



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, December 6, 2023

Day 19

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

Al-Guneid, Nagwan, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
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),
Official Opposition Whip
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),
Government Whip
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
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),
Official Opposition Assistant Whip
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)
Hoyle, Rhiannon, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)
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),
Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip
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)
McDougall, Myles, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)
Metz, Luanne, Calgary-Varsity (NDP)
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)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North West (UC)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),
Government House Leader
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),
Premier
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
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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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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Mickey Amery	Minister of Justice
Devin Dreeshen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Tanya Fir	Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Infrastructure
Nate Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Brian Jean	Minister of Energy and Minerals
Matt Jones	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Health
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry and Parks
Ric McIver	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Nathan Neudorf	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Advanced Education
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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
Lunty
Metz
Petrovic
Singh
Tejada

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Getson
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Chapman
Dyck
Eremenko
Hunter
Long
Renaud
Shepherd
Sinclair

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Eggen
Gray
Long
Phillips
Rowswell
Sabir
Singh
Yao

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Pitt
Deputy Chair: Mr. Stephan

Bouchard
Ceci
Deol
Dyck
Hayter
Petrovic
Sigurdson, L.
Wright, J.

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Yao
Deputy Chair: Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk

Arcand-Paul
Ceci
Cyr
Dach
Gray
Johnson
Stephan
Wiebe

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Ms Pancholi
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell

Armstrong-Homeniuk
de Jonge
Ganley
Haji
Lovely
Lunty
McDougall
Schmidt

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Rowswell
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schmidt

Al-Guneid
Armstrong-Homeniuk
Calahoo Stonehouse
Dyck
Hunter
McDougall
Sinclair
Sweet

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

The Chair: Hon. members, you may be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, Committee of the Whole is resumed.

Bill 5 Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023

The Chair: We are on amendment A4.

I see the hon. Government House Leader rising.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 5 and report bills 2, 8, and 9.

[Motion carried]

[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 bills: Bill 9, Bill 8, Bill 2. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 5. 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.
The hon. Government House Leader.

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

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

(continued)

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, all you cool cats and kittens. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 5 Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023 *(continued)*

The Chair: We are on amendment A4. I am seeking speakers to the amendment.

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A4.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:34 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

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

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 – 32 Against – 44

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Chair: I'm seeking speakers to Bill 5 in Committee of the Whole.

Seeing none, I will call the question on Bill 5, the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023, on sections 2 and 5.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 2 and 5 of Bill 5 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:39 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For 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	

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Eremenko	Kayande
Batten	Ganley	Loyola
Boparai	Goehring	Metz
Brar	Gray	Pancholi
Ceci	Haji	Phillips
Chapman	Hayter	Renaud
Dach	Hoffman	Sabir
Deol	Hoyle	Shepherd
Eggen	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Ellingson	Irwin	Tejada
Elmeligi	Kasawski	Wright, P.
Totals:	For – 44	Against – 33

[Sections 2 and 5 of Bill 5 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: One more question: shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? That is carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 5.

The Chair: With amendments.

Mr. Schow: With amendments.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. van Dijken: Madam Speaker, the committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 5. 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.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 8

Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move third reading of Bill 8, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

As I've noted previously in this House, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act would make updates to the Court of King's Bench Act, the Jury Act, the Justice of the Peace Act, the Estate Administration Act, the Trustee Act, and the Conflicts of Interest Act.

Amendments to the Conflicts of Interest Act would suspend investigations after a general election is called, which is a direct response to the recommendations from the Ethics Commissioner.

Changes to the Conflicts of Interest Act would also move dollar limits and rules for gifts and event attendance into regulation, providing the flexibility to adjust the limits and rules to reflect current costs and practices and to do so in a more streamlined way.

The amendments in the Justice of the Peace Act would increase access to justice for Albertans by temporarily increasing the maximum number of terms that a justice of the peace can serve. In addition, Madam Speaker, the Trustee Act would be changed to clarify the definition of an incapacitated person while the Estate Administration Act would make the requirements for an Albertan acting as a personal representative in the administration of an estate of a deceased person clearer and easier to understand.

