



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 5, 2023

Day 18

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)  
Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)  
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)  
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)  
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP)  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC),  
Deputy Premier  
Elmeligi, Sarah, Banff-Kananaskis (NDP)  
Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC),  
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Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
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Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP),  
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Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (Ind)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
Kasawski, Kyle, Sherwood Park (NDP)  
Kayande, Samir, Calgary-Elbow (NDP),  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC)  
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McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
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Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
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Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. R.J., ECA, Highwood (UC)  
Sinclair, Scott, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
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Tejada, Lizette, Calgary-Klein (NDP)  
Turton, Hon. Searle, ECA, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
Wiebe, Ron, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Williams, Hon. Dan D.A., ECA, Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)  
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 48

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

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Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
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Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	Lang Bawn, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

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Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Infrastructure
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Andrew Boitchenko	Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Relations
Chantelle de Jonge	Parliamentary Secretary for Affordability and Utilities
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridor Development
Grant Hunter	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Scott Sinclair	Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Policing
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development

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

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

Chair: Mr. Yao  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell  
 Boitchenko  
 Bouchard  
 Brar  
 Hunter  
 Kasawski  
 Kayande  
 Wiebe

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

Chair: Mr. Getson  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Loyola  
 Boparai  
 Cyr  
 de Jonge  
 Elmeligi  
 Hoyle  
 Stephan  
 Wright, J.  
 Yao

**Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee**

Chair: Mr. Getson  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Long  
 Arcand-Paul  
 Ellingson  
 Ganley  
 Hunter  
 Ip  
 Lovely  
 Rowswell  
 Wright, J.

**Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee**

Chair: Mr. Yao  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
 Dach  
 Dyck  
 Irwin  
 Petrovic  
 Pitt  
 Sabir  
 Stephan  
 Wright, P.

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
 Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring  
 Batten  
 Boitchenko  
 Long  
 Lundy  
 Metz  
 Petrovic  
 Singh  
 Tejada

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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 Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
 Chapman  
 Dyck  
 Eremenko  
 Hunter  
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 Renaud  
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**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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 Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson  
 Eggen  
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**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

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

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 Arcand-Paul  
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**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Pancholi  
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 Ganley  
 Haji  
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**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Rowswell  
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 Armstrong-Homeniuk  
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 Dyck  
 Hunter  
 McDougall  
 Sinclair  
 Sweet

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 5, 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 interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met.

#### Mr. Donald A. Tannas

April 25, 1938, to November 26, 2023

**The Speaker:** Donald Alfred Tannas was elected as the Progressive Conservative Member for Highwood on March 20, 1989. Serving four terms over 15 years, Mr. Tannas was the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees from 1993 to 2004. Notably, he sponsored Bill 211, the Protection for Persons in Care Act, in 1995, and it was passed unanimously to provide vulnerable people in care with protection from abuse. In 2003 he introduced Bill 201, which made rough fescue an official emblem of Alberta.

A graduate of the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary Mr. Tannas was an educator and a businessman. From 1962 to 1989 he was a teacher and a principal within the Foothills school division. During his time he took leave to work as a teacher trainer in Uganda, the first of many international travels throughout his life. Mr. Tannas was an active member of his community throughout a variety of community services, boards, and committees. Among the honours Mr. Tannas received were the 125th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada medal in 1992, the Queen Elizabeth II golden jubilee medal in 2002, the Alberta centennial medal in 2005, and Her Majesty's diamond jubilee medal in 2012.

Mr. Tannas passed away on November 26, 2023, at the age of 85.

#### Mr. Peter Knaak, KC

October 28, 1942, to September 19, 2023

**The Speaker:** Mr. Peter Knaak served as the Progressive Conservative Member for Edmonton-Whitemud from 1979 to 1982. Mr. Knaak moved to Canada from Germany in 1951. Here he attended the University of Alberta, completing a bachelor of arts in economics in 1966 and a bachelor of law in 1971. Mr. Knaak was a sessional lecturer at the University of Alberta in economics and law for 11 years. He also worked in the government on numerous election campaigns and as a ministerial assistant and as the director and president of the constituency association. His work prepared him well for his foray into politics. After leaving office, Mr. Knaak turned his focus to his family and a successful law career, where he was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1986.

Mr. Knaak passed away on September 19, 2023, at the age of 80.

In a moment of silent reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Tannas and Mr. Knaak, each as you may have known them.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

Please be seated.

## Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a school group.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce a grade 6 class from l'école Rio Terrace school with their teacher, Andrea Bluteau. I ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm pleased to introduce some fabulous grade 6 students from Glenora school with their teacher, Jodie Craven, as well as their educational assistant, Greg Connors; pre-service teacher Jayme Reid; and parents Mika, Dana, and two Nicoles. These engaged learners in grade 6 have asked me about mandatory instructional hours, different models of democracy, and bills that are overwhelmingly symbolic. I ask that they all please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has a school group.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce four people who are with us today from Greater St. Albert Catholic schools, a home-school group. There are four members in the gallery. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock has a school group.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly I'd like to introduce a grade 6 class from H.A. Kostash school in Smoky Lake. They along with their parent chaperones and their teacher, Courtney Cherniwchan, are here to learn more of the proceedings here at the Legislative Assembly. I ask you to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Sapreet Buttar, CEO of The Universal Radio Network, part owner of My Radio 580, *Edify* Edmonton's top 40 under 40, 2023, and a voice for the South Asian diaspora. She represents Alberta globally, being the only Canadian media outlet of the International Indian Film Academy and being the only South Asian outlet at the Junos this year. I ask that Sapreet rise to receive the traditional welcome.

**Member Boparai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Param Randhawa, a local Punjabi singer and rising star from Calgary. Thank you for your cultural contributions to both the Alberta and Punjabi communities. I ask Param to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to introduce to you and through you two women who are ready to significantly contribute to our province: Jyoti Malhotra, who was a former magistrate in India, and Dr. Mangla, who just got a PhD in quantum communications and security. Please rise as we welcome you to the Chamber.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly Cynthia Marks. Cynthia is a constituent of Edmonton-Gold Bar and a bills and *Journals* clerk here at the Assembly. She has been off on maternity leave. She brings with her the newest addition to her family, daughter Daphne Tabbert, along

with the proud papa, Chris Tabbert. I ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Ms Hoffman:** It's my pleasure to introduce Sadie Fenger. She and her parents, Carol and Lee, are here today. Sadie is a grade 7 student at Westminster junior high. She's got a strong interest in government and is concerned about changes to Alberta's curriculum. She believes it will negatively impact her future as well as those of other Alberta students. I ask that Sadie and her parents please rise and receive our warm welcome.

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

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce several counselling therapists providing invaluable mental health services in their respective communities. I welcome Nicholas Renaud from St. Albert; Nicole Imgrund, also from St. Albert and chair of the Association of Counselling Therapy of Alberta; and Fred Tappenden, principal and dean of St. Stephen's College in Edmonton, one of the institutions offering a graduate degree in counselling therapy in Alberta. Thank you so much for being here.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to the Assembly today Brad Lafortune, the executive director of Public Interest Alberta. Brad is well known in Alberta for being an advocate for working people and for ensuring that there is social justice for all Albertans. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly, Brad.

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

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Tigist Dafla, Irene Dormitorio, and Jwamer Jalal from the Multicultural Health Brokers and Liam Kavanagh-Bradette from the Edmonton-Decore constituency office. I ask Tigist, Irene, Jwamer, and Liam to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure to introduce to you and through you a well-known musician, Ms Sharmila Mathur. She is a gold medalist in the master's program and weaves harmony and communities through music. Mentored by Grammy award winner V.M. Bhatt, she's been directing the University of Alberta's Indian music ensemble for 18 years, popularizing Indian music in Alberta. She teaches the string instrument the sitar and is building the next generation of performing artists. Please rise and receive a warm welcome.

1:40

## Members' Statements

### Government Policies and Economic Indicators

**Ms Ganley:** Today in Alberta people are struggling. They're struggling to pay their rent, to feed their kids, to keep the lights on. Families can't afford what they once did. The regular life we grew up with or dreamed of, the thing that once seemed so normal to us – the house, the car, the vacations – now seems hopelessly out of reach for many. But we're told the economy is doing well. The price of oil is up. The government of Alberta is taking in huge revenues

and balancing the books. Surely, if someone is struggling, it must be their fault.

But, you see, I don't think that that's true. If more and more people struggle to attain the basics, how can they really say that the economy is doing well? I think that this old story, this Conservative story, that all that matters are a few numbers – gross GDP, provincial revenues – is wrong, because numbers can be spun, and the UCP are experts in it. They can spin any number; most days I think they spin every number. This UCP government shouts these numbers from the rooftops. They claim victory. All the while the situation for so many Albertans is getting worse. Many I hear from are struggling; they're scared. They can't see a way out from under the crushing debt or the stack of bills.

Now, this government would insist on explaining to them that these things are really going well. The numbers say so, they tell us, but people say otherwise, and their voices matter. After all, we were elected to represent people. The people I listen to aren't asking for much. They just want a regular life for themselves and their loved ones. I think the economy is really about people and how it impacts their lives. If it doesn't give them the opportunity to make an everyday life with the basics and maybe the occasional extra, I'm not sure it's doing so well after all.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore is next.

### Education Funding

**Ms de Jonge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP spent four years in government scaring away investment and prosperity, but I'm here to tell you today that Alberta is back and the future is bright. Thanks to our strong economy, high-paying jobs, and affordable cost of living, Alberta is on track for its largest population boom since 1914. Under a United Conservative government we have attracted billions in international investment from companies like McCain, HBO, De Havilland, Walmart, and Dow, who just last week announced a \$9 billion investment in Alberta's Industrial Heartland.

While this growth is fantastic, it comes with some challenges like unprecedented numbers of new students entering Alberta's education system. Mr. Speaker, as a resident of one of Alberta's fastest growing communities, I know how essential our education system is to the future of our province and our communities. In Budget 2023 Alberta's government invested historic levels of funding, totalling \$8.8 billion, to support our world-class education system. Over the next three years Alberta's government is investing \$820 million to address enrolment growth. This funding can be used to hire additional teachers and support staff at the discretion of school authorities, who best know the needs of their students and classrooms.

But we have seen that with unprecedented enrolment growth much more needs to be done. School authorities across the province have gone far beyond their enrolment projections for the 2023-24 school year. This is why last week the Minister of Education announced additional funding that will flow directly to school divisions to meet growing needs. An additional \$30 million will support school authorities with any enrolment growth over initial projections under the supplemental enrolment grant. Through this grant new funding will be available this month so that additional supports can be added to classrooms immediately.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government is working hard to support the pressure we are seeing in enrolment through school authorities, who know where the funds will make the most impact for the students. Alberta is calling, and our best days are still . . .

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

### Lethbridge Concerns

**Ms Phillips:** People in Lethbridge have been very clear about their priorities. Lethbridge is concerned about health care. Since the UCP took office, Lethbridge has lost dozens of doctors. Still no family docs are accepting new patients in the city. We have lost ob-gyns. Wait-lists for specialists are long and involve travel. We got to the point where, in her one visit to Lethbridge during the election campaign, the Premier told pregnant women in Lethbridge that they should just drive to Calgary.

Lethbridge has a housing crisis. Rents are going up, homelessness is growing, and our downtown businesses are struggling with unhoused people finding shelter in doorways and alleyways. They have nowhere else to go. The UCP have ignored housing investments. Our shelter is small, old; it does not have adequate funding. We don't have enough permanent, supportive, or new social housing, especially for low-income seniors.

I get people sending me their utility bills on the regular. The cost-of-living crisis is out of control, in part because the UCP lifted the cap on electricity rates that the NDP put in, and now people are facing hundreds of dollars a month in costs. That's to say nothing of insurance, school fees, and our property taxes. Property taxes went up zero per cent per year under the NDP; now they go up 5 per cent a year.

The UCP priority this session hasn't been any of this. They've been exclusively focused on taking away our CPP retirement savings, a scheme only the Premier actually wants. Nobody wants to give their retirement to this government to gamble with, and the UCP know it, which is why they were not honest with the voters during the election about their plans.

We will continue to stand up for Lethbridge. The NDP knows the real priorities for the city, and we will focus on those while making sure the voters in Lethbridge are heard on their desire to stay in the CPP. Our Lethbridge town hall on the CPP will be on Tuesday, January 30, 2024. Lethbridge, your NDP opposition, at least, wants to hear from you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has a statement to make.

### EpiPens on School Buses

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Four years ago I was privileged to bring forth and eventually pass my private member's bill, the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, which requires Alberta schools to carry epinephrine in case of an anaphylactic emergency. I recently met with Dr. Alf Conradi, an intensive care physician and clinical professor from the University of Alberta, who thanked me and our government for this important legislation. Dr. Conradi shared with me that he has seen first-hand how this piece of legislation has saved the lives of children. But now we have the opportunity to do more. We have the opportunity to save more lives.

As you know, an anaphylactic reaction does not wait for kids to get to school. They can happen at any time, any place, including a school bus. By allowing epinephrine on school buses, we might save more children, especially in rural areas where emergency care may be miles away. A few days ago I received an e-mail from Dr. Conradi, and I would like to read the following section of that e-mail into the record today.

I was extremely impressed with the work you have done in making epi-pens available in . . . schools. This has without a doubt saved lives. In our discussion you indicated that it is now

your intention to try and implement having epi-pens available on all school buses.

I would be happy to help with this in what-ever manner I can. As a pediatric intensive care physician at the Stollery, I am all too aware of how suddenly and catastrophically allergic reactions can present.

I will be tabling Dr. Conradi's entire e-mail letter today and would like to thank him for his dedication and help.

For a child who needs epinephrine, minutes and even seconds can be the difference, quite literally, between life and death. This is why I'm asking the Minister of Education to look into the possibility of allowing epinephrine to be carried on school buses.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that I'm incredibly proud to have been able to pass the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, and I look forward to our continued work together to ensure the health and safety of all Alberta students.

Thank you.

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

### Supports for Seniors

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 2009 Alberta seniors have been neglected by this UCP government. Seniors, who are important figures in our community and have contributed to this great province, are being left behind. While the government continues down its delusional path to gamble away our pensions, they are ignoring the day-to-day concerns of Alberta seniors. Many of these seniors are living on limited income while inflation continues to skyrocket, worsening the cost-of-living crisis. Seniors are struggling to afford their basic needs.

During the pandemic they abandoned our seniors. They have cut health care, and they have limited the support services that have traditionally benefited seniors. Why does this government think that seniors deserve less? In 2020 the UCP cut seniors' drug benefits by \$72 million. The special needs assistance for seniors program, that helps low-income seniors buy necessary equipment like orthotics and chairlifts, was reduced to, quote, focus on the most essential supports. Unquote. Previously orthotics were covered to a maximum of \$400 each, and chairlifts were to a maximum of \$800. With the UCP slashing funding for these necessities, it is adding an extra burden of \$1,500 to \$2,000 to already struggling seniors. This has forced many seniors to either forgo necessary medical support or dip into their limited incomes to pay for it, making other aspects of their lives unaffordable.

On this side of this House we respect our seniors, who have dedicated their lives building up our province. With the overall cost of living increasing, groceries, bills, and housing are becoming unaffordable. Our seniors don't need an Alberta pension plan; they need the government to open their eyes to the problems they are facing.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has question 1.

### Nurses' Contract Negotiations

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the UCP claimed that their radical health care overhaul would result in neither contracting out or layoffs, but on December 1 both Covenant Health and AHS wrote to the nurses' union warning of – wait for it – contracting out and layoffs along with the overall elimination of services. To the Minister of Health: why are UCP ministers telling us one thing while their health

officials are doing another? Do they not know what's going on, or did they decide to tell us something they knew not to be true?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, that statement is just pure – I just want to say that it's not true. I'll be very, very clear. It is not true. In fact, the letter that went from AHS to the nursing union was in fact to notify them that, given the refocus, because of our contractual obligations and the fact that they are in a position to bargain as of December 2, possibly some positions may move from AHS. They may shift – shift – from AHS to the other organizations. That's all it was.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I suggest the minister read the letter, because it's significantly more than that.

Now, over this government's tenure Albertans have been subjected to unprecedented chaos within our health care system. While much of that can be tracked to UCP mismanagement, it is true that part of that chaos is because of a national nursing shortage. To the minister: in the midst of such a historical nursing crisis which genius in the Premier's office thought that threatening the employment security of the nurses we do have is a good recruitment and retaining strategy?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, again I want to clarify that I met with UNA just recently, just last week. I also met the nurses' association. I met with them just last week, and they knew this letter was coming. Again, contractually we needed to notify the union that perhaps positions will shift from AHS to the other organization. But no decisions have been made. In fact, we have grown the workforce, and we're going to continue to grow the workforce. We've added 3,900 nurses in the last year alone, and we see that number growing.

