pull this off. Like, what Albertan would have expected this to have taken place in 2023, where you have a Premier who had lobbied loud and strong for this type of a measure to satisfy the oil companies' interests, to relieve them of obligations to the tune of \$20 billion they already have – who would have believed that, indeed, if that lobbyist actually assumed the premiership would continue to double down on that and think it was a winning proposition for her government? It's a pretty interesting tale, and it's reminiscent of sort of Wild West days.

5:20

You know, when I worked in the oil patch for small businesses that benefited from the production of oil and gas in this province, many of which still continue to do so, there was a respect, a dignity amongst those, at least the small businesses, to ensure that they took their responsibility seriously, and they actually paid if indeed they screwed up, if there was a spill, if there was some damage done to land. That's why we have tribunals, to ensure that this happens. The

Surface Rights Board, for example, Mr. Speaker, looks at disputes between landowners and oil companies.

It's very, very disappointing, shocking, and certainly unacceptable that we have a government led by a Premier who lobbied on behalf of oil companies to receive up to \$20 billion in compensation for doing what they're already responsible to do by law. It's very disappointing that we now have a Premier and a government who seem intent on following through on this when, in fact, Albertans are gathering their voices loudly and clearly to say: "Uh-uh. This is not right. It offends our sense of justice. It's just plain offensive, and we're not going to stand for it."

I urge the government, Mr. Speaker, to reconsider what they're doing and endorse the policy, the principle of polluter pays. You know, this motion opposes the use of government revenue to incent the cleanup of abandoned oil and gas infrastructure by companies that are legally required to pay for that cleanup. It's astounding that indeed the government seems intent to move forward on this. In many respects I know that some pundits are feeling that the government is running towards a cliff by supporting and sticking with this policy of handing over up to \$20 billion to oil companies, yet the government seems intent.

I remember times when we were in government ourselves and the opposition was saying, like, you know: just take our advice on this one; it's going to hurt you. There were a couple of times when it probably would've been a good idea. This is a time, Mr. Speaker, when the shoe is on the other foot, and we're telling the government very plainly, "Back up on this, think it through again, and don't cause yourself the trouble that you're getting yourself into with the Alberta taxpayer," who is definitely smelling something rotten. They're not comfortable at all with what this government is trying to pull off here. It's almost as if in the light of day they think they can get away with something that indeed under the cloak of secrecy might have been more difficult and they might've been accused of hiding something. Here they're right in the open. They're asking Alberta taxpayers to come up with \$20 billion to compensate oil companies to do what they're already required to do, clean up their own mess. I can't understand why indeed the government is so intent on it.

I mean, if that's what they are intent on doing, they will suffer the penalty and the wrath of Albertans and Alberta taxpayers because indeed it's on the radar of the Alberta taxpayer and the public, in my riding and right across the province, whether you're in Fort McMurray, southern Alberta. Wherever you find oil patch exploration going on, you'll find people are concerned about this, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane and Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that I'm a little bit surprised that the NDP want to continue down the path of taking a position against the energy sector heading into an election. You know, even when it comes to good environmental stewardship and the acceleration of well closure, the NDP refuse to lend support.

Before I get into those details, I'd like to talk about some of the great work going on in industry because it exemplifies responsible development. As of January 1 there were approximately 464,000 wells in Alberta, including 133,500 reclaimed to date, of which over 15,000 were reclaimed in the last year alone. Contributions for this cleanup came through direct industry initiatives; the Orphan Well Association, which is a levy paid by the oil and gas sector; and through closure efforts from the site rehabilitation program.

Alberta's energy sector are setting the pace when it comes to methane reductions, having achieved 44 per cent thus far, meaning

we will easily exceed the 45 per cent goal set out for 2025. At a flaring and methane reductions panel that I participated in at CERAWEEK in Houston, many were happy to see the tremendous success within Alberta and expressed displeasure at the lack of action elsewhere in the world.