Madam Speaker, the proposed changes to the Jury Act would replace a reference to "summary trial" with "streamlined trial". Effective January 1, 2024, streamlined trials will increase access to justice for Albertans by replacing a very seldomly used summary trial process for civil and family matters in the Court of King's Bench. Finally, amendments to the Court of King's Bench Act would increase the number of other judges from 74 to 80. This reflects the current number of positions of the court based on increases by orders in council since 2021.

If these amendments are passed, Madam Speaker, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, will simplify the process for Albertans to access vital services and ensure that our legislation remains current.

[The Speaker in the chair]

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: I believe the hon. the Official Opposition House Leader is rising to make a unanimous consent request.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I rise to seek unanimous consent of the House to revert to Introduction of Guests.

The Speaker: That was some good teamwork there by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Well done.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much to all the colleagues in the Legislature. I know all MLAs will agree with me that this job is difficult and stressful, and we could not do the work we do in this House and in our constituencies without the amazing staff teams that support our work. I want to acknowledge some of the staff that are above. Dhuha Nader, Annie Wachowich, Parul Kanwar, Samantha Choi, and Simon Koots have each of them played an invaluable role throughout this session in supporting the work that we do. Any mistakes are our own and not your fault, to be very clear. Thank you. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

(continued)

Bill 5

Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023

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

7:50

Mr. Horner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and move third reading of Bill 5, the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023.

Bill 5 will repeal the current compensation model for non-union public-sector compensation, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act, also known as RABCCA. It is an inflexible and prescriptive compensation framework that has restrained compensation with a one-size-fits-all approach for diverse public agencies. It doesn't account for competitive and changing labour market conditions and has led to many well-qualified and exceptional workers leaving and finding more competitively compensated work elsewhere. The framework has put pressure on agencies to shift compensation approaches away from market and sector norms and prescribe compensation levels at 2015 or 2016 rates as inflationary pressures increase.

This new proposed governance-focused approach would strike a better balance and provide government with more flexibility to respond to emerging circumstances. Nothing in the proposed legislation would change the governance structures of individual public agencies or the relationships between agencies and ministries. The proposed legislation would streamline and harmonize government's direction for non-union compensation across Alberta's public sector. Mr. Speaker, it would apply to Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health. It would also apply to all postsecondary institutions except independent academic institutions. As well, it would apply to some public agencies such as Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Commission, Alberta Innovates, Travel Alberta, and the Workers' Compensation Board. The proposed legislation enables a more flexible approach to compensation regulation that envisions developing a common compensation policy that would apply across the public sector and would envision provisions applicable to all employers.

It will take time and a collaborative effort by governments and public agencies to develop the details of a new compensation framework. There would be a directive issued at the time the proposed legislation is proclaimed. The directive would ensure that compensation is maintained under the current rules and controls while the details of the new model and common compensation policy are finalized and implemented through consultations with public agencies. Built into this system would be a process for compensation planning. Employers would be required to work with the government to develop competitive compensation plans for their organizations. The plans would be reviewed and approved by government before being put in place.

These proposed changes aim to strike the right balance between public-sector employer independence and autonomy with oversight of public dollars now and into the future. It would also ensure that Alberta can continue to attract and retain top talent.

The proposed legislation is a starting point. It's enabling. There will be continued consultation with employers to develop the details and processes to support a new compensation framework. The proposed legislation allows for changes to occur and would take time to complete and be done in collaboration with employers. It would secure Alberta's future as a top destination for highly skilled workers while ensuring strong fiscal oversight. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to support this bill and help government move forward with modernizing Alberta's public compensation framework.

I now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 2 Alberta Pension Protection Act

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last number of weeks I have eagerly listened to the debate about the important new legislation we put forward as Bill 2. Bill 2's core purpose is to protect Albertans' pensions. If passed, the Alberta Pension Protection Act will commit to Albertans that they have the choice to decide, through a referendum, which path to take. If passed, this legislation will guarantee that an Alberta pension plan would offer the same or better benefits than the Canadian pension plan, with the same or lower contribution rates than currently paid under the CPP. Finally, if passed, the Alberta Pension Protection Act will also guarantee that the funds transferred from the CPP would only be used to set up and operate a provincial pension that protects the interests and benefits of all Albertans.