**Ms Notley:** Well, UNA contradicts very much what the minister just said.

Now, before COVID hit, this UCP government threatened the employment of at least 500 nurses. Albertans thought that ridiculousness had been abandoned when it became clear how the UCP's threats actually created needless uncertainty in a system already in crisis. Fast-forward, and that language used back then has reappeared in the letter sent to the nurses' union last week. When will this government learn that nurses are an integral part of our health care system and that we cannot keep them if we obviously, repeatedly threaten to fire them?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, when will the members opposite actually listen to the fact that we added 3,900 more nurses this past year? We plan on growing that number. We know how valuable our nurses are. We know how valuable our front line is. This refocusing is all about adding value and adding more of those front-line care professionals to improve our health care system and strengthen the health care system. The letter was merely a contractual obligation. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, that contractual obligation contradicts everything the minister just said.

### Affordable Housing

**Ms Notley:** Now, while one-quarter of this government's legislative agenda has been focused on getting bigger gifts and bumping the pay for friends and insiders of the government, Albertans are focused on

the struggle to keep roofs over their heads. Rent in Calgary is going up faster than anywhere else in Canada, and Edmonton isn't far behind, in third place. We're proposing concrete action to confront these rising costs by implementing a temporary rent cap. To the minister: will this government support us, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, rent control is not an option. We know that rent control does not work. The truth is that the problem we're facing today is that we have a tight supply of housing. We need to expand that supply. We will not follow the Trudeau Liberals or the NDP in their socialist response. We understand that the solution is creating more supply and more housing. That's why we've invested over \$9 billion with our partners in new housing starts. We've seen housing starts go up 21 per cent already this year.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, research and studies contradict what the minister just said.

Meanwhile rents in Calgary rose 15 per cent last year, and the current annual income required to afford the average apartment is \$10,000 higher than the median income of a single parent. It's hardly surprising that Calgary Food Bank usage jumped by an astounding 27 per cent last year alone. Why is this government more focused on removing the cap on their gift limits rather than placing a cap on rent increases? When will they start focusing on the needs of Albertans?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, you know who disagrees with the members opposite? It's Deron Bilous, the former minister, who said, quote, my answer from earlier, "Rent control is not an option," under that previous Premier's government. The truth is that they need to pick a line. You can't suck and blow at the same time. Rent control doesn't work. It wasn't going to work in 2015, and it's not going to work now. What will work is increasing supply.

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**Mr. Williams:** It's absolutely incredulous to see the members opposite say that they are supporting food banks now when we're the only government ever to support food banks with \$26 million from this ministry. [interjections]

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

A point of order is noted at 1:57.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the rate of rent increases is unprecedented, and it's under this government's watch. Meanwhile they're failing on everything else: \$44 million cut from rental assistance, \$36 million cut from Indigenous housing, \$53 million cut from maintenance funds, and they are 50 per cent short on current targets for new units. On top of that, there are 2,400 fewer people receiving support now than there were in 2019 even as the crisis grows. The distressing facts go on and on. Why won't this government dedicate a minister responsible solely for housing?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, we're not taking lessons from a government that failed to produce affordable housing. They produced only one-third in their four years of what we produced, 4,600 attainable low-income housing units in this province. We're investing \$9 billion with our partners between now and 2031, and we see housing starts go up. Until we increase supply, we will not see a solution to this problem, which is why Albertans regularly choose Conservatives with real solutions to solve this problem for them, and we're going to deliver on what the NDP couldn't. [interjections]

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

The Leader of the Opposition for her third set of questions.



**Bill 2**

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the UCP's plan to gamble away Alberta's pensions, the government disrespected Albertans with a survey that didn't ask them what they wanted, by spending millions of dollars of advertising full of fake facts, and by breaking a promise for in-person town halls. Today the antidemocratic cherry on top is to ram through this plan by shutting down debate on their deeply misguided legislation. To the Minister of Finance: is there no end in sight to the UCP's fundamental disrespect for our democracy?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich to hear any antidemocratic talk coming from that side of the House when they're on the record saying that they wouldn't respect the outcome of a referendum if we pose the question to Albertans . . . [interjections] Whatever the Nearly Democratic Party or Not Democratic Party or Never Democratic Party is saying right now, while I'm trying to answer, really means nothing. What I can tell you is this. Bill 2 is on the floor. No government can proceed without a referendum first. [interjections]

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

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the UCP government suppressed debate on the CPP during the election, convincing Albertans that they didn't need to worry by promising them a referendum. Six months later the message is now: we told you you'd get your say, but we didn't tell you we'd listen to it when you did. Mr. Speaker, this is sneaky and disingenuous at the next level. To the minister: if I'm wrong, will he commit to accepting our amendment today to make the referendum binding? [interjections]

2:00

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Horner:** Once again, I think any kind of chatter about a referendum is rich from a team that says they wouldn't honour one anyways. But if they're bringing amendments forward sometime soon, I intend to look over them with our full team, have some analysis, some debate, and we'll see where it lands. What I can tell Albertans is that Bill 2 is about four things. It's about: you need a referendum to proceed, all of the asset withdrawal has to be used for the set-up and operation of an APP, and it has to be beneficial both for benefits and for contributions. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, by failing to accept our amendment, this government is confirming that it was always their plan to bait and switch Albertans on whether or not there would be a binding referendum that this government would listen to. Now, we're also proposing an amendment that would protect Albertans from a two-tiered pension plan, something that the legislation as currently drafted allows. Again, to the Minister of Finance: will he accept that change, or is a two-tiered pension plan another part of the UCP's hidden agenda?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, I hear there are many amendments coming from the opposition. I look forward to going through all of them, hearing the debate, talk. It's a very simple process. We're talking about engagement with Albertans on a complicated idea. We're getting new information back from the federal government's Chief Actuary hopefully sometime soon, so we can continue to have that conversation. What Bill 2 does is let Albertans know that their pensions are safe, while there's maybe a little bit of misinformation

happening from the other side of the House. Four basic principles: that's what the bill is about; that's what it means.

**Conflicts of Interest Act Amendments**

**Mr. Sabir:** This session has been marked by the UCP government trying to gamble people's pensions, tear down public health care, and drive up costs on families, and they have done all this while jamming bills through this House to raise salaries for their friends and put bigger gifts under their own Christmas trees. Forget the Polar Express; this Christmas the UCP is riding the gravy train. Premier, explain to Albertans why your colleagues need more presents and everyday Albertans get nothing.

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, we're looking to modernize the rules. We're looking to establish laws that represent where we are today, the environment of today. It's important to make sure that the act and the laws represent what we're dealing with currently, right now. That is exactly what we're doing here. We're moving along with the times. Albertans have asked us to be there and to be present for them in the events and the circumstances that they're dealing with, and that's what we're doing here today. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sabir:** I never thought that I would see a day where government would bring in such a self-serving piece of legislation as Bill 8. In the next two days the government intends to pass this bill and take all restrictions off the gifts that they get for being minister, but it gets even worse. The new rules for gifts will be determined by the UCP ministers themselves. Unreal. It's like having a credit card this Christmas with no spending limit. Will this government accept an amendment we intend to bring in to stop this and turn over setting the rules for gifts to an independent body? Yes or no?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, once again nothing could be further from the truth here. The Conflicts of Interest Act still governs members in this House, and the Ethics Commissioner is still going to ensure that the act is followed. What we're doing is making sure that the act reflects the changing demands of today and in the future. This is an independent body. It has been debated thoroughly. Albertans have spoken, and the democratically elected government, your government, this government, is making changes.

Thank you.

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, contrary to popular belief, the UCP has not invited me to a single one of their holiday parties, so I won't get to be a witness to the lavish gifts they receive this holiday season after taking the price cap off and neither will Albertans, but we all deserve transparency and accountability. Will the UCP accept an amendment we intend to bring on Bill 8 that would require public disclosure of every gift they receive for being ministers? Yes or no?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, once again, we're updating the act to ensure it remains current and that it provides clarity. It'll provide transparency for Albertans.

**Mr. Sabir:** Say yes.

**Mr. Amery:** It'll provide for us to make sure that the laws governing members reflect current times and current circumstances and current environments.

**Mr. Sabir:** Say yes.

**Mr. Amery:** The hon. member keeps saying: say yes; say yes. He hasn't even presented an amendment for us to look at yet. This is exactly what the NDP ideology is: hopes and dreams but nothing of substance whatsoever. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### Provincial Pension Plan Proposal

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, people in Edmonton-North West and all across Alberta are angry that this UCP government is trying to gamble away their Canada pension. Pensions are built dollar by dollar with the money that Albertans have contributed from the day that they earn their first paycheque. That money is not there for the UCP to take. All of these workbooks and millions of dollars in advertising avoid the obvious question. If the minister is so sold on the idea, why doesn't he ask Albertans yes or no as to whether they want to be pulled out of the Canada pension plan?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, if the idea were to proceed, that's what a referendum would be. They would ask them: yes or no? That's kind of how it works, Mr. Speaker. I would just say that if you're talking to Albertans about a complicated issue like this, you want to make sure they have all the facts. Obviously, the facts could be evolving. The Chief Actuary is involved now at the behest of the federal minister. We look forward to that. We also have the Canadian Institute of Actuaries that's digging into the report, and we welcome all of those good-faith contributions to this ongoing conversation.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that in my time as MLA for the Edmonton-North West region I have never received more feedback on a single issue and given that I have also never seen so many people more united on an opinion on that same single issue and given that I'm curious to know how the minister can reconcile all of this in his mind given that he is certainly receiving the same messages telling UCP, "Keep your hands off our Canada pension," what part of this message does this minister not understand?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, wherever any Albertan sits on this, whether they've made up their mind or not or whether they're open to more information, they can take solace in the fact that this conversation isn't over. We're not rushing to a conclusion. We struck a panel to engage with Albertans. They've done multiple things: the telephone town halls, now the survey, now the workbook. It's ongoing, and we're waiting for more information from the federal government. There may very well be many Albertans that have made up their mind, but I know there are many that haven't, and it's up to us to make sure the information is accurate.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that the UCP playing games with pensions is creating uncertainty and chaos for individuals and for business interests, too, given that the National Payroll Institute says that, I quote, establishing an Alberta pension plan is costly and risky for everyone concerned, unquote, a sentiment shared by many individuals, including the former Finance minister Jim Dinning, and given that I know that every member of this UCP caucus is hearing the same thing, will they start listening and please take their hands off Alberta's pension plan and back away from it slowly?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, that's why every Albertan should take comfort in the fact that no government, ours or a future government, could proceed without a referendum. That's the pledge that we've made from the beginning. I am excited to talk to Mr. Dinning and the panel in hopefully the very near future about what they've heard

so far, what they think the next step should be, especially considering that the feds have involved the Chief Actuary. If the numbers change, so will the conversation with Albertans, but I don't see why we're racing towards a conclusion when there's no legislation on the table. It's a conversation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose is next.

### Education Funding for Enrolment Growth

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is the place to be. People are coming from across the country and around the world to call Alberta home. We've got a booming economy, well-paying jobs, and some of the best schools across the country. Increased populations also mean more families and children going to our education system. To the Minister of Education: how is the government supporting increasing enrolment growth in schools across our province

2:10

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, and I want to thank the member for her work and advocacy in ensuring that we have a strong education system. As the member mentioned, we do indeed have significant pressures in our education system as tens of thousands of people from across the country and around the world flock to Alberta. To help our school divisions contend with this pressure, we've made an in-year investment of an additional \$30 million to help support our school divisions address some of this enrolment pressure that they're experiencing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that I've seen growing population in my constituency of people bringing their families to Alberta and given that I know first-hand from my children how important education is in shaping the future of Alberta, to the same minister: how would this additional \$30 million be allocated to support growing school divisions in my riding of Camrose and across the province?

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

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The \$30 million that we announced will go to top up the supplemental enrolment growth grant. This grant is for school divisions that are experiencing enrolment above and beyond their projections. More specifically, this increase of \$30 million will provide \$1,500 per student for additional enrolment from zero to 100, and for enrolment above 100 additional students they'll be funded at \$2,000 per student. That \$30 million, of course, is distributed across all our school divisions that are dealing with additional pressure.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this money will go directly to school boards so that they can make the best decisions to positively impact students and their schools and given that with the United Conservatives in government we will continue to see more growth in our economy and population across our great province and further given that it is important to ensure Alberta's students receive top-quality education, to the same minister: how does this investment work to ensure Alberta's students are receiving world-class education?

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Mr. Speaker, ensuring that our students have a world-class education is a top priority for our government, and we

will continue to work towards that. I'm very happy, though, to be able to take this opportunity to report that as per the international PISA rankings that were released today, Alberta is first in Canada when it comes to reading, first in Canada when it comes to science, and we are second in Canada when it comes to math; furthermore, internationally we also continue to excel against top-performing global jurisdictions. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.  
The Member for Calgary-Currie.

### College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans would be stunned to know that there are no minimum training standards and no oversight for the 4,000 unregistered counsellors practising in Alberta. Since legislation passed unanimously in 2019, the UCP affirmed that this was a risk to the public, completed broad consultation, and developed the regulations for a college of counselling therapy of Alberta. But now they refuse to proclaim the college into being. Why is the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction withholding from Albertans the solution to increase regulated, quality mental health counselling?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, this government is not refusing anything, but we're listening. The truth is that we received information in our engagement coming back from Indigenous communities, particularly Treaty 6, bringing some concern around moving forward too quickly. This is an important piece of legislation and regulation. As the member opposite noted, our purpose of having colleges is to work in the public interest, and we are going to continue to move forward on the file as we consult with a number of the different groups that are important stakeholders in this space, and I'm happy to work with the members opposite and the stakeholders that are relevant to make sure that we achieve this end as soon as possible.

**Member Eremenko:** Given that the college of counselling therapy aligns with the UCP mandate to increase the mental health workforce and it is the government's responsibility to enforce basic safety measures and essential health services and given that I will be tabling a petition with over 1,400 signatures, echoing 8,500 letters already sent to the UCP government calling for equitable and safe mental health counselling through the proclamation of the CCTA, why is the minister's office repeating its call for consultation, creating red tape and withholding public protection?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, in the work we've done already, working with ACTA, we know that we've had not-for-profits, we've had all sorts of organizations that do delivery on the ground. We've had charities give us feedback saying that they want to make sure this proceeds in a thoughtful, appropriate way. It is not red tape to listen to Indigenous communities. Different from the members opposite, we believe partnership, not imposing but proposing, with our community members is the best way to move forward, and that is what you're going to get from this government, a thoughtful, continuous move forward on policy to make sure that we are looking after the public interest and at the same time regulating those professionals.

**Member Eremenko:** Given that consultation has already been ongoing for five years and given that regulation costs the government nothing since it's self-funded by the professionals and given that ACTA has completed all the necessary steps as directed by legislation and this government and given that Albertans are

facing an affordability crisis and that services can't be covered by third-party insurance or First Nations and Inuit noninsured health benefits until counsellors are regulated, when will the minister cease the stalling tactics and commit to basic safety and quality assurances by finally endorsing the proclamation of the college of counselling therapy of Alberta?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, we're very happy to work with any stakeholder that wants to move forward on protecting the public interest when it comes to regulating our health professionals. My office and the ministry and the department have been in regular contact over the past month with ACTA and with relevant stakeholders. We are not going to impose a solution on our Indigenous community, on our not-for-profits, on those who work in the mental health space. I want to thank every single counsellor that does the work that they do in helping the mental health of Albertans. I want to make sure all Albertans have access to it and that we're regulating in a way that is thoughtful and protecting the public interest. [interjections]

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

### Supports for Vulnerable Youth

**Member Batten:** Alberta continues to set new records. As of November 30, 2023, we have had the highest number of children and youth die while receiving care from the government of Alberta. Surpassing our previous records and with three months-plus to spare, 64 sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, children have been lost, and for many we don't even know why. The number of cases left pending, waiting in a queue for the medical examiner, continues to grow. Where is the urgency from this government? How can this government keep the children in their care safe when they don't even know why they're dying?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children and Family Services.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The safety and well-being of children here in the province is one of my highest priorities, and that's why I look forward to getting the OCYA recommendations to look for ways to continuously improve the system. That's why since 2013 over a hundred recommendations have come forth to Children and Family Services, and my ministry has met over 106 of them, and we continue to work on the rest. We're going to do everything in our power to make sure that children are looked after, that they're cared for, and my heart grieves alongside any of the families that are affected by a child's loss.

**Member Batten:** Given that transitioning to independence can be one of the most dangerous times for youth in care and given that the cost of living has skyrocketed and there are thousands of people in Calgary alone waiting for affordable housing and supports and given that all answers that we've received from the minister have been business as usual, does the minister recognize the cost of inaction and the cruelty of changing eligibility on programs as they did with TAP, and can the minister commit right now to properly funding programs which serve Alberta's most vulnerable?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children and Family Services.