Alberta oil sands producers are also showing leadership, having brought down emissions by over 35 per cent in the last 20 years, 22 per cent in the last decade. The Pathways Alliance, made up of the six largest oil sands players, have committed to reaching the goal of net zero, or net neutrality, by 2050 and are actively working to implement carbon capture technology into their operations.

Mr. Speaker, our producers are technological innovators and have the highest level of environmental metrics, a deep concern for civil and human rights, not to mention strong governance policies. This doesn't even take into consideration the human and social factors from the energy sector's contributions to local communities, Indigenous partnerships, and their outsized contribution to public services through royalties and tax dollars.

The implication from this motion brought forth by Alberta's NDP is that the industry is not living up to their obligations, and that is completely false. It's that ideology that keeps tripping up this opposition. Mr. Speaker, we all know that both the federal and the provincial NDP are one and the same. They are one party, which means that Jagmeet Singh is the leader, with provincial parties being subordinate. So let's take a look at some of their platform policies. From the NDP's website:

Putting a price on carbon has been an important tool in efforts to drive emissions reductions. We will continue with carbon pricing while . . . rolling back loopholes . . . [to give] to big polluters. But we also recognize that carbon pricing won't be enough . . . Further action is needed.

. . . We will support Canada's net-zero target by reviewing financial legislation . . . [to] ensure that strict rules are in place to prevent big companies from using . . . offsets.

And they go on and on. They say that they will put in place legislation to ban any future oil, gas and pipeline [incentives].

Mr. Speaker, the anti oil and gas position is a fundamental, ideological NDP belief, with no incentives of any kind to be allowed to fossil fuel producers ever. That is the real message behind their motion. Naturally, this causes strife and division within the NDP ranks because we live in Alberta. Adhering to an anti oil and gas platform, at least outwardly, is an election killer, so the NDP try to gaslight the regular citizen into thinking that they support but use incrementalism to destroy resource development. They do this in a number of ways such as increasing the cost of doing business until companies are no longer viable, and then they go bankrupt. As an example, the NDP will increase corporate taxes and personal taxes while they're at it; support the clean fuel standard, which is just another carbon tax; they'll increase levies; and they're talking about another hike in the minimum wage, all things designed to increase the cost of living and make life miserable for business.

Now, we all know, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP introduced Canada's first retail carbon tax, and the purpose was to increase the cost of living so high that one would have to stop using fossil fuels such as gasoline or natural gas for heating your home. In Alberta this is virtually impossible because of the cold climate and the vast distances we have to travel, so all this does is increase inflationary pressures on families and make companies less competitive. By design the NDP set out to damage the pocketbooks of Albertans with their carbon tax, which, by the way, is a tax that they are credited for introducing to Justin Trudeau. So they've got that going for them.



The NDP have a tax-and-spend mentality, and their fundamental, core belief against fossil fuels means they believe that resource companies should pay their fair share. What's really meant by this is to shut them down, so they increase the cost of doing business, which chases investment out of the province, thus driving people to the unemployment line. Mission accomplished for the NDP.

5:30

But, Mr. Speaker, they are placing themselves in a corner with these internal struggles inside of their party around energy. Let's look at this. Previously the NDP supported the \$235 million loan to the OWA. They also created C-star, which allows companies to write off their well cost against future royalties. Does that sound familiar? It should.

Last week the Member for Edmonton-North West introduced Bill 207, that calls for incentives to a variety of areas, including critical minerals, but this creates a problem. As many NDP supporters don't realize, critical mineral development will require expertise, expertise that we find in the oil and gas sector, and hence they will play a big part in future resource development.

How does the NDP handle this direct conflict to their founding principle against any resource development? Well, this again is where the incrementalism principle comes into play, Mr. Speaker. To satisfy the turmoil within, they introduce stuff like emissions caps, windfall taxes, and they support the federal Liberals on items like Bill C-69, the No More Resource Development Act.