As I've said in this House, our government values the voice of Albertans, which is why they will have the final say, through a referendum, whether we move forward with a provincial pension plan. I want to be clear. The decision to move forward with an Alberta pension plan is and has always been up to Albertans. The Alberta Pension Protection Act will lock in the promise that Albertans will decide if we move forward.

If passed, the Alberta Pension Protection Act will guarantee that an Alberta pension plan would provide Albertans with the same or lower contributions. If passed, the Alberta Pension Protection Act would guarantee that an Alberta pension plan would provide Albertans the same or even better benefits, increasing pension security for seniors after retirement. During the debate members of the opposition said that no such guarantees are possible, but let me remind them that the Canada Pension Plan act states that in order for a province to withdraw from the CPP, it must show that a provincial pension plan would offer an equivalent level of benefits.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have worked hard to contribute to their retirement. The Alberta Pension Protection Act would give Albertans both the voice and choice that acknowledges this hard work and protects those contributions. We will continue listening to Albertans and working to protect their futures. The new legislation, if passed, will safeguard and protect the pensions and benefits Albertans have earned for years to come. I'd like to ask all members of this House to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Time Allocation on Bill 2

21. Mr. Schow moved:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 2, Alberta Pension Protection Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move Government Motion 21. [interjections] I hear the members opposite; already the chorus of frustration and anger coming from the NDP. I understand

that they may be displeased with me moving this motion, but it should not come as a surprise. In this Chamber our job is to do the people's work. [interjections] I hear the members opposite still heckling. There will be an opportunity five minutes after I conclude my remarks. They can stand up, and they can refute, you know, their interest in this motion. That is the standing orders. If you don't like it, win government and change them.

An Hon. Member: Okay. Will do. Absolutely.

Mr. Schow: Best of luck with that. With your leadership race, too.

Mr. Speaker, I will say this. We were elected and given a mandate by the people to complete the government's business. Whether the members opposite form the largest opposition in the history of the province or the smallest opposition, we will get the people's business done. They have threatened on social media, they have threatened in a number of instances that they want to sit all the way until Christmas. We're not going to allow it to happen. We will complete the people's business. We were going to get this done, and that's why we're moving this motion tonight.

With that, I conclude my remarks. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition is extremely disappointed that this motion has been invoked so early in the debate on this important piece of legislation. Bill 2 is fundamental here in this province and is the number one concern for so many Albertans, as we've seen from our inboxes, as the government has seen from theirs.

The Government House Leader says that he hears frustration and anger from the NDP. We are hearing frustration and anger from our constituents, from seniors in this province, and it is our job to reflect that. It should be the government's job to listen, but they are not interested in listening. They are curtailing debate, giving the opposition a single hour now that we are at third reading of this bill.

We were forced to condense our attempts to amend and fix Bill 2 into two hours of debate in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, across the last two days, essentially giving very little time to talk about issues like that they are protecting in Bill 2 the level of benefits for the current entrants who are members of CPP, but they rejected our amendment to make sure that the youth of today, when they start working – if there is an APP, that their benefits are protected as well. It is a major loophole in this bill. There were other loopholes in this bill that we attempted to amend that they rejected.

8:00

I think in third reading, as is the practice in this Legislature, that is the time for the government to take note of the concerns we are bringing forward to give Albertans an opportunity to give their feedback because they have not had that. They have not had that on telephone town halls that have only talked to 150 preselected Albertans; they have not had that in in-person town halls because the government won't do them.

The Official Opposition has, and in our town halls, where it's standing room only, people say: hands off our CPP. We have talked to Albertans across this province and we will continue to, because although Bill 2 passes today, we know that this government's word is not worth the paper Bill 2 is written on. They say they want to listen to a referendum, yet the amendment that would actually make a referendum binding was something they rejected. They will not be held accountable through the passage of Bill 2.