**Mr. Turton:** Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. We realize that preventative

measures are extremely important to make sure that children and families are looked after. That's why we support Family Resource Networks to the tune of over \$60 million each year. These provide mental health supports for families, for children. These are a key part of our prevention strategy to help enable families so that they can be healthy and safe. We continue to invest in children's services as well, make sure that we increase capacity, and make sure that children are looked after here in the province of Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Member Batten:** Given that the annual report from the Child and Youth Advocate this year has provided additional recommendations and given that each recommendation is a lesson learned from a tragic loss of life and given that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate maintains its independence, which only strengthens the importance of the recommendations, can the minister tell us when each outstanding recommendation will be implemented? How many more lives must be lost before this government takes action?

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

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. The recommendations put forth by the OCYA are a very important aspect that provide guidance to the ministry about ways that we can continuously improve the system. As I stated before, since 2013 over 112 recommendations have been put forth. Children and Family Services has met over 106 of them, and five more are in progress. Many of these recommendations are complex, and families are complex. We're continuously working towards meeting these recommendations, and I value the work that the OCYA does to help provide guidance on how we can improve the system for the benefit of children.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

2:20

### Economic Corridors

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Economic corridors are the arteries of our province. They supply our economic heart with the necessities required to keep it beating strongly. Pipelines, power lines, railways, bridges, fibre-optic cables, highways, irrigation lines, airports, rivers, barges, and even ferries are all integral in keeping our economic engine running. We are blessed not only with the raw resources but the talent to make the things that we need and to supply our trading partners with the things that they want. These corridors not only connect our economies but our trading partners, friends, families in our own country and around the world. To the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors: can you advise on the progress being made on the corridor file by your department and with our prairie partners?

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question. Actually, thank you to the member for all the incredible work that he has done in the Economic Corridor Task Force. That was a tremendous project that really highlighted the importance of economic corridors in not only the province but also across the country. As the member alluded to, the province of Alberta led with Saskatchewan and Manitoba in signing an agreement that would harmonize rules when it comes to

the prairie provinces as well as took a leadership role, working with B.C. and the territories, to be able to have nation-building projects built here in the province again.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the corridors in my constituency are segments of the overall corridor model, which help get our goods to market, and further given that any choke points in this efficient movement of goods and people would have an impact on our overall economy, can the same minister advise on the progress being made on the highway 60 overpass and the expansion located in Acheson, which is integral to the greater capital region?

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for that very important question. The highway 60 overpass project is well under way. The CN track redesign is wrapping up, the land negotiations are under way, and subject to all of that being completed, tendering should be out by next year. I know there's a lot of chatter from the NDP. Maybe they didn't understand the question, but Acheson: it's outside of the city of Edmonton, just to the west of here, and it's a very important part of the province. There's a tremendous amount of investment and great entrepreneurs there, and the member knows that all very well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Acheson actually is on the border of Edmonton and a lot of folks that live in Edmonton and in my area both benefit from any progress and given that the opposition should really pay attention to more than what's happening in their own backyards, a little bit outside the edge, and given that highway 22 in my constituency is also recognized by the corridor task force as a critical artery of the province and further given that the Cowboy Trail stretches all the way from down south on the border to up north in our areas – it's integral to not only the Edmonton region, my region, but all the local economies in the province – to the same minister: how are we making out on highway 22?

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for that very important question. When it comes to highway 22, there's been pothole patching that has happened over the summer. There is design under way, and whether it be repair or overlay coming in the future, that will be part of the budget submission that is currently under way. In Transportation and Economic Corridors we have an \$8 billion, three-year capital plan that could easily be doubled, but obviously with the financial mess that the NDP left us, it's a lot harder to be able to afford building schools, hospitals, and roads because of the tens of billions of dollars . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has a question.

### Capital Projects in Lethbridge

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be asking three questions about provincial infrastructure and investments in the city of Lethbridge. The Lethbridge exhibition centre has experienced some cost overruns through no fault of their own with their expansion. I've also written to the Finance minister about this issue.

Considering that the government was front and centre during the exhibition's initial expansion announcements, will the Minister of Finance commit to providing support to the Lethbridge exhibition centre in the upcoming budget as the city has requested? A clear answer now will help with planning.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have had conversations with the mayor and most of council as well as Mike Warkentin and those that are involved on the exhibition side, so we're definitely aware of the situation. They may even be in town this week having further conversations with multiple ministers. I can only say that it will be overlapped with all of the pressing needs in the budget. That hasn't started yet, but . . .

**Mr. Sabir:** You don't think it's pressing?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, as you say, there are many things that are pressing in this province, Mr. Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

I think we'll have to assess everything, but it's a beautiful building . . .

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

**Ms Phillips:** Given that the government seems to have forgotten a little bit about the expansion of cardiac care services in Lethbridge, an expansion that the NDP opposition has supported since 2018, and given that the UCP focus for health care seems to be the bureaucratic reorganization of AHS – but cardiac care facilities save lives, Mr. Speaker – can the government update the community on the half-hearted campaign promise the UCP made about cardiac care expansion, and can you give us timelines and specifics, please?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We haven't forgotten about Lethbridge nor the cardiac catheterization lab. In fact, in Budget 2023 we allocated \$2 million for planning. That planning is ongoing. We know how important it is for the Chinook regional hospital to have that so necessary service within their facility, so that will continue to progress. We want Albertans to have the health care they need, they deserve when and where they need it, so this is absolutely a priority for us.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that under the UCP homelessness in Lethbridge has hit historic highs and given that our shelter is barely holding on and it is too small, it's old, and it is a facility where staff are struggling every day to keep residents safe and healthy and given that the UCP just announced a trailer outside the shelter for winter warming so that people don't freeze – I suppose that is something; I think we can all agree it is nowhere near enough – what is the government doing to redevelop the shelter and build permanent supportive housing in Lethbridge? What are the dollars, timelines, and spaces? I'm looking for specifics. [interjections]

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

The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that I want to congratulate and thank both the city of Lethbridge and the Blood Tribe, who operate the shelter in Lethbridge, for their absolutely exemplary work as a part of the continuum of care and the recovery-oriented system of care. When it comes to that shelter, I've visited

it personally, and I've seen the great work they do. We provide \$3.26 million for stabilization for the shelter, with a top-up of \$400,000 for enhancement and for salaries and, of course, \$1 million for that 50-person warm-up shelter. We're going to continue to do the work, work with those local partners, make sure we're delivering what we need to keep people safe over these winter months. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

### Highway 28 Capital Plan

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 28, which runs from Cold Lake all the way to Edmonton, is a critical corridor for central and northern Alberta. I see first-hand every day I drive to and from Edmonton that this highway is in poor shape and in dire need of repair. Not only that, but this is one of the main issues that many of my constituents wish to see addressed as well. Can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors please share what work they have planned for this essential road?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of transportation.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that very important question. Budget 2023, the last budget, actually committed \$5 million for engineering and design work from Smoky Lake to Cold Lake. The department is currently reviewing if there are twinning or passing lanes viable between Smoky Lake to Bonnyville as well as then Bonnyville to Cold Lake. That work is well under way. I know the member opposite has ideas of whether it should be twinned or passing lanes or both. This is a very important project. Highway 28 is a priority of this government, and we'll continue to fund very important . . .

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

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituents and their fellow-travellers in northern Alberta were very pleased to have a 30-kilometre stretch of highway 20 recently repaved and further given that consultation with the communities along this highway is a necessary step for the remediation process, to the same minister: what is the projected timeline for these consultations regarding the planning for the rest of the highway between Cold Lake and Edmonton?

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that very important question. He's a fierce advocate when it comes to highway 28 and to the road network in his riding. I'm happy to say that consultations will actually start next year. I know the word "consultation" may be foreign to the NDP. [interjections] They're heckling. You know, consultations that the NDP didn't do when they were in government were with Bill 6, with the carbon tax that they didn't tell anybody about but they introduced. As a sharp contrast, the United Conservative government: we want to actually go out and consult, talk with Albertans to make sure that government priorities are matching with people, obviously, something that is a foreign concept to the NDP.

2:30

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

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that highway 28 is not only an extremely important roadway for my constituents but also for Albertans' economic activities at large, again to the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors: is there any consideration of giving the designation to the highway of an economic corridor, and if so, what steps are being taken towards this designation? How about an announcement for an early Christmas present for northeast Alberta, sir?

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. The resource revenue map is something that the department is currently working on for highway 28 and other critical, important highways and bridges across the province. Again, a foreign concept to the NDP: resource revenue comes from rural Alberta, not from cities. That is something that we are planning, to be able to map out the \$20 billion of resource revenue that we collect here in the province of Alberta to be able to match with roads and bridges and economic corridors all across the province so we can make sure that they are well maintained.

### Education Funding

**Ms Ganley:** Alberta, the richest province in the country, has the lowest per-student funding in the country. These children are our future. Now, I know the UCP ministers are trained to give some sort of song and dance about the total number being higher, pretending that inflation and massive growth in student populations is not a thing, but I think Alberta kids deserve better. I have a very simple question for the minister. This UCP government provides the lowest per-student funding in the country. Doesn't he think our kids deserve better?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, of course we want to ensure that our students receive a world-class education, and of course we're concerned with a lot of the enrolment growth and pressures that we're seeing across the entire province. That's exactly why last week I announced \$30 million in additional funding to our school divisions to help them supplement the additional funding they receive. This funding will go to help our school divisions hire additional educators, teachers, educational assistants, and others to help ensure that our students have the resources that they need in their classroom.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that the UCP's cuts to per-student funding and the loss of over 20,000 educational assistants and other staff, that the UCP fired in 2020 with a tweet, are having real impacts on children throughout this province and given that this will impact their ability to learn, to participate in the economy, and to give back to society and given that the cuts to education do not save money in the long run, why does this minister think that it is acceptable to mortgage our kids' future to pad his bottom line today?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, we're investing in our kids' future and education because we understand the importance and value that there is from ensuring that we have a world-class education system. We know it's the door and the gateway to greater opportunities for all future generations. I'm not sure what the member opposite is talking about when she talks about a cut. Funding in the last four years went from \$8.2 billion to \$8.8 billion currently, an increase. [interjections] I'm not sure how an increase is a cut, but these are the actual, factual numbers that we have in front of us.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is called at 2:34.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that the UCP claims these ruthless cuts to per-student funding aren't having an impact on student learning and given that we know that class sizes do in fact have an impact on student learning and given that we gave the UCP the opportunity to measure those impacts by reporting on class sizes but the UCP chose to vote that down, if the minister truly believes he's doing such a good job, why does he refuse to have this data made public? Why is he so scared to show us his homework?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've already had that debate in the Assembly, and I provided my remarks with respect to the bill and the reasons why I voted against the bill.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's education system is on a great track. As I reported earlier, our PISA rankings are the top in Canada. Our PISA rankings are also top internationally. In addition, we're also hiring the additional staff that we need. Starting this school year, 1,200 new teachers have joined our school divisions in addition to over 450 educational assistants. [interjections]

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order!

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education has five seconds remaining.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** In addition, 450 educational assistants have also joined our four metro school divisions this September alone, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Trucking Industry Concerns

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta trucking companies haul billions of dollars of freight across the American border every year. These companies and the drivers doing the hauling are a vital component of the Albertan economy, but recent delays in the United States B-2 visa applications are causing a cross-border driver shortage. Does the minister of transportation have a strategy to work with the appropriate American stakeholders in order to expedite U.S.A. B-2 visa processing times for truck drivers at Alberta companies? And could the minister please pretend that the stakeholders are watching, because they are?

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, as the Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors we work with a trucking company when it comes to getting rid of regulations that obviously are a competitive disadvantage for them, whether it's the carbon tax that's increased the fuel that they use every day to fill up their trucks or working with the federal government when it comes to approving visas. There is a trucker shortage across the province, and we want to make sure that we can do everything we can to make sure that we have great people in our trucks.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, given that the minister doesn't seem to understand the issue and given that it's the U.S. Consulate in Calgary that is telling Alberta truck drivers that there is a 12- to 18-month wait for American B-2 visa appointments and given that this wait time is far too long as this is worsening lingering supply chain issues and hindering economic development and given that these B-

2 visas give trucking companies the flexibility they need to work the most important routes, will the minister of transportation stand up for Alberta trucking companies, try to understand the issue, and take on a leadership role in fixing this issue?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes. It's something that we will continue to work with the trucking industry on to make sure that we can help address the driver shortage, whether that's training up Albertans who want to have a career here in the province or bringing in other truckers from around the world. It's something where we want to make sure that our trucking industry can do what they do best, which is deliver products, whether it's exports from Alberta or even to transport goods to grocery stores to make sure that there are things there for when families need it.

**Mr. Dach:** Now, given that the American B-2 visa chokehold is delaying Alberta drivers from working on the routes required to keep goods flowing across the border between Canada and the U.S.A. and given that billions of dollars' worth of goods cross the Alberta-U.S.A. border by truck each year – it's clear that the American B-2 visa delays have the potential to seriously affect our Alberta economy – and given that stakeholders seek the opposition's help when they are feeling ignored by the minister, once again I have to ask the minister: what is his plan to help Alberta drivers get back on the best routes, or is he just going to wait for further damage to be done?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, we're working with the trucking industry to address the trucker shortage across the province, but we're not going to take any lessons from the NDP. They brought in the carbon tax, which has been the biggest hit and drove up costs within the trucking industry. So it's a little rich coming from the NDP saying that they have the trucking industry's best interests at heart, because they don't. They brought in MELT. That was one of the most frustrating things to the trucking industry. We're not seeing any improvements of any accidents but a huge increase to the trucking industry. We are working with the trucking industry to make sure that we have common-sense regulations and rules here.

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

### Addiction Treatment and Recovery

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the province and in my riding of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock people are worried about their family members who are suffering from the deadly disease of addiction. This is something that across the country we have seen governments fail to address by not investing in recovery. The Alberta recovery model is setting an example for other jurisdictions to follow and is something Albertans are proud of. To the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction: what does the Alberta recovery model do to support the families and people impacted by the deadly disease of addiction?

2:40

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

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Albertans are and should be proud of the Alberta recovery model. The truth is that addiction, when it runs its course, has only one of two ends. It either ends in death, misery, and pain or recovery through treatment and a new lease on life. That's why we're opening 11 recovery centres, two of which are already open, Red Deer and Lethbridge, and we removed the \$1,240-a-month cost, that the NDP left in, for access to life-saving treatment. We

believe that treatment and recovery is the best path forward, and I'm proud of the work we're doing here in Alberta to that end. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that Indigenous communities have been especially impacted by the addiction crisis, which has caused significant pain and suffering for families who watch loved ones suffer from this deadly disease, and given that our government's response to this crisis is to support recovery through the building of these 11 recovery communities, can the same minister tell the House how we are partnering with Indigenous communities to support life-saving recovery?

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

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. The truth is that we're working very closely with Indigenous partners, whether it be First Nations and communities like the Blood Tribe, Siksika, Tsuut'ina, and Enoch Cree or working in future projects with Métis communities as well. The truth is that when we ask our Indigenous communities what needs to happen, they say: if we know somebody is habitually suffering, why would we stand back? That was Chief Ouray Crowfoot from Siksika. He continued: we want to be able to do something before we're going to funerals. It's recovery, it's treatment, it's the Alberta recovery model that Indigenous communities are begging for, and we will continue to work with them and support them.

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

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that the Alberta recovery model is leading North America in a new way to respond to the addiction crisis and given that there are many supports available for those currently suffering from this deadly disease but given that the NDP has been clear about their support for failed ideas like the so-called safe supply, which we have seen cause so much disorder in places like downtown Vancouver, to the minister: how is our UCP government's response different from what we saw from the Alberta NDP when they were in government?

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

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that if we look across this country, people are clamouring for the Alberta recovery model, including Manitoba's NDP. We see that the First Nations chiefs in Manitoba are asking for the NDP government to consider, quote, successful models like Alberta. The truth is that proposals for continuation down the path of something like safe supply is nothing but a response to White and woke liberal guilt. In truth, the recovery model is a response for those suffering from addiction. We believe that is the path forward. [interjections]

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

Unfortunately, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of members' statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has a statement to make.

### Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op 25th Anniversary

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week, alongside the hon. members for Edmonton-Glenora and Calgary-Foothills, we had the privilege to join the 25th anniversary celebration of the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op, also known as the Brokers. Established in 1998, as the province was still adjusting to the amalgamation of 250 local hospitals and health care facilities into seven health authorities, the Co-op emerged as a beacon of support for Edmonton's newcomer population to navigate the health care system. The Co-op was created to enhance the health and well-being of families and foster their efforts to thrive and actively contribute to Alberta's vibrancy. The Brokers are predominantly women from immigrant communities who know first-hand the social, economic, and language difficulties that immigrants and refugees face.

This year alone the Brokers served nearly 4,000 individuals, demonstrating unwavering commitment in the face of the rising cost of living. Having collaborated with them in various capacities over the past 10 years, I am profoundly grateful to witness the work this incredible organization continues to do in our province. As immigration levels continue to increase, they remain committed to addressing the persistent challenge faced by newcomers irrespective of their background. Located in the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood riding, the Co-op stands as a symbol of community-driven initiatives and a vital force of Alberta's multicultural vibrancy.