I'd like to add that the Supreme Court started hearings on C-69, I think, actually, earlier today, Mr. Speaker. The NDP were very upset that Alberta courts supported our government's case against C-69 and its creator, close friend and ally to Alberta's NDP, Justin Trudeau.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP drone on with misinformation about a nonexistent program, one that would accelerate site closure, which is a good thing, but I can tell you that no such program exists, nor is it contained in the budget. Many programs get considered, and for a multitude of reasons they end up on the cutting-room floor. Processwise a program must go through consultation, vetting within the department. Then it has to go to committee, cabinet, caucus, and Treasury Board, and the program that this NDP is alluding to hasn't completed even a single stage of what I just mentioned. They are desperate, and it is "create a crisis" for the NDP.

Our resource sectors are the driving force behind Alberta's economy. They invest billions into our communities and are good stewards of the environment, and to imply otherwise is categorically false. Industry has mandatory spend limits on closure that increased 66 per cent this year, to \$700 million. But as I described earlier, they do so much more to preserve and conserve for future generations. Mr. Speaker, we should be thinking pragmatically and working with industry, not against them. After all, they are the technological innovators. They complete the R and D we use to meet environmental goals.

It's in everyone's best interest to have a healthy resource sector, and that requires balance. As we have seen with the pandemic and geopolitical events, ideological positions against the energy sector such as those held by the NDP are traps, traps that lead countries like Russia to weaponize their resources against us. Again, we require balance, balance between energy security, reliability, affordability, and sound environmental stewardship. That is what this UCP government provides.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and add my comments on behalf of my constituents to Motion 505. I also commend and congratulate my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for bringing forward this motion in the House, because I think, kind of based on the feedback I get in my office, these are very concerning issues not only in my riding but also among Albertans.

It is a very general principle. You don't need to do a lot of education around this. If you make a mess, you clean it yourself. You break it; you fix it. More importantly, if you're running a professional organization, a big company, then it is expected that you better understand those principles. More than that, if they're running a multimillion-, multibillion-dollar corporation or multinational corporation that is earning billions and trillions of dollars and have so many professionals and talented and skilled people onboard, then they'd better understand the content of the agreement they have signed with the government, and in this case it seems everyone understands but this government.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, you know, I appreciate he stood up to provide comments to this motion in response to my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar, but it was disturbing to see that he has nothing to back up his argument, basically no information. I don't know; we need to see probably how many times he used "Justin Trudeau" and "Jagmeet Singh" and whoever. This motion was all about what he's doing with public funds, Albertans' money, to hand over to multibillion-dollar companies to do a job they're already legally – legally – obligated to do. You're doing it at a time when Albertans are going through a tough time, and you're doing it at a time when the Alberta government told them that you cannot help them enough because you can't afford to do it.

You came up with this plan. Those companies: you know, they're still walking away with hundreds of millions of dollars, tax dollars that are due to the municipalities. Instead of helping those municipalities to get those tax dollars back so they can help the municipalities and communities grow and build the economy, the UCP government came up with this plan. They say that this is a wise enough decision, to come up with public funds at a time when they could be spent on people where they are lacking a lot of support in health care, in education, an affordability crisis. They came up with a plan to . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows is the only one with the floor.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was looking at this bill, you know, it reminded me of something that happened in the mid-90s in the B.C. government. The then NDP Premier Glen Clark came into the news by his government signing about an \$800 contract. It turned out that the individual who worked on that contract was Premier Glen Clark's neighbour. Somebody complained. He had a really good relationship as a neighbour with the Premier, and he was often seen helping and working and mingling with the Premier's household. The Premier immediately took responsibility, saving the reputation of himself and his party. He resigned even though after that he was cleared from all those processes from the Ethics Commissioner. From the legal point of view there was nothing done wrong. He had no role to play with that \$850 contract.