As they mark their 25th anniversary, the Co-op continues navigating the third episode of health care restructuring that will embark a new confusion. This reaffirms its dedication to providing ongoing support to individuals and families to access an equitable health care system. Mr. Speaker, Alberta is fortunate to have such an incredible organization.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has a petition to present.

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to present a petition with 1,443 signatures from all across Alberta that urges the government to proclaim in force section 29 of the Mental Health Services Protection Act, which would establish the college of counselling therapy of Alberta. Right now in Alberta anyone can call themselves a counsellor and provide counselling therapy services to vulnerable people seeking help. There are no standards for education or training. This petition echoes the 8,500 letters already sent to the government, including letters of support from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, educational institutions, counselling therapy employers, Canadian third-party insurance companies, and 12 different counselling associations in Alberta. This government has already completed the consultation and prepared the regulations. They called on ACTA to ready the college for opening and to grandparent the profession. The work is done, and the college is ready to be . . .

**The Speaker:** If the member wants to make a statement in the House, she can do so at Members' Statements. Presenting a petition needs to be done probably twice as quickly. I was very generous to you today, but I appreciate your remarks.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Government Motion 14 there shall be no evening sitting tonight.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate that.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has an introduction.

#### Bill 205

#### Housing Statutes (Housing Security) Amendment Act, 2023

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise to request leave to introduce Bill 205, the Housing Statutes (Housing Security) Amendment Act, 2023.

Alberta is currently in the midst of a housing crisis. This bill seeks to help by addressing the skyrocketing rent increases facing far too many Albertans. This bill proposes a temporary rent increase cap set at 2 per cent for two years and then tied to CPI between 2 and 5 per cent for two years. Every Albertan deserves a home that is safe and affordable. This cannot be achieved while Calgary has the fastest increasing rent in the country and Edmonton the third. This act would also provide greater accountability and transparency from the government by asking for detailed affordable and social housing targets and reporting. This would extend to rent supplements and the rent supplement wait-list as well as co-operative housing. We must build more affordable housing, and this is a key piece of holding the government accountable to do that.

I am honoured to move first reading of Bill 205, the Housing Statutes (Housing Security) Amendment Act, 2023, and I urge all members of the House to support this critical legislation.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two. The first is from Mr. Large, who wants the Finance minister to stop spending public money on a campaign to pull Alberta out of the CPP.

The second is from Sadie Fenger, who I introduced earlier today, who wrote to express concern about the proposed curriculum changes and the impact that they will have on student mental health as well as economic opportunities.

2:50

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies, as mentioned in my member's statement earlier today, of an e-mail I received from Dr. Alf Conradi, an intensive care physician, dated November 29, 2023, in which he expresses support for both the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act as well as allowing the carrying of epinephrine on school buses.

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

**Member Kayande:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with the five requisite copies to table e-mails which my office received from Kate Korman, Audrey Gallup, and Jesse Skwaruk on keeping Alberta within the CPP.



Also, an additional five copies of e-mails from Shawna Wirz, C.J. Delwo, and Jeff Spong, asking for action on the housing crisis.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. I rise today to table documents I referenced earlier, one being an article from CBC entitled *Alberta Government Urged to Help Sustain, Restore Rural Bus Service: Camrose Wants to Bring Back the Popular Connector Route to Edmonton*.

The second one is an article from 511 Alberta showing the stark nature of the Alberta bus network system in Alberta. We'll reference that later in debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. At 1:56 the hon. the Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At 1:56 the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction used the term "suck and blow" in his response, language that has been debated as a point of order in this House multiple times before. The language "suck and blow" is very visual, bordering on profane, and beneath the dignity of this House. In fact, this exact language was used in the headline of a *National Post* article titled 'Suck and Blow Every Day': Appalled by Alberta's 'Disrespectful' MLAs, School Swears off Legislature Visits and subtitled That was the Part Where the Students Sort of Looked at Me and Said "Can He Say That?" Grade 6 Teacher Tom Stones Told the *National Post*. I will table this article tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

Most recently in this House this language was debated on March 14, 2023. At that time you said:

As we saw today, this language certainly didn't lend itself to creating order; as such, a case could be made that it created disorder.

Having said that, I will provide a caution . . .

And in that ruling you noted that on March 20, 2013, on page 1671 of *Hansard*, when a member used the language around sucking and blowing on that occasion,

a point of order was not found, but a caution was provided with respect to language that is likely to create disorder.

Mr. Speaker, we now have language that isn't likely to create disorder; we have language that has created multiple points of order, multiple Speaker cautions, and a *National Post* article. This is in fact creating disorder. I ask that you rule this language out of order so that we can focus on parliamentary debate in this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to oppose. This is not a point of order. The truth is that I find it offensive; we all understand that words can have multiple senses and purposes. It is very clear, as a fact of biology, that one cannot inhale and exhale at the same time. It is a cherished phrase in Alberta parliamentary history, including in a *Calgary Sun* article from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who said, quote: "They're campaigning on something that's been rejected. It's not real; they can't suck and blow at the same time," et cetera, et cetera. It was not offensive then.

There were two points of order that were called in the past, referenced by the member opposite, both on March 20, 2013, on page 1671 of *Hansard*, where it was not found to be a point of order, and again by yourself on page 588 on March 14, 2023.

Mr. Speaker, biological reality should be free to be debated in this House. If the members opposite want to say that one can suck and blow or inhale and exhale at the same time, they're welcome to it. It is clearly intended in that sense, and to try and vulgarize it I think is inappropriate from the members opposite, and it is not intended in that sense at all.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

I am prepared to rule. As noted by both the Deputy Government House Leader and the Official Opposition House Leader, there have been on two separate occasions a ruling on the usage of the words "you can't suck and blow," including in 2013. Again this point of order was raised in 2023. And as I said yesterday in rulings on points of order, the context in which language is used here inside the Chamber often determines whether something rises to a point of order. I would have to agree with the Deputy Government House Leader that this doesn't rise to a point of order as it is the first time in this legislative session that we have had a point of order called on the use of such language. Having said that, the repeated use of language that creates disorder will, at the end of the day, eventually become, quite likely, a point of order, as we have seen on many occasions in the past.

I would caution the Assembly with respect to decorum in the House more broadly, and pointing to examples where school groups have been disappointed with the decorum here inside the Assembly, I can assure members that on a semiregular basis I receive correspondence from school groups, municipalities, or otherwise commenting on the behaviour of members. I am always reluctant to point out who is or what caucuses are the subject of such content, but if this is going to come into our points of order, I'll be happy to table all of such communication. This isn't a point of order; it is a matter of debate. I consider it dealt with and concluded.

At approximately 2:34 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I did. At the time you mentioned, I rose on a point of order, specifically citing 23(h), (i), and (j). At this time, noted while the hon. Minister of Education was speaking, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud said, and I quote: you need to go back to math class. I know there are all kinds of heckles in this Chamber, but I believe that accusations or comments or insults directed specifically at a member, especially, you know, not through the chair, is unparliamentary. This would be a perfect example of that.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, this is coming also from the same member who once compared the math skills of the hon. Minister of Education of the day, the Member for Red Deer-North, to the math skills of her own children. Now, there's a conversation to be had about who does that, brings their children into the debate of the Chamber, but in this instance saying that you need to go back to math class is certainly unparliamentary. It doesn't belong in this Chamber, and I would argue that it is, in fact, a point of order.

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will have to admit that at 2:34 I was listening to the contents of the questions and I did

not hear this particular heckle, so I cannot comment in this case on what may or may not have been said.

**The Speaker:** I do have the benefit of the Blues. As I have mentioned on numerous occasions, if the Speaker doesn't hear a remark or it's not on the public record or if an accurate transcription of the remarks that were made is unavailable, the Speaker is unwilling, unable to make a ruling on such comments. I do have the benefit of the Blues, in which no remark of that nature is recorded. I also did not hear such remarks. This is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, prior to moving a motion, I do have another motion to move asking for unanimous consent.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed with the unanimous consent motion.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the remainder of the afternoon, including on the first division in Committee of the Whole.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a request for unanimous consent that will move the House to one-minute bells for the remainder of the afternoon sitting. It will also include, which is a departure from the standing orders, the first division in Committee of the Whole. I want to be clear what the request is.

[Unanimous consent granted]

#### 3:00 Committee Referral for Personal Information Protection Act

9. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that
- the Personal Information Protection Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and the committee shall be deemed to be the special committee of the Assembly for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review pursuant to section 63 of that act;
  - the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued; and
  - in accordance with section 63(2) of the Personal Information Protection Act, the committee must submit its report to the Assembly within 18 months after beginning its review and that report is to include any amendments recommended by the committee.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(i) this is a debatable motion. Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question or ask the hon. member to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Waive.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

#### Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee Appointment

10. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that
- a Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be appointed to review the Conflicts of Interest Act as provided in section 48 of that act;
  - the committee consists of the following Members: Mr. Getson, chair; Mr. Long, deputy chair; Member Arcand-Paul; Mr. Ellingson; Ms Ganley; Mr. Hunter; Mr. Ip; Ms Lovely; Mr. Rowswell; Mr. Wright;
  - the committee continues despite a prorogation of a session and may, without leave of the Assembly, meet during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
  - reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid, subject to the approval of the chair;
  - in carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may utilize the services of employees of the Legislative Assembly Office or, with the concurrence of the head of a department or an officer of the Legislature, utilize the services of employees of the public service employed in that department or office;
  - the committee must submit its report to the Assembly, including any amendments to the act recommended by the committee, one year after commencing its review;
  - if the Assembly is not sitting at the time the report of the committee is completed, the chair of the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 38.1 and forwarding a copy to each Member of the Legislative Assembly.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does anyone want to speak to Government Motion 10?

Seeing none.

[Government Motion 10 carried]

#### Enactment Continuation

12. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly approve the continuation of the following enactments:
- Section 2 of the Rural Electrification Long-term Financing Act;
  - Sections 3 and 36 of the Rural Electrification Loan Act; and
  - Sections 32 and 33 of the Rural Utilities Act.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any speakers to the motion?

Seeing none.

[Government Motion 12 carried]

#### Statutes Repeal

13. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to section 3 of the Statutes Repeal Act, SA 2013, cS-19.3, the following statutes, appearing on the list of statutes to be repealed, which was tabled in the Assembly by the Clerk of the Assembly on behalf of the

Minister of Justice on March 8, 2023, Sessional Paper 96/2022-23, not be repealed:

1. An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government (2017 c13) s.1(4), (39) to (41);
2. Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017 (2017 c23).

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any speakers to the motion?

Seeing none.

[Government Motion 13 carried]

#### **Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee**

15. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that:

- (a) a Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed for the purpose of inviting applications for the positions of Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer and to recommend to the Assembly the applicants it considers most suitable to each position;
- (b) the committee consists of the following members: Mr. Yao, chair; Mr. van Dijken, deputy chair; Mr. Dach; Mr. Dyck; Member Irwin; Mrs. Petrovic; Ms Pitt; Mr. Sabir; Mr. Stephan; and Ms Wright;
- (c) reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chair;
- (d) in carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may, with the concurrence of the head of the department, utilize the services of members of the public service employed in that department and of the staff employed by the Assembly;
- (e) the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
- (f) when its work has been completed, the committee shall report to the Assembly if it is sitting; during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any speakers to the motion?

Seeing none.

[Government Motion 15 carried]

#### **Adjournment of Fall Sitting**

17. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2023 fall sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any speakers to the motion?

Seeing none.

[Government Motion 17 carried]

#### **Committee Referral for the Annual Report of the Child and Youth Advocate**

18. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that

- (a) the 2022-2023 annual report of the Child and Youth Advocate be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for review;
- (b) the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
- (c) in accordance with section 21(4) of the Child and Youth Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 90 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any speakers to the motion?

Seeing none.

[Government Motion 18 carried]

#### **Government Bills and Orders Second Reading**

##### **Bill 9**

#### **Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2023**

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill 9, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

Madam Speaker, as many members know in the Assembly, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act is my favourite act. It is also one that carries the most pieces of legislation, pivotal legislation to the health and prosperity of our province as a whole. I believe that all members would see a benefit in voting in favour of this bill, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, because it does good for not only their constituencies but constituencies across the province, which would be effectively referring to all members of this Chamber. I encourage all members to vote in favour of second reading of the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act and the many great things contained in it.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move second reading of the misc stats bill.

3:10

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the government. As per past practice the miscellaneous statutes act has been discussed with the Official Opposition. We agree that they are miscellaneous statute amendments, and as such we will be supporting them. I thank the government for working with the Official Opposition on that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the bill, Bill 9?

Seeing none, would you like to close debate?

**Mr. Schow:** Well, I think I've said a lot already about this bill, but any opportunity to speak a little more about my favourite bill, the misc stats bill, is a great opportunity. But I would say: let's get to voting on this thing. It sounds like the opposition is wildly in favour of it as well. I'm excited. Let's get on with it.

With that, I close debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I like the theme here.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 7 Engineering and Geoscience Professions Amendment Act, 2023

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise to move third reading of Bill 7, the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Amendment Act, 2023.

Bill 7 proposes legislative amendments which clarify the use of the software engineer title to help attract skilled tech-sector talent. Our legislation today restricts the use of the term "engineer" such that only those who are professional engineers and registered with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta, or APEGA, can use the title "engineer." However, the software engineer title has become the industry standard for a range of roles inside technology companies around the world. Continued restriction of the title "software engineer" will hamper the ability of the tech industry to compete for global talent and has the potential to jeopardize the significant growth we have seen in the tech sector in Alberta. If passed, Bill 7 will allow the term "software engineer" to be used broadly while protecting the health, safety, and economic interests of Albertans. The proposed amendments to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act will meet the needs of industry while continuing to support APEGA in their important work of safeguarding the public interest and safety of all Albertans.

We are proud to have the support of leaders in Alberta's tech sector, including Nicole Janssen, cofounder and co-CEO of AltaML, who told us when we launched Bill 7, "This announcement will make competing for talent on a global scale easier for our company and for other tech companies around the [world]," and Cam Linke, CEO of the Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute, who joined us for the announcement and recognizes the positive impact of Bill 7, stating, "This is another example of the province listening to the tech sector about removing barriers in order to attract the best talent to Alberta and further grow industries and job opportunities for all Albertans." By passing this bill, we can help ensure continued tech-sector growth, bringing economic diversification for the benefit of all Albertans.

Madam Speaker, I thank the members who participated in the debate for their comments and suggestions. I encourage my colleagues in this Assembly to support this bill today.

With that, I move third reading of Bill 7, Engineering and Geoscience Professions Amendment Act. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 7?

**Mr. Haji:** Madam Speaker, Alberta has the highest professional standards in engineering, something that we are all proud of. While we will support Bill 7, we still have the view that a proper consultation needs to be undertaken, particularly on the impacts of this change, especially since we will be setting a precedent in the country. The integrity of professional designations such as "engineer" is crucial for maintaining public trust.

I note that APEGA's role in setting and enforcing engineering standards is important. While I'm disappointed that the amendment

that we made was not incorporated in the bill, the Alberta NDP urged the minister to minimize these risks while still providing tech companies the clarity needed to continue to grow the industry and the labour force. The Alberta NDP believes that creating an environment where stakeholders collaborate is crucial for our economy. We urge the government to inclusively work with all stakeholders and create a healthy environment for all stakeholders to be successful.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join debate on third reading of Bill 7? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Ellingson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do rise today to speak to Bill 7, Engineering and Geoscience Professions Amendment Act, 2023. As the former program director of the Calgary Innovation Coalition, I have had many conversations with technology companies struggling to recruit the talents they need. While I am speaking today in support of the bill, we do feel that further improvements could be made in these efforts. We'd appreciate the government to do additional engagement with stakeholders and the regulator, APEGA, to ensure that those practising engineering are indeed professional engineers. Our hope was that this work could have been done in advance and included in this bill. We look forward to updates from the government in this regard. This bill will support technology companies in their recruiting efforts. However, additional work is still required for our technology companies to recruit and retain the very best talent to fuel the growth of their companies.

This past November Calgary celebrated Innovation Week, with dozens of events to discuss the progress being made by our technology ecosystem. I had the pleasure to be at many of these events with the Minister of Technology and Innovation, who was sharing at this time that it is a great time for technology and innovation in Alberta.

Alberta has indeed made great strides in the past several years. Let's be clear that growing the technology and innovation ecosystem involved the effort of hundreds of stakeholders working towards a common goal over an extended period of time, and to continue growing the sector will take more than the passage of Bill 7. We need to continue to grow programs that support everyone to pursue careers in tech, including newcomers, our First Nations. We also need to support persons with disabilities to enter the workforce. We need to maintain excellent immigrant settlement services, allowing newcomers to be supported in their life outside of work so that their work time can be the most productive. We need to ensure that there is affordable housing available for people migrating to Alberta so that we can keep them here and they'll grow their career and stay in Alberta. We need to support work-integrated learning and reintroduce the summer employment program and build partnerships with our technology companies to hire summer students and interns.