On the other side we see the conflict-of-interest issue, the ethics being broken by this party. If the UCP believes in ethics, anything like that, they would have a better answer today. I was expecting that the minister, when he rose to respond to my colleague, would have had a better argument than this.

5:40

The hon. minister probably is, you know, surprised that I'm talking about the ethics issue. So that we all know how those connections work in our current Premier's office and R-star, I would just like to, for the sake of the record – I don't know how much time I do have – go over the information.

A staff member in [the Premier's] office [broke] ethics rules due to his ongoing role in an organization lobbying for a massive royalty giveaway to a small number of oil and gas companies.

According to corporate search records, Kris Kinnear is registered as a corporate director of Sustaining Alberta's Energy Network . . . The organization developed the RStar program that proposes granting up to \$20 billion in royalty credits to incentive the cleanup of wells – something companies are already obligated to do.

Kinnear also works in [the Premier's] office as a Manager of Special Projects and is currently working on implementing RStar.

Section 23.2 of the Conflicts of Interest Act (Page 33-34) reads "A member of the Premier's and Ministers' staff breaches this Part if he or she takes part in a decision in the course of carrying out his or her office or powers knowing that the decision might further a private interest of the member, a person directly associated with the member or the member's minor or adult child."

"This is corruption,"

said my colleague the critic for democracy and ethics in his public statement.

"[The Premier] and her office are using their power to help themselves and enrich their [close] friends. This is [truly] unacceptable."

In the budget estimates, when the Opposition Leader asked, the Premier

claimed Kinnear resigned from [Sustaining Alberta's Energy Network].

Corporate records indicate that that is not true.

[The Premier] was also a registered lobbyist for RStar before becoming premier.

The other director listed for [the corporation] is Mackenzie Lee who also runs the Alberta First Initiative – a third party political advertiser that is largely funded by companies that would benefit from the program.

"It's clear that [the Premier] has every intention of moving ahead with this \$20 billion giveaway to her friends and donors."

**Mr. Rutherford:** Point of order.

**Mr. Deol:** "She lobbied . . ."

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted.

The hon. the government whip.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 23 (h), (i), and (j), I think, to impute a false motive to the Premier. To say that she has every intention of going ahead with this program, when the Minister of Energy has clearly spelled out that there is no program, and doing so to the benefit of friends and donors is making an allegation against another member, specifically talking about another member, and telling the public that there's a program that exists that, in fact, does not should be an apology and a withdrawal, please.

**The Speaker:** The deputy opposition whip.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is clearly not a point of order. We've heard similar lines of debate in this Chamber, and they were found not to be a point of order, so I would love if the Member for Edmonton-Meadows can continue with his well-thought-out points.

**The Speaker:** I do concur that this is a matter of debate. It's what we do here.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you. What I was saying, Mr. Premier – Mr. Speaker; sorry about that.

**An Hon. Member:** That's okay.

**Mr. Deol:** That's okay. The Premier belongs to the House and . . .

**The Speaker:** Motion Other than Government Motion 505. Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been listening to debate, as you so eloquently put it as what we do here today. We've got Motion 505 on the floor from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I'm just going to read it into the record here yet again for the folks at home so they understand what's taking place.

- (a) endorse the principle [that] polluter pays; and
- (b) oppose the use of government revenue to incentivize the cleanup of abandoned oil and gas infrastructure by companies that are legally responsible for that cleanup.

On the surface, Mr. Speaker, this seems to be pretty innocuous, pretty innocuous like having a coyote on the edge of your farmyard when they keep sniffing around the chickens, but they want to keep grabbing one at a time. It's the same type of thing. Firstly, the polluter does pay. That is a principle written everywhere. We have so many laws in place to do that for the environmental protection of the province. That's number one. The second one is: to oppose any use of government revenue to clean up abandoned wells. There was a comment made in here earlier today, and it was pretty wild. You know, there's an old adage out there that to catch a thief, you have to think like a thief. Well, to see what a plan is to shut down our energy sector, you have to think like a socialist. This mandate that they've been doing has been nonstop. They like to say in here, you know: the just transition plan. No? Well, let's talk about that after the election. We don't want to talk about literally the alliance that we signed with Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau. They hate to recognize that their party is one big party that's right across the country. These are the same things that are insidiously creeping here again.