The Business Council of Alberta's Define the Decade scorecard notes that the percentage of Albertans with a postsecondary degree is declining. We need to open more access to postsecondary and make it affordable for students. We need to support microcredentialing, allowing people to have their training recognized outside of diploma or degree programs. We can look to other jurisdictions with innovative labour practices like Seattle, that developed an apprenticeship program for technology workers.

We need to explore programs that derisk small to mid-size technology companies recruiting people without work experience. We need to understand and find ways to compete with other jurisdictions in this country that have hiring incentives in place. We need to expand the number of technology worker allocations

through the Alberta advantage immigration program accelerated tech pathway.

Madam Speaker, while Bill 7 does support recruiting for technology companies, we cannot take our foot off the gas in exploring and implementing ways to grow our technology sector. I've held my comments today to the talent needs of technology companies. Technology and innovation has incredible potential in this province, and we need to continue to do all we can to support its growth and development with respect to talent but also research and development, access to capital, access to government contracts, connections with our existing industries, and so much more. Doing so will provide thousands of good-paying jobs for Albertans. We support Bill 7 but advise and encourage the government to do more to support technology and innovation in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to Bill 7 in third reading?

If not, I'll ask the Minister of Advanced Education to close debate.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I now move to adjourn debate on Bill 7 . . .

3:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Would you like to close debate perhaps? As there are no other speakers, I think that's probably what you're trying to do.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Yes. Thank you. I would like to close debate on Bill 7.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a third time]

### Bill 5

#### Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yeah, I'd like to take the opportunity to move third reading of Bill 5, the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to move an amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment REC1.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 5, Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 5, Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 2 and 5.

Simply as a way of reasoning, there are a couple of amendments that we'd be interested in introducing in Committee of the Whole and have notified the government as such. I hope all members will be able to support this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion, and to be clear, if this amendment passes, this bill will go back into committee to discuss the specific sections mentioned in this recommittal motion. Are there any members wishing to join the debate on the amendment?

Seeing none, I will ask the question.

[Motion on amendment REC1 carried]

### Private Bills Committee of the Whole

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

#### Bill Pr. 1

#### St. Joseph's College Amendment Act, 2023

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yes, Madam Chair. I'd like to rise and move third reading of Bill Pr. 1, St. Joseph's College Amendment Act, 2023.

**The Chair:** You can just speak to it.

**Ms Sigurdson:** To this first? Okay.

I just want to say to the members of the House that this legislation, if passed, will allow St. Joseph's College to operate as other academic institutions governed under the Post-secondary Learning Act. St. Joseph's will be able to grant diplomas and degrees, update their board composition, and create a senate. St. Joseph's important affiliation with the University of Alberta is unchanged by this legislation. I urge all members of the Assembly to support it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to join the debate on Bill Pr. 1?

Seeing none, I'll ask the question.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? So carried.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

#### Bill 8

#### Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to join the debate? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, a.k.a. the gravy train bill. What this bill does is it ignores all the issues Albertans are facing such as the cost of living, health care crisis, lack of schools in their communities, rising insurance costs, utility costs, and giving ministers and MLAs the opportunity to get bigger and better gifts

for themselves. I think it's completely out of touch with the realities of Albertans. Also, it's not just that they are removing the gift cap for themselves; they're also giving themselves the ability to determine what the gift limit should look like.

I think we are opposed to that. Given the history of this government with the Conflicts of Interest Act, Albertans are opposed to it, and I don't think it's reasonable for this government to seek that power to determine the gift limit for themselves. That's unacceptable, and that's why I will be moving an amendment that will simply take that power away from this government, to set their own gift limits. I have the requisite number of copies, and once it's distributed, I'll read that on the record.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1. Please proceed to read it into the record.

**Mr. Sabir:** The MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall to move that Bill 8, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, be amended in section 1 by striking out subsections (2), (3), (6), (7), and (8).

As I said, this amendment is pretty straightforward, pretty simple. It takes and strikes a section that gives cabinet the ability to determine the gift limit amount. I think, first, we are opposed to government removing this limit that has been in place for a while and that is completely in line with other Canadian jurisdictions. This amendment will simply take that ability away from the cabinet, to determine their own gift limit. As I said, given their record and history with the Conflicts of Interest Act – more recently the Premier was found by the Ethics Commissioner to have breached section 3 of the Conflicts of Interest Act. Before that, the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been fined \$500 under that Conflicts of Interest Act. I don't think that anyone would want this government to set their own gift limits.

3:30

With that, I do urge all members of this House to think about it, if that's something your constituents want. Is that an issue for them? The gifts that you receive: is that the number one issue for them? I can tell you that I have talked to many of my constituents, many Albertans, and it never came up. That's not the issue. They are more concerned about the cost of living, chaos in health care, chaos in education, and other crises facing Albertans because of the UCP and its reckless policies. I urge all of you to stand up for your constituents and vote in favour of this common-sense amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-North East.

**Member Brar:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It seems like the UCP's gravy train is now becoming the bullet gravy train. Nobody is benefiting from this, and Albertans are really tired of what they are seeing from this government.

I meet my constituents on a regular basis. I listen to their issues. I sit down with them, and we talk about the issues that they are facing. I do hear a number of issues that they share with me. The topmost issue that my constituents are facing at this point is regarding education. Out of the seven communities that I represent, four communities don't have a single school in them, and kids have to travel an hour each day one way to school and back. That takes a lot of time for them, for their parents, and it is becoming costly for them every single day to do so. Buses are another problem. School buses are not coming on time and can get cancelled right at the last minute.

Affordability is another issue that they share with me. Their insurances have gone up. Their utility bills have gone up. Tuition costs have gone up. In many courses they have gone up by 30 per

cent, 40 per cent, maybe 70 per cent in some medical courses. That's what I'm hearing from my constituents.

They are also telling me that health care is another big issue. In my riding of Calgary-North East there is a space left for a hospital or a medical centre. My constituents haven't seen anything from this government, and they are really worried about the future of health care. The closest medical centre or health centre to my riding is in Airdrie, and what I have heard from my constituents and we have seen in the news as well is that it gets closed because of the shortage and because of the reckless policies of this government.

The riding I represent is 70 per cent visible minorities, and they do face systemic racism, systemic barriers when it comes to recognition of their foreign credentials. I did share some stories yesterday with my colleagues and members of this Assembly.

You know, the least thing they want is this government to gamble with their pensions. They are really worried about the housing crisis. Rents have gone up. I'm proud that my colleague has introduced a bill today regarding handling this housing crisis and the rent controls.

These are the main issues that I hear from my constituents. I have never heard a single constituent coming to my office, writing to my office, meeting me in person saying that the UCP's cabinet or the UCP government can remove the gift limits and, you know, give them heavy gifts and allow their wealthy insiders to give them gifts. I've never – never – heard any single constituent saying this, so I'm not sure why this is a priority for this government.

Instead of focusing on the issues that I shared with the members, instead of focusing on the issues that my constituents are sharing with me – you know, not only my constituents; these are the issues of everyday, regular Albertans – this government is focused on bringing these changes to this act that will remove the gift limits. The UCP is fuelling their own gravy train so they can't be held accountable when they are found breaking the law right before the election. These are wrong priorities. These are not what Albertans elected us to do. They are working hard every day to make sure the system works for themselves and their wealthy insiders while regular Albertans continue to struggle.

Madam Chair, the Alberta NDP remains resolute in its commitment to standing up for regular Albertans. We certainly do not support the legislation. I do appreciate that the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall brought up this amendment, that I would request everyone to support.

You know, I would like to share some other concerns as well, and I do want to ask some questions as well of this government. While Albertans are struggling, why does this government or why does the minister feel that it is important to amend this Conflicts of Interest Act, specifically removing gift limits and investigations during elections? Does this government want to break the law and get away with it and not get caught?

At the same time, I want to request that all members of the Assembly support this amendment brought forward by my colleague. I hope that all members will think about it and will support this.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Member Tejada:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to support the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall's amendment for Bill 8, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. That is an amendment to not have cabinet set its own limit. One of the things that I find very special in particular about this place is the prayer that we do at the very beginning, and I'm just going to repeat part of that. We need to "keep in mind [the] responsibility to seek to

improve the condition of all.” I would ask what Bill 8 does to ensure that we meet this commitment as legislators.

What I hear every day in our communities is that people are struggling. People are on assistance. They’re struggling to pay their groceries. They are struggling to pay their rents, which are rising astronomically every month. They’re struggling to pay gas to get to their jobs. They’re desperate for a family doctor. I spoke with one constituent this week who made 50 calls to be able to get a family doctor and was ultimately unsuccessful. I am hearing from folks that they are screaming for relief from this government.

We know that we’re hearing lots about surpluses and how the economy is good, and I just feel like that doesn’t translate well to the folks that I’m meeting at the doors. They’re still struggling. Their priorities are the affordability crisis, housing. I am so thankful for the bill brought forth by my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. These are the priorities of Albertans, so I would ask how Bill 8 is meeting the needs of Albertans.

Although I am not for Bill 8 in general, I would ask that we at least consider this very reasonable amendment that cabinet not set the limits for themselves. In my many years working in constituency offices and now having the honour of being an elected member, I can say very, very safely that not a single constituent has ever come to me and asked: “Hey, how about we remove the limits for gifts that you can receive as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta? I feel that that might help my problem with paying rent or that might help me get the supports that my child needs in the classroom or that it might help me get a family doctor, that it might help me be able to afford my rent.” Taking the limit off, taking the cap off the amount of gifts that we can receive as legislators is just so plainly self-serving and just really unbecoming of all of us.

Thank you.

3:40

**The Chair:** Other members wishing to join the debate on amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:40 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Eremenko	Metz
Batten	Ganley	Pancholi
Boparai	Goehring	Phillips
Brar	Gray	Renaud
Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Hayter	Schmidt
Deol	Hoffman	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Ip	Tejada
Ellingson	Kasawski	Wright, P.
Elmeligi	Kayande	

Against the motion:

Amery	Jean	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Johnson	Schow
Boitchenko	Jones	Sigurdson, R.J.
Bouchard	LaGrange	Sinclair
Cyr	Loewen	Singh
de Jonge	Long	Stephan
Dreeshen	Lovely	Turton
Dyck	Lundy	van Dijken

Ellis	McDougall	Wiebe
Fir	McIver	Williams
Getson	Nally	Wilson
Glubish	Neudorf	Wright, J.
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Yao
Horner	Petrovic	Yaseen
Hunter	Rowswell	
Totals:	For – 29	Against – 44

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We’re back on Bill 8 in Committee of the Whole. Are there members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It looks like they’re all onboard this gravy train, but we will still try to stop it or at least try to remove some carts from this train. Here is another amendment that will try to take one cart off the UCP gravy train. Once it’s distributed, I will read the amendment into the record and explain what this amendment does.

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

**Mr. Sabir:** The MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall to move that Bill 8, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, be amended in section 1(2), in the proposed section 7(3), by striking out clause (b) and substituting the following:

- (b) in the case of a ticket or invitation to an event, if the ticket or invitation
  - (i) is accepted by the Member or Member’s spouse or adult interdependent partner or minor child in accordance with the regulations, and
  - (ii) is not one of the following:
    - (A) a ticket or invitation to attend a game of the National Hockey League or the Canadian Football League;
    - (B) a ticket or invitation to a concert with a maximum attendance that exceeds 10,000 persons.

Again, a pretty straightforward amendment that will put some limit and prohibit receiving tickets for sports games, like, corporate gifts. I think it’s important we do that because Albertans often found themselves returning those favours in the form of arenas, which are millions of dollars. We can’t afford that, so there needs to be some prohibition that members, ministers, their spouses, their interdependent partners should refrain from accepting those sports tickets and corporate gifts.

I don’t think there is much more to this amendment. All I am asking is: think about your constituents; think about the issues they are facing; think about the cost-of-living crisis; think about the crisis in health care; think about the lack of schools and all those things. Instead of building homes for billionaires, start investing in the priorities of Albertans. This will at least send a good message to the members of this House, the UCP caucus as well, that these sports tickets and those corporate gifts are unacceptable and should not be accepted.

With that, I move this amendment and urge all members of this House to support this common-sense and reasonable amendment. Thank you.

3:50

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

**Member Batten:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to of course speak in support of this amendment. I think it makes really good sense. I want to share just a short story about when I first had contemplated

coming into politics. I spoke with the hon. Clay Serby, who served in Saskatchewan as government from 1991 to 2007. He is my uncle. I've known him my whole life, and one question he asked me that really shocked me was – when I said, “You know, this is something I'm looking to do,” he looked at me and said, “Well, good, because you can't be bribed,” and that's what I think of when I look at this bill.

This bill is all about giving money to the wrong people, and when I say that, I mean it's not to Albertans. It's necessary that we actually support Albertans. That is literally our job, why you've been elected, why we're sitting here. So I support the amendment in that it is literally trying to make this bill, this colossal mess of a bill, into something that is actually for Albertans.

Another short point I want to share is that I do find it kind of ironic that I'm standing to discuss this bill today and these amendments at the same time that we've heard about kind of the attack on health care again. In 2019 we heard the same type of communication from our government. I remember it very, very clearly, and it caused quite the division. Again, when I look at this and when I go back to my, you know, fellow health care workers and say, “You know what? I stood up in the Leg., and I spoke against giving more money to government,” I can be very proud to do that. I don't know if the other side can do the same.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Any other members to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Chapman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. “The complaints of the privileged are too often confused with the voice of the masses.” That's a quote from John Kenneth Galbraith, and I thought of it earlier today when I heard the minister in QP say, “Albertans have asked us . . . to be present” in the issues facing them today, “and that's what we're doing,” in reference to this bill, Bill 8. I find it hard to believe that most Albertans find that the issues facing them today are whether or not MLAs can do business from swanky box seats.

Now, this amendment seeks to impose at least some small limitations by prohibiting sports tickets or concert tickets being accepted by members of this House. Folks, the fact that we are talking about MLAs' ability to accept tickets to fancy events just shows that this UCP government has its priorities all wrong. This is a bill that opens the door to good old Conservative entitlements and backroom deals, and the only funny thing about this is that when the current Premier was Leader of the Opposition in this House, she chastised that cronyism of the old Conservative dynasty. Well, now we see just how hollow and meaningless those words were, because now that she sits in the Premier's chair, she is more than happy to act as conductor for this out-of-control gravy train. It is an absolute shame that this government is more concerned about their own perks than the pleas from Albertans who just want to be able to put something under the Christmas tree this year.

We have spent a shocking amount of time in this session debating these bills that are all about lining the pockets of people whose pockets are full enough. My pockets are full enough. I don't need expensive hockey tickets or concert tickets. I don't need gifts to do my job. My job is to represent my constituents, and over the past six months I have heard countless stories from those constituents who are facing real challenges. Terry is worried about turning 65 and losing the bulk of the disability payments which he relies on to live. Virginia is a pensioner whose rent is going up \$500 a month. Murray and his son Mark lost the supports they so dearly needed from PDD.

Meanwhile this government has given a quarter of a million dollars to their old buddy Preston Manning. They revived Jim Dinning to lead their bogus pension scheme, private health care advocate Lyle Oberg is back on the scene, and now they look to fill their own pockets by lifting gift limits. How do these UCP members

return to their communities, look constituents in the eye, and tell them that their priorities matter when they walk into this House every day and propose such selfish legislation?

I'm going to close by sharing a short quote again from John Kenneth Galbraith. “The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness.”

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to join the debate on amendment A2?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:55 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Eremenko	Metz
Batten	Ganley	Pancholi
Boparai	Goehring	Phillips
Brar	Gray	Renaud
Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Hayter	Schmidt
Deol	Hoffman	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Ip	Tejada
Ellingson	Kasawski	Wright, P.
Elmeligi	Kayande	

4:00

Against the motion:

Amery	Jean	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Johnson	Schow
Boitchenko	Jones	Sigurdson, R.J.
Bouchard	LaGrange	Sinclair
Cyr	Loewen	Singh
de Jonge	Long	Stephan
Dreeshen	Lovely	Turton
Dyck	Lunty	van Dijken
Ellis	McDougall	Wiebe
Fir	McIver	Williams
Getson	Nally	Wilson
Glubish	Neudorf	Wright, J.
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Yao
Horner	Petrovic	Yaseen
Hunter	Rowswell	

Totals: For – 29 Against – 44

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Back on Bill 8 in Committee of the Whole, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm very disappointed. Bill 8 is a bill that changes the Conflicts of Interest Act, and the Official Opposition is working hard to try and amend and improve this piece of legislation. Amendment A1 was to remove the ability for cabinet to be able to determine gift limit amounts and A2 to prohibit sports tickets and corporate gifts, yet the amendment was not accepted. It's incredibly frustrating because I think these amendments were very well intentioned. I thank all members who spoke to them, because I think they added greatly to the debate.



[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

That being said, Mr. Chair, as we are under, on the Order Paper, the threat of potential time allocation, at this point I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 8 so that we might be able to discuss Bill 5 in Committee of the Whole. I move that we adjourn debate, Mr. Chair.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 5

#### Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023

**The Deputy Chair:** Members, Bill 5 has been recommitted into Committee of the Whole. We can have under consideration sections 2 and 5 in debate at this time.

Any members wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-Elbow has risen.

**Member Kayande:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bill 5, unfortunately, removes a lot of well-intentioned, very effective practices that were put in place as a result of the total unwillingness of Progressive Conservative governments in the past to rein in any amount of spending and, in fact, naked corruption. One of the elements that really helped bring some of these excesses to light was the presence of reports by, for example, the Auditor General.

Now, part of what Bill 5 does is that it removes those protections. It actually prohibits the Auditor General from auditing agencies, boards, and commissions to ensure that the money that taxpayers are providing for government operations is actually spent wisely.

With that, I'd like to move an amendment, and when the copies are delivered, I will read it out.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. Members, this amendment will be referred to as amendment A1.

The member can proceed with comments to the amendment at this time.

**Member Kayande:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The amendment reads: the Member for Calgary-Elbow to move that Bill 5, Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023, be amended in section 5 (a) in the proposed section 3.3 by striking out subsection (4) and (b) in the proposed section 3.4 by striking out subsection (9).

What these amendments do is that they put back in what was taken out as a result of Bill 5. Now, RABCCA, the act that Bill 5 is set to repeal, actually had terms in there that allowed the Auditor General Act and the terms of the Financial Administration Act to in fact remain in force. Both of these things are good, all right? Like, it is extremely important that the taxpayers of Alberta know that their money is spent wisely by government.

We can argue about whether, you know, we need university professors with \$1 million salaries. We can argue about whether we need agencies, boards, commissions that are paying themselves \$750,000, \$350,000, that are wine and dining themselves, with limo rides to watch the Oilers from box seats. These are political issues that are arguable, but what cannot be argued, I think, in a functioning democracy is that there is somebody, that there is an auditor that is standing between the government and the taxpayer that can at least answer the question: "Hey, in your professional opinion, auditor, are these expenses reasonable? Are they in aid of a specific government program? Did they actually provide value for money?" I think that the House, anybody who believes in value for money should be willing to support this amendment. It's really that simple.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the Minister of Finance has risen to speak.

**Mr. Horner:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the amendment brought forward by the other side. I would say that I'm not going to recommend that the House support this amendment. The noted legislation would not apply to the type of associations the EAs represent. EAs would be formed as a collaborative engagement of existing public agencies and be resourced by redirecting efforts they're already investing in independently. These are collaborative bodies and not formal agencies unto themselves.

It is probably important to also note that under Bill 5 agencies, boards, and commissions will still be audited. The Auditor General will still audit, for example, postsecondary institutions.

For those reasons, I would encourage everyone in the House to vote no to this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any others wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak in favour of the amendment. I think the idea that we would bring back in auditing and oversight on potential changes is a big thing. You know, this bill, again – and legislation is like this sometimes – involves a lot of changes, and they can have sort of far-reaching implications. One of the changes I'm most concerned about: while we are removing caps and increases on executive compensation – so the UCP is allowing executive compensation to go up – while we are creating more board positions and more executive positions, we're simultaneously making changes in this act that I think are very concerning when it comes to the wages of everyday people.

4:10

This act removes language from the preamble that deals with collective bargaining. In section 3.2 we talk about compensation plans and compensation policies. We also have employer committees. All of this, taken together, creates a situation where it looks to me like one of the probable outcomes will be an erosion in average wages of workers. That is a big problem for me because right now we find ourselves in an affordability crisis, and that affordability crisis is created by two things. It is created by an increase in the cost of living, but it's also created by the fact that average wages are not keeping up with the cost of living.

This bill has very much the potential – and I know the government will say, "Trust us," but I don't. It very much creates the potential to result in the breaking up of bargaining units, a decrease in bargaining power, in addition to having impacts because it allows the creation of health corporations of various varieties. It allows the appointments of additional boards. This creates new entities. It changes the potential landscape. In addition, it talks about policies around compensation of non-unionized workers.

My concern, Mr. Chair, is that what we're looking at is a situation in which we will see executive compensation and the number of executives skyrocket. The government is paying more money, the taxpayers are paying more money while simultaneously we see an impact decreasing the wages of average people. This, I would say, has been the UCP's main objective. It is certainly something that is, whether it's intentional or nonintentional, a strong result of their policies. A strong result of their policies is that average wages are not keeping up with inflation.

Mr. Chair, the reason I would suggest this amendment is because I think we need, at minimum, the oversight, at minimum for the public to be able to see what is happening here. At the end of the day, what it is that UCP friends and insiders are going onto boards with unchecked compensation, an unchecked number of increases in the folks appointed to those boards, and potentially a negative impact on average working people. I think that's incredibly problematic.

I would urge all members of the Assembly to support this amendment so that, at minimum, there is oversight, you know, of the changes that the government is making so that we can see how many of their friends are appointed and how much they're paying them.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Calgary-Currie to speak.

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few minutes to speak to this amendment and that I support it for one particular reason, that I think it should be very worrisome for all of us when a new bill is put forward that has such a critical exemption from the considerations of that bill. The role of the office of the Auditor General is an absolutely fundamental piece of our democracy, and it is about effective government and governance. The role of the Auditor General is maybe something that a lot of Albertans are not familiar with, and maybe that's because it simply does its job. The exciting domain of accounting is actually really critical when we're talking about whether or not the taxpayer's dollar is in fact being put to good use.

The role of the office is both for the financial audit as it is for a performance audit, and to presuppose an exemption within this bill that says, "No, that's okay, AG; there's nothing to see here" is incredibly worrisome. It does not assume that the Auditor General would automatically audit both financially and on the performance of some of the content within this bill, but to exempt that right off the hop denies Albertans a degree of transparency that I think they are owed.

At the end of the day, we are all here to achieve change. We may have different ideas about what that looks like, we may have different ideas about how we get there, but if we are not actually held to account by an independent office to evaluate that change and to evaluate the outcomes of the programs and departments and ministries that are tasked with that change on our dime, then we are missing a fundamental piece of the puzzle. The Auditor General's job is to ensure transparency and accountability, financial prudence, financial accountability, and measurement and evaluations of programs and departments. I think it's no exaggeration to say that people's lives depend on the effectiveness and the value of said programs.

I cannot support this amendment enough. The role of the Auditor General is absolutely fundamental to this institution, to government, and to democracy, and as I mentioned off the top, to suggest that the activities contained within this bill should be exempt from that kind of oversight is simply inappropriate and is not providing the transparency that Albertans deserve.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to amendment A1?

If not, I'm ready to call the vote.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:16 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Eremenko	Metz
Batten	Ganley	Pancholi
Boparai	Goehring	Phillips
Brar	Gray	Renaud
Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Hayter	Schmidt
Deol	Hoffman	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Ip	Tejada

Ellingson	Kasawski	Wright, P.
Elmeligi	Kayande	

4:20

Against the motion:

Amery	Jean	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Johnson	Sawhney
Boitchenko	Jones	Schow
Bouchard	LaGrange	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Loewen	Sinclair
de Jonge	Long	Singh
Dreeshen	Lovely	Stephan
Dyck	Lunty	Turton
Ellis	McDougall	Wiebe
Fir	McIver	Williams
Getson	Nally	Wilson
Glubish	Neudorf	Wright, J.
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Yao
Horner	Petrovic	Yaseen
Hunter	Pitt	

Totals:	For – 29	Against – 44
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on Bill 5, sections 2 and 5. Are there any speakers? The Member for Calgary-Elbow has risen.

**Member Kayande:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm disappointed by the defeat of the last amendment allowing the Auditor General to investigate.

There are other portions of Bill 5 that are extremely problematic. One of the ones that is actually significantly responsible for improving the quality of lives of people in Alberta is the section on collective bargaining. Sadly, the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023, removes some preamble and removes some of the protections on collective bargaining that are embedded in the laws of this province, so because of that, I would like to move an amendment to Bill 5.

**The Deputy Chair:** Members, this amendment will be referred to as A2 on Bill 5.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow can proceed.

**Member Kayande:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The amendment reads that the Member for Calgary-Elbow to move that Bill 5, the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023, be amended in section 2 in the proposed preamble as follows: (a) in the proposed second recital by striking out "objective; and" and substituting "objective;"; (b) in the proposed third recital by striking out "public services" and substituting "public services; and"; (c) by adding the following immediately after the proposed third recital: "Whereas the Government of Alberta respects the importance of the collective bargaining process."

Mr. Chair, collective bargaining has resulted in more gains for the middle class than virtually anything else that has been done purportedly in their interests. I was very pleased to have done my MBA in Pittsburgh at Carnegie Mellon University. One of my summer work terms I drove past a monument every day on my way to work. I didn't know what that monument was, so one day when I had a little bit more time on my hands on my way home from work, I stopped there. It was a memorial to those steelworkers who had given their lives striking at the Carnegie Steel mill in Homestead.

Everything that unions have done on behalf of workers to make life better for people – things like having weekends, things like not having children work – are deeply important to the structure of our

society and extremely important for us as human beings and, most certainly, important to those of us on this side of the aisle.

I would urge this House to value workers and to value workers' contributions and ensure that collective bargaining and its importance remains part of these acts that this bill is amending.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, let me begin my comments on this amendment by thanking my friend from Calgary-Elbow for bringing forward this amendment. This amendment, of course, is very much in line with the NDP's values. We are a party that has sprung out of the labour movement here in Canada, and we continue to wear our labour heritage with pride. In spite of the members opposite who try to shame us for our connections to labour, we wear that as a badge of honour, and that's why we're bringing forward this amendment.

I would like to just take members down memory lane a little bit to the NDP government from 2015 to 2019 and some of the advances that we made in collective bargaining here in this province and some advances that I'm particularly proud of having accomplished having been the Minister of Advanced Education. The first significant advance that we made in the Ministry of Advanced Education was to give faculty members the right to strike for the first time in the history of the province, Mr. Chair. That was a significant achievement bringing Alberta finally in line with the Constitution of Canada and in line with all other jurisdictions in the country. It had been decades since other provinces had given faculty members the right to strike, and Alberta finally did that between 2015 and 2019.

That has resulted in meaningful improvements in faculty members' ability to collectively bargain, and we've seen significant labour relations actions on campuses all across the province. In January 2022, Mr. Chair, we had the first faculty strike in the history of Alberta at Concordia University in my friend from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood's riding. Over the 12-day strike the members of the Concordia University Faculty Association were able to significantly improve their working conditions, significantly improve their wages and benefits, reduce their workload, and make life easier for faculty members so that they can spend the time that they needed to spend giving the students of Concordia University the best quality education that they possibly could.

At about the same time, Mr. Chair, we had faculty members at the University of Lethbridge go on strike, and that strike lasted for 40 days. Over those 40 days the members of the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association were able to win some significant wage increases, I think on the order of 1 and a half, maybe around 2 per cent. I forget the exact number right now, but they were able to successfully negotiate meaningful increases in their wages, and that was through collective action, striking against their employer. That was something that, up until our government came in and changed the legislation, faculty associations were not allowed to do.

The second advance that we made in the area of collective bargaining on campuses, Mr. Chair, was with respect to how faculty association members are assigned to the faculty association. Now, universities were odd beasts and still are odd beasts when it comes to collective bargaining in that employees do not have the right to choose who their bargaining unit is. In fact, it is the board of governors who assign members of the employees of the university to the bargaining units, which is a bit strange. You can imagine that if an employer gets to pick and choose who's in the union and who isn't, that gives the employer a significant advantage when it comes

to collectively negotiating with its employees. Well, we changed that. In fact, we gave faculty associations much more power to include members who should be in the faculty association into the faculty association. We are quite proud of that fact.

4:30

It was much needed. There were huge discrepancies between campuses as to who was in a faculty association and who was not in a faculty association. It should come as no surprise, Mr. Chair, given their political leanings, that the University of Calgary was very aggressive in preventing people from joining the faculty association, much more so than the University of Alberta. So we had huge numbers of people who were employed at the University of Calgary who should have been in the faculty association but were prevented from being in the faculty association because the board of governors could simply say: "No. Your job role does not belong in the faculty association. You are out of scope. You are in the non-union sector." Their counterparts at the University of Alberta, however, were in the faculty association because the board of governors had a different approach to assigning their employees to the faculty association.

That was grossly unfair. Why should somebody doing the same job at the University of Alberta be in the faculty association while somebody at the University of Calgary doing that job was not? That's simply because it was up to the decision of the employer as to who was in the union and who wasn't.

So we changed that, Mr. Chair. We changed the legislation to allow faculty associations to advocate for members to join without consent of the board of governors. We made significant changes to the Alberta Labour Relations Board and how they're structured and how they were able to deal with those kinds of disputes. This was a significant advance in increasing the number of people who belong to the union. As my friend from Calgary-Elbow points out, working class wages and working conditions improve thanks to the activities of the union. I am certain that there are many members of the campus communities all across the province who have benefited from those changes.

The third change, Mr. Chair, that I'd like to highlight was with respect to postdocs. Prior to our government, from 2015 to 2019, postdocs were not clearly defined when it comes to their employment status. The universities would treat them like employees when it was convenient to treat them like employees, and they would treat them like students when it was convenient for the universities to treat them like students. So it was really the worst of both worlds for faculty. They weren't allowed to negotiate for wages, for example, because they were considered to be students and not employees, but they could be dismissed at will because they were employees who weren't represented by a union and not students.

Within that ambiguity, postdocs, who are expected to do quite a lot of work, quite a lot of valuable work on campuses, I might add, were an incredibly vulnerable group of employees/students. We decided to change that, Mr. Chair. We became the first jurisdiction in the entire country who freely recognized postdocs as employees of a university, and we changed the legislation to clarify that they were to be considered employees of a university. That finally allowed postdocs for the first time in Alberta history to negotiate for their wages, to negotiate for their benefits, to negotiate for their working conditions, a whole host of things that any other employee had the right to. Unfortunately, up until our legislation postdocs were denied that right.

I'm particularly proud of the fact that our government changed the legislation. Now postdocs can collectively bargain for wage increases. They can collectively bargain for benefits. I appreciate

the work that our government did to make those changes to make workers' lives on campuses significantly better, Mr. Chair.

For those reasons, I'm quite pleased to see that this amendment is reintroducing the importance of collective bargaining in the preamble. I urge all members of the House to assert their belief in the importance of collective bargaining by voting in favour of this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any others wishing to speak to amendment A2? The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has risen.

**Mr. Horner:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess this is one of those moments where I'm in agreement with the members on the other side, and we'll be prepared to support this amendment. I recommend that the entire House vote in favour of this amendment. Certainly, on our side of the House we respect labour of all kinds as well, and I think this addition to the preamble will make that clear. It's our intention to respect the importance of the duly established collective bargaining process.

We're happy to once again express our already existing respect of this process as established by the laws of Alberta. For that reason, I see no reason not to support this, and I suggest that everyone does.

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** We're back on the main bill, section 2 and section 5.

The Official Opposition House Leader has risen.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm very excited to see the preamble changed to reflect respect for collective bargaining rights. I think this is a really positive change for this bill. Unfortunately, the content of the bill I'm quite concerned will continue to be used to undermine the collective bargaining rights of employees, but certainly having this change is a positive step forward. I would encourage the government to continue to work towards respect of collective bargaining rights and everything they can do.

With that being said, we've now debated two amendments on Bill 5, and I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill 5.

Again, given that we are under time allocation – motions are on the Order Paper; they could be used at any time – I do want to make sure that we have ample time to discuss amendments on Bill 2 in committee, so I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 2 Alberta Pension Protection Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak at this time? The Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to introduce the first of the NDP opposition's amendments. I have the requisite number of copies here for our first amendment, which I will make sure are distributed to members.

I'd like to provide just a few opening comments if I might, Mr. Chair. I think it is well known at this point that Alberta's NDP opposition does not support Bill 2. However, we will now undertake an effort to do our level best to what my mother would call make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. We're going to try to make this legislation better.

We need to make sure that we strengthen protections on benefits and contributions. This lies at the core of many objections to the Alberta pension plan. What we hear at town halls, what we hear in e-mails into us is that they simply do not trust this government to protect their benefits and their contribution rates. In particular, the public does not believe the government's assurances that after an asset transfer, both their contribution rates would remain the same or their benefits would remain consistent with the benefits that are enjoyed by other Canadians. Bill 2 in its current form, Mr. Chair, only protects the contributions of Albertans who are already in the Canada pension plan. Those that join after, such as, hopefully, my children very soon, as they get their first jobs in the next few years: their contributions are not protected by this legislation. They're just not. So the government can say whatever bland assurances they like, but it is not in the legislation as it is currently written.

4:40

Benefits as well are only guaranteed for current CPP members and are only guaranteed to be equal to or better than the current benefits. There's no need to keep up with the CPP. We have seen in the last, oh, I would say, five to six years a national agreement to expand our contribution rates so that more of our salaries are pensionable earnings and also enhance our benefits. This legislation as it is currently written would not ensure that our benefits would keep pace with the rest of Canadians if another one of those agreements were to come along within the next decade, within the next half decade, even. We will amend this piece of bad legislation to ensure that all contributions are protected and that benefits must always keep up with the CPP.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Pardon me, Member for Lethbridge-West. Would you please read the amendment into the record?