The same folks that are standing up here, claiming that they don't want to use tax dollars, say: free money. Free money. They actually said that. The leader of the opposition said "free money" in here today, talking about other health programs. The free money is taxpayer dollars. For a program that doesn't exist, they're pulling some feathers out of wherever they pull things from to make up things in fairy tale and pixie dust land again to have this pontification about saving the planet, saving the environment – oh, yeah – and saving taxpayer dollars. They're making – I can't say certain unparliamentary language. I'm trying – very comfortable here – but calling an L-word something and trying to think of a different one right now is frustrating the heck out of me. Misleading, misstepped, misguided, or just the simple just transition language about our energy sector and what we're trying to do here. They don't want to

have a made-up program in concept, that they still keep reaching for – they don't want to use taxpayer dollars or incentivize dollars to be able to fix something.

The Orphan Well Association: that's what it does. It literally takes wells that couldn't be cleaned up, thrown into a pot, that is then managed by the government basically to clean these things up. [interjection] Oh, Mr. Speaker, I've just been called an idiot by the member opposite, but that's okay because he's been kicked out more times than not. That's okay. I've been called a heck of a lot worse by socialists. Every time I point these things out, this is the same guy that sits there and jumps up and down and says things against the Premier or Prime Minister Thatcher. He says a ton of things that got him kicked out more than once, but that's okay. He's really used to jumping up and down with a protest sign.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Okay. The hon. member will speak to the motion. Better things will happen.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. I shouldn't be listening to him; you're absolutely right of what he's saying over there.

Alberta has a long-standing relationship between the oil and gas companies. This is a known fact. This happens to be one of our major sectors. The members opposite support organizations like Extinction Rebellion. In fact, one of them wanted it to be put in the schools, in the classrooms, and still does, still loves to have that. This was an organization recognized on a terrorist watch list over in the U.K., and this is the type of ideological thing that we should be teaching, which goes right along with this. This is just bonkers.

Again, we're talking about a program that they're trying to stop, that hasn't even started. Here's a really novel approach. In concept, when you incentivize a group – I don't know – like lowering taxes, we've seen tons and tons of investment come in. You have to make sure that this industry can clean up the assets. You have to make sure that they're solvent.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadows was talking about how we have to make sure that these companies pay their taxes. You absolutely do. And to do that, to generate that revenue, you have to make sure that they're viable. But you can't chop off your foot and then win a hundred-metre dash.

**An Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. Getson:** This is logic. I'm trying to give him some socialist logic. I don't speak freaky-deaky socialist. I'm trying to do it as much as I can so they can understand it, but their motion is still the same point. You can't use revenue dollars that you don't have to clean up something that doesn't need to be cleaned up. We want to clean it up, but we don't want to clean it up because we don't want to use taxpayer dollars to do it because that's what's safe.

5:50

They had four years to take care of this. We've got a bunch of wells that need to be cleaned up. We've got a large inventory of inactive and abandoned wells across the province because we've had lots of activity. The current way we've been doing it for years isn't quite working. The minister spoke about some program they're talking about that the opposition is jumping up and down about – that isn't in place – is going to be the death knell for all of us. What I would like to hear is: is the minister working on programs behind the scenes, working on items that would be novel – no different than how we worked on the economy – to clean up these wells, to make sure that we get these things cleaned up that are sitting out there? The government introduced the liability management framework to help decrease the number of inactive

well sites, to support and to speed up the targets for Albertans to nominate sites for cleanup. This is a good thing.

So, again, what's taking place on this file is similar to what was said earlier on crop insurance files. The opposition loves to go out, make up a news story, get their little tweets, their little twits, whatever the things are on social media that are out there that follow and do that, so then they can jump up and down and cause disinformation. That's what this motion is, where we want to make sure that we can . . .