**Ms Phillips:** Oh. It's really long, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** And move . . .

**Ms Phillips:** Do you want me to read the whole thing?

**The Deputy Chair:** Well, I don't think you officially moved it.

**Ms Phillips:** I didn't officially move it?

**The Deputy Chair:** I don't remember. When the paperwork came to me, you were talking that you were going to continue with the comments.

**Ms Phillips:** Sorry?

**The Deputy Chair:** You were going to continue with comments when the paperwork was being brought . . .

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. I wasn't sure that I had to read the whole contents.

**The Deputy Chair:** Well, if you're just willing to just move it, make a motion.

**Ms Phillips:** Oh. I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I am moving the amendment.

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

Members, the amendment will be referred to as A1.

Are there any members that are wishing to speak to amendment A1? The Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 2 and the amendment that is brought forward to make sure that we from this side of the House do our due diligence when it comes to protecting Albertans' pensions. As the representative of Edmonton-Decore I have been receiving a significant number of e-mails or phone calls, whether it is a passive engagement, where constituents come to my office, or whether I engage at their doors or the many town halls that the Alberta NDP hosted. There are two clear things that constituents express: one, anxiety; two, uncertainty. Those are really, really some concerning expressions that I hear.

So I asked myself: what is the impact to the total population that lives in Edmonton-Decore? This bill and the risk to pensions has an impact on 43 per cent of my constituency. These are the numbers that I used, based on those who are already eligible to receive or those, too, who will be getting their pensions in the next few years. It's 43 per cent of the population that I represent here in the House.

This bill puts the retirement security of millions of Albertans at risk. The arguments my constituents make is that the CPP is a long-standing part of a strong retirement security for the people of this province.

The other thing that comes to the conversation in our engagement with our constituents, Mr. Chair, is the timing, and timing is very important. This is happening at a time when the economic uncertainty and the rising costs of living are impacting every single person in this province. This is not a time that we put retirement securities of Albertans at risk.

There are so many issues that need to be debated in this House based on expressions that we hear from Albertans: health care, which is creating another uncertainty and anxiety because of unknown implications of what is being called, quote, unquote, restructuring; education, the complexities of school class sizes; housing and affordability; cost of living; among many others. These are top of mind for Albertans, particularly those that I represent in this House, Mr. Chair. A list of dangerous experiments that come with anxieties is not a thing that we will be prioritizing this time. I, therefore, support the amendment that's brought forward.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak to amendment A1.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak in favour of this amendment brought forward by my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West. I think this amendment speaks to the core of what we're hearing and many of us are hearing from our constituents, which is fear, the fear of the risks associated with the proposal from the UCP to withdraw from the Canada pension plan and start an Alberta pension plan.

That has very much been the undercurrent of all of the comments that I have heard from my constituents as well from the town halls that I've attended, where individuals – many times seniors, but of course we know that this impacts all working people – are raising concerns and questions about whether or not this move would actually jeopardize the stability and the long-term security that comes from the Canada pension plan, because it is rife with all kinds of uncertainties, and unfortunately the government has taken the position of spreading misinformation and information that is truly not grounded in facts to try to sell this to Albertans. That is actually contributing even more to the uncertainty and anxiety that people have. When they know they're not being given the correct information, it makes them trust this government's position even less. So I really welcome this amendment because it speaks to that.

I want to just highlight, as I have an opportunity to, some of the comments that I've received from e-mails from my constituents that

speak to this uncertainty. One e-mail says – and I will table all of these in the Legislature tomorrow, Mr. Chair, but one constituent writes:

I do not agree with this proposed change and believe it [is] a dangerous move on behalf of the Alberta UCP. In my opinion it would cause further political division between Alberta and the Federal Government and be detrimental to sustaining any Provincial Pension Plan as fewer people are contributing. This is a very bad idea for Alberta.

Another constituent, Mr. Chair, says that

the completely flawed analysis that is being used to support forming such a program is a disservice to Albertans as well as creating unprecedented levels of misinformation for both Albertans & the rest of [Canada].

Another constituent wrote, Mr. Chair:

I would also like to confirm that I prefer to have my pension run by an outside/non-governmental organization that has been doing a balanced and fine job of it for decades. Your government has a poor record of investments. I am sure I do not need to remind you of the multiple cases where you have tried and failed.

This was a letter written to the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Then another constituent wrote, Mr. Chair:

I do not agree with the proposed change. I think it is far better to remain with all Canadians in the Canada Pension Plan scheme. I am nearing my 65th birthday and have grave concerns about what could happen to my pension.

I believe the risks to the pension fund increase as one decreases the number of participants.

4:50

Lastly, Mr. Chair, an e-mail that really summarizes it quite well from one of my constituents, written to the Minister of Finance:

We are responding to the question of whether Alberta should have its own pension plan separate from the Canada Pension Plan.

Your questionnaire does not provide an option of responding with a "no" so we are informing you that our answer is absolutely no!

Mr. Chair, Albertans have said very clearly that the risks are far too high. The information that's being provided by the government is far too inconsistent. It is unclear. It is not based in strong analysis, and it feels as though their pension is being gambled with by this government. Therefore, I appreciate the level of certainty to some degree that we are trying to infuse into this with this amendment to say that there will not be an impact on the contributions and benefits of Albertans should the government proceed regardless of whether or not Albertans actually support it. With moving ahead and pulling out of the CPP, we need to do all that we can to protect Albertans and their retirement security, and I'm proud that we are doing so.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment on Bill 2. I just want to add a couple of comments and add to my colleague. I, too, have received just an incredible amount of e-mail, telephone calls. I've had people drop in. People come and speak to me, and not once have I heard: "I think it's a good idea. I think I trust this government enough to move ahead with it." Not once have I heard that. I also know that the Member for Morinville-St. Albert – I've been CCed on lots of e-mail that goes to that office, and it's not pretty, but apparently the member is not listening to those constituents.

Anyway, I just wanted to say one quick thing before I talk a little bit more about the amendment. The online survey – I mean, in the time that I've served in this House I've seen some very bad online

surveys, some very bad ones: do you love this or do you really love this? That's not a good idea in a survey, and this survey for something so incredibly important and something so visceral for people to understand their pension, their future, their well-being is just kind of a smack in the face. It was a ridiculous survey, and a government in 2023 should be able to do a lot better than that. It's incredibly disappointing.

Needless to say, I think this is a bad bill. I hope – I hope – that we can amend this bill somewhat to make it less horrible, but you know if we're not able to do that, what this bill is is a gimmick at best. It lacks information, protections for Albertans and honestly, if it's not properly amended, should be shredded.

Last week we had an in-person consultation in St. Albert, and let me tell you a little bit about how we got there. I got a call from the seniors centre that told me that the Member for Morinville-St. Albert or somebody from their office had requested a meeting with the seniors to talk about the pension realities and to dispel some of the NDP talking points. Certainly they called me and they said, "Would you be willing to do one the next day so that people in St. Albert, particularly seniors," because that was the group, "have an opportunity to hear from both parties, to hear two sides of an issue?"

Now, certainly I was willing to do that as were my colleagues willing to come with me, but guess what? The Member for Morinville-St. Albert cancelled and, you know, blamed it on a staffing issue. Then we had another person from the other side schedule another one and cancel another one. Now, I understand that our schedules are difficult to manage at best, Mr. Chair, but that is incredibly disrespectful to a community, and it says a lot about unwillingness to speak face to face to people who have questions, who have real questions, who don't want to just spew rhetoric, who have real questions, who have serious questions and are truly fearful. They are fearful. I think I've heard a couple of my colleagues talk about the anxiety they're seeing and reading in e-mails and calls, and that is true.

Let me fact-check a couple of things. Number one is that, you know, I think we've all heard the ridiculous – ridiculous – commercials that \$7.5 million dollars are being spent on, and basically it's this, Mr. Chair, if you haven't heard it. I mean, sadly, I get to watch it a fair amount on YouTube, but it's like: "You know what? Your pension is going to be higher. You're going to pay less, and employers are going to pay less, and you're all going to have unicorns." It's ridiculous. It is absolutely ridiculous and is almost insulting the intelligence of Albertans. They know that if it's too good to be true, it's too good to be true. You pay less; you earn more? False. We don't know that. This is just them spewing misinformation.

The LifeWorks report approach – and there were no authors, I might add – suggests that Alberta is entitled to over 50 per cent of the CPP entitlement. Now, we know this because it has been debunked very clearly. Experts, economists have debunked this. Now, if Alberta and Ontario applied this obviously faulty estimating process, it would result in the withdrawal of more assets than actually exist in the CPP. It's pretty straightforward, Mr. Chair, but still you have members on the other side going: "Yeah. This is a great idea. Let's continue. We can get over half of the CPP fund." We cannot. That is not true.

A comparison to QPP is ridiculous. We know they pay higher rates, which is an odd take for this government because usually, you know, they like to slap Quebec around a little bit.

Anyway, I'm going to wrap up my comments. I could go on for hours about the ridiculousness of this legislation and how angry my constituents truly are, but I will now take my seat and let others comment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Horner:** Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I was hopeful, after that good work on Bill 5, that that would start a pattern and I would be very supportive of everything to come after, but I'm afraid I'm not going to be able to support amendment A1 on Bill 2, the Alberta Pension Protection Act. This amendment appears to be an attempt to simplify the language of the APPA; however, the changes create legal ambiguity into the meaning and effect of those sections. The simplification in section 8 and the deletion of section 5 is perhaps more reader friendly but actually loses some of the protections for individuals moving from the CPP to an APP.

For those reasons, I won't be able to support this. I encourage all the members of the House to vote against this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1?

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

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:57 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Metz
Batten	Eremenko	Pancholi
Boparai	Goehring	Phillips
Brar	Gray	Renaud
Ceci	Haji	Sabir
Chapman	Hayter	Schmidt
Dach	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Deol	Irwin	Tejada
Eggen	Kasawski	Wright, P.
Ellingson	Kayande	

Against the motion:

Amery	Jean	Pitt
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Johnson	Rowswell
Boitchenko	Jones	Sawhney
Bouchard	LaGrange	Schow
Cyr	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
de Jonge	Long	Singh
Dreeshen	Lovely	Stephan
Dyck	Lunty	Turton
Ellis	McDougall	Wiebe
Fir	McIver	Williams
Getson	Nally	Wilson
Glubish	Neudorf	Wright, J.
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Yao
Horner	Petrovic	Yaseen
Hunter		

Totals: For – 29 Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Do we have any wishing to speak on the main bill, Bill 2? The Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It is indeed disappointing that the government has used some sort of legal loophole excuse not to defend both the contributions and the benefits of future

contributors to the CPP. Certainly, that piece of mistrust of the government's intent forms the basis of many, many people's objections to the Alberta pension plan. It is unfortunate indeed that the government does not share our view and the view of the majority of Albertans that those pieces must be protected at all costs.

However, we move on. I would like to now move another amendment, Mr. Chair. This amendment will ensure that "The question or questions to be put to the electors at a referendum ordered under subsection (1) must be determined by a resolution of the Legislative Assembly on the motion of a member of the Executive Council."

What does that mean, Mr. Chair? That means that a referendum question has to come to this House before it can be put to the people. This is standard practice in constitutional referenda. I believe – I'm going to assume – that the legislation came into effect at the time of the Charlottetown Accord. I don't know that to be true, but I do know that that question had to come to the Legislature before we all did a national referendum on it.

This would make sure that the question itself is appropriately debated in public. Otherwise, you just have cabinet deciding on whatever convoluted question that is not really a question. It's more a, you know, series of prepositional phrases and subordinate clauses, which the voters won't have any idea what it means and whether they should vote yes or no. We've seen this in Canadian history, Mr. Chair. We've certainly seen governments try to monkey around with this in the case of the Quebec referendum of 1995, so we would want to avoid that.

This is part of what we do hear from Albertans about mistrust of how the government is going to proceed. They see that this is a nonbinding referendum. They see that their contributions and their benefits, after the asset transfer, as yet notional but that Bill 2's legislation contemplates – people see that all of this can be done in ways that do not redound to the benefit of retirees or contributors or even employers, for that matter, employer contributions. This would take away one of the aspects of people's many, many objections to this legislation.

This is standard practice. This should be accepted by the government unless, of course, they have an intention to put a convoluted question before the people of Alberta, that they've dreamed up around the cabinet table instead of having that question appropriately debated by all members of the Legislature and for Albertans to see how that question was arrived at.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Members, the amendment will be referred to as amendment A2. I see the Member for Calgary-Foothills has risen to speak.

**Mr. Ellingson:** Mr. Chair, thank you for the time to speak to amendment A2 of Bill 2, the Alberta Pension Protection Act. If there's one thing the Alberta Pension Protection Act doesn't do, it's protect Alberta's pensions, something that was just proven by this government in voting down amendment A1. Many of the residents of Calgary-Foothills are newcomers to Canada. They have made it clear to me that while they do reside in Alberta, they made a very conscious decision to move to Canada. They have no interest in separating or distancing Alberta from Canada. They view the suggestion that Alberta exiting the Canada pension plan as just that, distancing Alberta from the nation that they consciously decided to relocate themselves to. When coupled together with other bills like the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act, how could they think otherwise? Newcomers understand that the Canada pension plan is there for them when they retire. All Albertans are

making plans, relying on the predictability of pension earnings that they will be or are receiving from the Canada pension plan.

Like my colleagues, I've received dozens of unsolicited e-mails on this topic. I'd like to read some excerpts. They absolutely do not want Alberta to leave the Canada pension plan. They participated in the online survey available, and without seeing any opportunity to truly express their concerns, they wrote to me to ask me to express their concerns. They don't believe that other Albertans want to leave the CPP. Knowing that the bill doesn't require the government to accept the results of a referendum, which is why we put forward this amendment, they cannot believe a government would consider leaving the CPP when it isn't what Albertans want. The residents of my constituency believe the CPP works for them and all Canadians, and they cannot believe the government will consider leaving the CPP, completely disregarding how this might impact other people across the country, who might be their relatives. Residents have implored me to do what I can to inform the government of Alberta that they do not want to leave the CPP.

Mr. Chair, the CPP ranks well among other global pension plans with respect to rates of return and governance. The governance model ensures no government intervention in the management of the fund. Frankly, the numbers being used in marketing this campaign, being blasted to Albertans with taxpayer money, are misleading. I think we all know that, at the end of the day, the number on the table won't be 50 per cent of the asset base of the Canada pension plan. Why are we misleading Albertans with lofty dreams that simply will not become reality?

The marketing materials don't mention that changes in demographics might change contribution rates, something that Quebecers have come to understand. The Premier consistently mentions that Albertans last year contributed more to the CPP than they collected, but she doesn't mention that 66 per cent of the population of Alberta is of the working age, contributing to CPP, while 14.8 per cent are over the age of 65, collecting. My guess is that she neglects the second point as it makes her first point look, frankly, uninformed. When she does so, she neglects to mention the track record in Alberta: a pension management company that has underperformed the returns seen by the CPP.

**5:10**

Conversations on an Alberta pension plan with no guarantees in place, the same protections against political interference, are nonsense. Newcomers fear that leaving the CPP is a step towards leaving Canada. Mr. Chair, Albertans have no interest in leaving the CPP. While this government insists on pushing forward with this bill, the least we can do is consider the amendment before us that requires the question to be put to referendum and the results of that referendum be brought to the Assembly.

The least we can do is that before that referendum would take place, Albertans have the information in front of them that is real and valid, they can make a decision based on facts, they can be provided with full information, and we respect the intelligence of Albertans to process that information and make a decision that is the best decision for them. Quite frankly, it is irresponsible to do what we are doing: pay for a marketing campaign with numbers that won't be the real numbers at the end of the day.

I implore the members of this House to accept and vote in favour of this amendment requiring a referendum to be held, with the results brought back to this House. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-South West has risen.

**Mr. Ip:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak to this amendment and this bill. Where do I begin? There are so many challenges with this bill, the Alberta Pension Protection Act. At its crux it is an unserious, weak piece of legislation that does not serve the interests of Albertans and certainly does not protect pensions.

I should note that there are several tactics that this government has engaged in that truly worry me. First of all, the engagement process has been biased and limited. The information in advertising to the general public so far has also been biased. The piece of legislation presented before us doesn't guarantee a due process or that Albertans' genuine will is followed. It is a disingenuous bill, in short.

I want to first talk about the LifeWorks report. Its rosy projections are hardly credible. In fact, the CPPIB, the Canadian pension plan's own board, have said that Alberta pension exit consults are biased and manipulated. Let me read you an excerpt from a recent article from the *National Observer*. The CPPIB in its letter said that a third-party market research firm contracted to analyze the survey also determined it failed to meet the basic standards of public consultation. The report by Innovative Research Group said that the survey gives respondents an untextualized, rosy picture of benefits for Albertans based on one report while failing to report the risks or potential downgrade of Alberta going it alone.

At the end of the day, this government is not levelling with the public. Members opposite like to brag about their fiscal management abilities, but the reality is that, you know, they've proven that they can't manage a simple writing contest, much less the finances of this province. I can't imagine what Alberta's finances would look like today without record oil prices. Let me maybe point out a few of the blemishes: \$80 million lost from a bungled drug order, down the drain; tens of millions of dollars spent on a war room that has done little for Albertans; a renewable energy ban that has resulted in lost investments, ironically hurting many rural Alberta municipalities, this government's voting base.

I think you can imagine why Albertans would be a little bit skeptical about this government's ability to manage their pensions. When I speak to constituents in Edmonton-South West, they care about electricity rates. They're worried about housing costs. They're worried about the lack of schools. No one is worried about the CPP, not one. So it begs the question: why is this government so fixated on the CPP, and what are they distracting us from? What is it that the government is trying to hide?

I mean, let's set the context. I think we're all very familiar with the affordability crisis and situation facing so many Alberta families. As this House debates Bill 2, Alberta is under the worst affordability crisis in forty years. This is not a talking point; this is reality. Working Albertans under this government are facing higher housing costs, higher power bills, higher insurance, tuition, and property taxes. Again, not a talking point. Utility bills have doubled in the last year. Auto insurance is up 30 per cent. University and college tuition is up nearly 30 per cent. Municipal taxes are going up because of funding cuts and costs downloaded to municipalities. The number of doctors accepting new patients has collapsed by over 80 per cent over the last four years. School and bus fees are up. Alberta students get less funding than anywhere else in the country.

Mr. Chair, in short, this bill does not serve the interests of Albertans. I simply don't understand why this government has made it their priority, so I stand against it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise with honour to speak to the amendment on this bill, in favour of this amendment. There are a number of reasons. First of all, you know, I'm honoured to have this opportunity, the very first time to have the opportunity to add a few comments. I will be brief, I know. I have been pressured by my constituents to be on the record. They wanted to see me, that I delivered their messages in this House.

I am listening and I am receiving e-mails, phone calls, visited senior centres and all other public places, and on radio stations, and heard zero support in favour of what this bill is proposing and government's move to pull out of CPP. I got a message, a repeated message, that I need to deliver on behalf of my constituents. I have so much to say, the feedback I'm hearing, but I know the time wouldn't allow me. The one thing they say: this is a terrible idea. I often reply back, I say: the government also knows this is a terrible idea. If they didn't – it was not long ago – they wouldn't have hid it from people when we were in election. And the government members knew this, that if they would debate the APP and they would just, you know, have this as an election agenda, they wouldn't have been sitting on that side. They hid it from people, their secret agenda, and six months after, in the First Session of this 31st Assembly, they pulled it out.

People all over the province – 37 of my colleagues share their feedback from their constituents. Similarly, the feedback from my constituents is no different, and I know the government House members have no different feedback. The documents that were FOIPed similarly showed that 90 per cent of Albertans sending messages to the government were opposing this idea.

5:20

This bill and this idea is putting in danger and risking the retirement security of Albertans. They are worried about it and about this bill. This bill is also another terrible idea to move forward. If the government was serious, they would have supported all those amendments we proposed because they provide more clarity to the bill. That is why I rose in this House to support my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West, to support this amendment. I would encourage all the members also to support the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to amendment A2? The President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has risen.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise and speak to amendment A2 on the Alberta Pension Protection Act. Unfortunately, I won't be able to recommend the House support this amendment. As we've said many times, this cake isn't baked. If this were to be adopted, there would be a misalignment between the Alberta Pension Protection Act and the existing rules for nonconstitutional referendums as described in the Referendum Act.

For those reasons, I encourage members of this Assembly to vote against this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other speakers wishing to speak to amendment A2? Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:22 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]



[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Metz
Batten	Eremenko	Pancholi
Boparai	Goehring	Phillips
Brar	Gray	Renaud
Ceci	Haji	Sabir
Chapman	Hayter	Schmidt
Dach	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Deol	Irwin	Tejada
Eggen	Kasawski	Wright, P.
Ellingson	Kayande	

Against the motion:

Amery	Jean	Pitt
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Johnson	Rowswell
Boitchenko	Jones	Sawhney
Bouchard	LaGrange	Schow
Cyr	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
de Jonge	Long	Singh
Dreeshen	Lovely	Stephan
Dyck	Lunty	Turton
Ellis	McDougall	Wiebe
Fir	McIver	Williams
Getson	Nally	Wilson
Glubish	Neudorf	Wright, J.
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Yao
Horner	Petrovic	Yaseen
Hunter		

Totals: For – 29 Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the main bill, Bill 2. The Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have to take a moment to underline for the public just how extraordinary that was. The excuse for not making sure that the referendum question is clear and comes to this House was paper thin at best; it was an excuse and nothing more.

If there needed to be consequential amendments to other pieces of legislation or some other amendment made, then the government should do that tomorrow, because we are still sitting and they can still redeem this part of the legislation where this referendum question – given that the CPP arrangements are more difficult to amend than the Constitution in this country, this referendum question should at least follow the same rules that a question of that level of import follows.

It is very clear to me, given the level of excuses, that the government is not interested in having a clear communication on the referendum question with the citizens of this province via the members of this Legislature.

Moving on. I'm going to move yet another amendment, Mr. Chair. This amendment is rather long, and what it does is it adds the following immediately after section 4, which circumscribed some duties of the Chief Electoral Officer, specifically, to provide the public with various levels of:

- (a) information about the referendum question or questions that are to be put to the electors;
- (b) information about the potential impacts if the majority of ballots are validly cast at the referendum vote the same way on a question stated;

and that:

... the Chief Electoral Officer must provide information in a manner that ensures the accessibility of that information.

I will provide those copies, Mr. Chair. I have so moved that amendment. It is to ensure that Albertans have access to nonpartisan education and other informational materials. Once again, going to the issue of trust, that Albertans simply do not trust the information coming from this government on such a matter of high import, being their retirement security. If one were to give this amendment a nickname, it might be: past behaviour is pretty good predictor of future behaviour, so we need to guard against that and make sure that we've at least got some impartial information going to Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, the Member for Lethbridge-West has introduced an amendment that we will refer to as A3. Are there any others wishing to speak to amendment A3? The Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

5:30

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment that we now have before the Legislature. What occurred to me, as I was listening to debate this afternoon, is how little this whole referendum question and how little this pension question actually revolves around the issues that are concerning Albertans today. I've yet to dismiss from my mind the possibility that the government will at some point in the future, after recognizing, of course, that the referendum question is something that should be put before the Legislature and after looking at the number of pension town halls that we have been hosting as the Official Opposition in person and the hundreds and hundreds of people who are showing up in increasing numbers and in large measure – over 90 per cent of those people who are showing up are rejecting this whole idea of a Canada pension plan. The survey that we've done online shows that as well, a 90 per cent rejection of this whole idea of an Alberta pension plan replacing the Canada pension plan.

It reminds me of a potential name that the government could use to exit this whole crazy scheme and just say: *Let's Call the Whole Thing Off*. It's a song by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. I think that at some point, Mr. Chair, that may be what happens. I mean, it behooves me and many political watchers who are looking at the numbers on this issue to see what a cliff it is for the government to be continuing to race towards with, you know, 90 per cent of Albertans against this, yet they're maintaining their momentum towards the cliff at potentially critical and calamitous political risk. At some point I think that they may just simply call the whole thing off and wonder indeed why in the name of good policy they ever got involved in it in the first place.

I mean, it behooves one to look at the discussions that were going on, after the government was elected, as to what they would pursue in their legislative agenda, and this would be something that would become one of their priorities: the replacement of the Canada pension plan, that is highly respected and the best in the world, with an Alberta pension plan. Notwithstanding that it was one of their political promises, sure, but there are lots of campaign promises that are made, Mr. Chair, that don't get followed through on, particularly those that are as sour cabbage as this.

I mean, it is really astounding that a government with a small – small – majority in this House would want to squander political goodwill the way they're doing so with the continued roll towards a cliff that they are pursuing with this pursuit of replacing the Canada pension plan with the Alberta pension plan. It must be the subject of many debates in political science classes. I can certainly

imagine people shaking their heads and maybe writing papers on this, saying: “Why in the world did this government go ahead with something that was so widely opposed by Albertans? They seemed so diligent in their course that they went right off the cliff with it.” That’s something that history will write. Perhaps in very short order, Mr. Chair, we’ll see that history written unless they decide, of course, to call the whole thing off.

That may be part of the purpose. I mean, some political watchers are wondering aloud if indeed that is what this whole scheme is about, to simply parade a smokescreen to hide some of the things they’re not doing in this Legislature; that is, to protect Albertans in their struggle to make ends meet in a time of a housing crisis, an earnings crisis, an inflation crisis. Yet here we have so much time being spent on debate in this Legislature about abandonment of the Canada pension plan, which nobody is asking for. You heard it here first, Mr. Chair. If you hear the government saying, “Let’s call the whole thing off,” we’ll have perhaps the Minister of Finance sing the refrain in the House.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has risen.

**Mr. Horner:** You bet. Thank you, Mr. Chair. With amendment A3 to the Alberta Pension Protection Act, I’m unfortunately not going to be able to advise that we support that. It’s unclear how the Chief Electoral Officer would provide impartial information or who would make such determination. It’s also unclear how the Chief Electoral Officer would have the capacity to explain the potential impacts of the outcome of a referendum. Additionally, the role of the Chief Electoral Officer is about ensuring there is integrity in the election process rather than providing information which may impact how an Albertan would vote in a referendum.

For those reasons, I encourage members of this Assembly to vote against this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

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

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Metz
Batten	Eremenko	Pancholi
Boparai	Goehring	Phillips
Brar	Gray	Renaud
Ceci	Haji	Sabir
Chapman	Hayter	Schmidt
Dach	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Deol	Irwin	Tejada
Eggen	Kasawski	Wright, P.
Ellingson	Kayande	

5:40

Against the motion:

Amery	Jean	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Johnson	Sawhney
Boitchenko	Jones	Schow
Bouchard	LaGrange	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Loewen	Singh

de Jonge	Long	Stephan
Dreeshen	Lovely	Turton
Dyck	Lunty	van Dijken
Ellis	McDougall	Wiebe
Fir	McIver	Williams
Getson	Nally	Wilson
Glubish	Neudorf	Wright, J.
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Yao
Horner	Petrovic	Yaseen
Hunter		

Totals: For – 29 Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** I am seeking speakers to Bill 2. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** All right. Well, let’s see if we can improve this piece of legislation, that is roundly opposed by the majority of Albertans, Madam Chair. At the very least, I will move the following amendment, that requires an audit before a referendum vote. I have the requisite number of copies here to move this amendment.

This amendment will ensure that the Auditor General has to . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. Hon. member, just wait until I have a copy before you speak to the amendment.

**Ms Phillips:** Sorry. I’ll get that to the table. How about that?

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A4. It’s two pages.

Hon. member, please proceed to read it into the record.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just by way of explanation, this amendment will ensure that the Auditor General reviews all government spending on an Alberta pension plan advertising campaign and other assorted communications and lays a report before the Assembly.

**The Chair:** Sorry. I hesitate to interrupt. Can you read the amendment into the record?

**Ms Phillips:** I think I may have given you all of my . . .

**The Chair:** We will very quickly get a copy of the amendment to the hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Okay. That Bill 2 be amended (a) by striking out section 1 and substituting the following:

Definitions

1. In this Act,

- (a) “Auditor General” has the same meaning as in the Auditor General Act;
- (b) “department” has the same meaning as in the Financial Administration Act;
- (c) “provincial pension plan” has the same meaning as in subsection 3(1) of the Canada Pension Plan (Canada);
- (d) “public money” has the same meaning as in the Financial Administration Act.

(b) by adding the following immediately after section 4:

Audit before referendum vote

(4.1)(1) The Auditor General must report to the Legislative Assembly with respect to the amount and nature of the expenditure of public money by a department in connection with each referendum ordered under section 2.

(2) The Auditor General must provide the report under subsection (1) to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly within

60 days after the date of the referendum vote, and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly must table a copy of the report in the Legislative Assembly as soon as possible after receiving it if the Legislative Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not, within 15 days after the start of the next sitting.

(3) If the Legislative Assembly is not sitting when the Auditor General provides a report to the Speaker under subsection (2), the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly must make copies of the report available to the public.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Lethbridge-West for her incredible work on this bill. I am hopeful, it being one of our last amendments today, that this government will support this really important amendment to the Alberta Pension Protection Act, ensuring that the Auditor General reviews all government spending on an APP. I can tell you, like my colleagues have so aptly stated today, that Albertans have a whole heck of a lot of questions about the UCP's plan to take on their CPP.

Now, I can tell you that I was just in both St. Albert and Red Deer this past week. St. Albert: overflow crowds, hundreds of people out to hear about the UCP's plans. Red Deer, Alberta: again, hundreds of people, standing room only. They had a lot of questions about the CPP and not a lot of answers. We tried our best to listen to as many people as we could, to try to answer their questions as best we could, but we couldn't because there's a clear lack of transparency, and quite frankly there's a clear lack of listening from this UCP government. I can tell you that some of the comments from people in Red Deer were just so, so important, and I wish more UCP MLAs would show up to those town halls. Things like: listen, we're Canadians first. Things like: what happens if I move to other provinces? Really critical questions that we're not getting answers to.

So I would urge this UCP government, like my colleague from Edmonton-McClung got on the record there, to really – how did that song go?

**Mr. Dach:** Let's call the whole thing off.

**Member Irwin:** Let's call the whole thing off. Thanks, sir. I don't always understand his antiquated references, but I do like them.

Truly, if my office, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, is getting inundated from Albertans who are fully concerned about the UCP's plans, we know that the members on the opposite side are getting them as well. I urge them to start listening, and I urge them to accept this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North East.

**Member Brar:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This Bill 2 is basically a solution to a nonexistent problem, and it is my honour to rise in the House to support this amendment. The thing is that we are hearing from our constituents the problems that they are facing. This UCP is not focused on addressing those issues, not focused on addressing those problems. Instead, they are giving themselves an open, free hand to accept gifts. They are working for their wealthy insiders. They are working for themselves instead of working for Albertans who elected them. This bill and many other bills that they have put forward clearly show that.

I want to share some information regarding the example that the members on the other side always try to give; that is, the Quebec example. They believe that, just like Quebec, we can have a pension plan, but I just want to look at the record of what things have happened in Quebec. The CPP was established, as we all know, in

1966, and Quebec opted to go alone. After the record of 60 years we can look at the data, and we can see that there are three lessons that we need to learn from the 60 years. The first lesson is that the provincial plan really cannot diverge significantly from the national plan. It goes along the way that the national plan goes. We have seen from Quebec as well that it has almost followed the path of CPP but has way fewer benefits. Recently Quebec had to increase the contributions, which has significantly impacted the benefits as well.

The second lesson that we need to learn is that economy and demographics can change significantly. I know the members opposite like to talk a lot about that we have more working-age population. Yes, it is there today, but it can change any time. It is not eternal, and it is important that we recognize this, because pensions are long-term decisions that we make. Pensions are not something short term. We need to keep that in mind as well. You know, Alberta's economy is heavily reliant on oil production. The same was with Quebec in the 1960s, when they used to have significant asbestos production, and that has changed significantly. So we need to keep these things in mind.

We need to make sure that we make decisions that are long term. That is why I request all members of the Assembly to support this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A4? The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Horner:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Amendment A4 of the Alberta Pension Protection Act: unfortunately, I'm not going to advise that we support this amendment. None of the proposed amendments to the Alberta Pension Protection Act on this topic would apply to any other referendum held in accordance with the Referendum Act. For those reasons, I encourage the members of this Assembly to vote against this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:50 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Kayande
Batten	Eremenko	Metz
Boparai	Ganley	Pancholi
Brar	Goehring	Phillips
Ceci	Gray	Renaud
Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Hayter	Schmidt
Deol	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Irwin	Tejada
Ellingson	Kasawski	Wright, P.

Against the motion:

Amery	Jean	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Johnson	Sawhney
Boitchenko	Jones	Schow
Bouchard	LaGrange	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Loewen	Singh
de Jonge	Long	Stephan
Dreesen	Lovely	Turton

Dyck	Lunty	van Dijken
Ellis	McDougall	Wiebe
Fir	McIver	Williams
Getson	Nally	Wilson
Glubish	Neudorf	Wright, J.
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Yao
Horner	Petrovic	Yaseen
Hunter		
Totals:	For – 30	Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Chair:** According to Standing Order 4(3) the committee shall rise and report without question put.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. van Dijken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill Pr. 1. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 8, Bill 5, Bill 2. 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.

### Private Bills

#### Third Reading

##### Bill Pr. 1

#### St. Joseph's College Amendment Act, 2023

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill Pr. 1, St. Joseph's College Amendment Act, 2023.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a third time]

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

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. We have had good debate and lots of eloquence throughout the evening. I will move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow, Wednesday, December 6.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]





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