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt but pursuant to Standing Order 8(3), which allows the mover of the motion up to five minutes to close debate, I will call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to do just that . . .

**Mr. Nielsen:** It'd be another 10 minutes for you if I got up.

**The Speaker:** I might remind all members of the Assembly that unparliamentary language on or off the record is still unparliamentary. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for what was probably the most merciful interruption of the entire day. I appreciate that, and I appreciate the opportunity to close debate on Motion 505.

You know, it was interesting to hear the Energy minister stand up and talk about the motion. It was interesting because he didn't say whether or not he's going to support the motion or whether he's against it. So I guess we'll have to see, when members are called to vote, exactly how the government members are going to vote, because in neither of the statements that I listened to did either speaker from the government side indicate whether or not they support the idea of polluter pay and oppose the idea of government using taxpayer dollars to clean up oil and gas wells or whether they'd vote in favour of the proposed \$20 billion giveaway that the Energy minister has been tasked to create.

Now, the other thing that was interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that for about a minute of the Energy minister's speech he did reference the R-star program, and in the same sentence he said that the program didn't exist, but if it did exist, it would work wonderfully to clean up all of these oil and gas wells that need to be cleaned up. Well, what is it? Does the program exist or not? We know that the program has been given as a responsibility to the Energy minister to develop. It's clearly written out in his mandate letter, published on the Alberta government website, for the entire public to see.

The minister himself has said that, in his opinion, we need to incentivize oil and gas companies to do the thing that they're already required to do. Like my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View said, this is like incentivizing speeders to slow down by paying them money to stop speeding. This is the creation of a moral hazard, and it beggars belief that the government thinks it would improve the condition of the regular Albertan by spending \$20 billion on oil and gas companies' environmental liabilities rather than the priorities of Albertans, as I've outlined before.

The government has refused to entertain any meaningful action on this. The government knows that the solution to the problem exists in just making sure that the industry pays for its bills, but it refuses at every turn to take the necessary steps to make the bad actors in the oil and gas industry pay their bills. They refuse to step in and require them to pay their municipal taxes. They refuse to step in and recover the money from the Surface Rights Board that's paid out to the oil and gas industry. The minister claims that the oil and gas industry is doing an excellent job of reducing methane reductions, and that's true, but the taxpayer has been on the hook for over \$30 million in that effort.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. The taxpayers of Alberta are tired of paying bills that properly should be paid by the oil and gas industry, and I think it's rich that the Energy minister will portray this as socialists refusing to provide any incentive to the oil and gas industry. I think the difference here between our party and his party is that we want to create incentives so that companies do the things that they normally wouldn't do here in Alberta. That's the idea behind the PDP program that we implemented. That's the idea behind a bunch of the tax credits that we implemented. That was designed to encourage industry to carry out activities here in Alberta that they wouldn't normally do.

That's not the case with the R-star program. This \$20 billion that the Energy minister is intent on giving away is actually going to disincentivize the cleanup of oil and gas liabilities, because, as my friend from Calgary-Mountain View pointed out, who's going to spend their own money to clean up their own oil and gas liabilities when they can wait for a government handout? We saw that with the site rehabilitation program. Once the government announced the site rehabilitation program, all that activity stopped until everybody knew who was going to get the money. That's exactly what's going to happen.

I encourage all members to stand up for their constituents and vote for this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 505 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:57 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dach	Gray	Schmidt
Deol	Irwin	

Against the motion:

Fir	Lovely	Schow
Getson	Nally	Singh
Glubish	Neudorf	Smith, Mark
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Toor
Hunter	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Issik	Pon	van Dijken
Jean	Rosin	Yao
Loewen	Rutherford	Yaseen
Long		

Totals:	For – 5	Against – 25
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 lost]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 3(1) the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:13 p.m.]





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