Now, the Government House Leader speaks about the mandate, the mandate of the people. Mr. Speaker, in the election they refused to talk about and debate pensions at all. They said it was not an issue

and that they had no designs on Alberta's pensions, yet here we are with Bill 2 being the second bill of this new government after telling Albertans during the election that this was not something that we needed to debate.

It is shameful, Mr. Speaker, and now they are limiting the debate, and we are not getting the opportunity to bring into the record, to a government who is not listening, the concerns of our constituents. I have heard across the last several weeks each one of my colleagues table letters from their constituents, rise in this place and ask questions on behalf of their constituents because this issue is so important and is dominating all of the communications that we are getting.

The fact that this government is curtailing debate and going off for their Christmas vacation while at every Christmas table Albertans are going to be talking about the concern around Alberta pensions – and what is this government doing? And what was that \$8 million ad campaign on numbers that I don't really believe? Do you believe them? I don't believe them. That's because the numbers aren't real, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, we see a government that has used time allocation over and over and over again when they are passing legislation that they know Albertans don't support. One of the reasons we don't use time allocation is to give citizens, media, stakeholders, experts opportunities to examine pieces of legislation and to weigh in, to have those ideas reflected, and I do not think we have had adequate time on Bill 2, Mr. Speaker. Having the time allocation imposed now and shutting down debate is antidemocratic and very, very frustrating for an Official Opposition.

We have 38 members, Mr. Speaker, and for many members they've only had minutes to talk about this bill because of how quickly it's gone through. There is so much more to say, and I believe we deserve this opportunity. I would encourage all members, government and opposition alike, to vote against this time allocation motion. Let us continue to have a real debate in this place on something that is critical for each and every one of our constituents, that will impact those of us who are currently in the CPP system and those of us who will be in the future. I say: reject this government motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 21 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:04 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For 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	van Dijken
Fir	McIver	Wiebe
Getson	Nally	Williams
Glubish	Neudorf	Wilson
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Eremenko	Loyola
Batten	Ganley	Metz
Boparai	Goehring	Pancholi
Brar	Gray	Phillips
Ceci	Haji	Renaud
Chapman	Hoffman	Sabir
Dach	Hoyle	Shepherd
Deol	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Irwin	Tejada
Ellingson	Kasawski	Wright, P.
Elmeligi	Kayande	
Totals:	For – 45	Against – 32

[Government Motion 21 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Time Allocation on Bill 5

22. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 5, Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've made my points pretty clear in the last motion that I recently moved. Those points stand. I think it's important that we get the people's work done in this Chamber and not delay that and delay the implementation of these bills. For that reason, I move Government Motion 22.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. opposition whip.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again we see the government invoking closure on a bill that has not been properly debated, quite frankly. We have spent – you know, take a look around, and you'll see that the landscape in this Legislature has changed quite dramatically. In the last election we built the biggest opposition in the history of this province – that's sitting across here now – and with these time restrictions we are not able to debate properly. We have a matter of minutes to distribute amongst 38 different MLAs on this side. This simply is not a way by which we can . . . [interjections]

8:10

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has the call.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, the government is uncomfortable about this because they know that it's the wrong thing to do. We know that Bill 5 is a complicated piece of legislation. It has several areas that simply jumped out at us straight away, and Lord knows they've jumped out at Albertans as well. This is the provision in this bill that removes all salary restraints from agencies, boards, and commissions. I'm not one to give advice to the government lightly, but this is pure poison for a government to do.

All of the perks and excessive salaries and gifts and extra things that accumulated over 44 years, Mr. Speaker, of Conservative rule – right? – Albertans had enough of that. They said loud and clear that they didn't want any more of that. [interjections] I sat with many of these same people – you can hear them howling and

hooting because they know this is painful – at this very same time. I sat with them in the opposition, and they railed against that PC government – you were there, too, Mr. Speaker – railed against excessive gifts and excessive salaries and all of that kind of thing. Here they are in 2023 planting those very same crops that they were criticizing the PC government for a few years ago.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the government can change their ways because this is the way that a government goes down, quite frankly. It's a way that a government goes down. It's not necessarily from a budget; it's from giving your friends gifts – excessive gifts – from the public purse. That was only one part of this bill – right? – in fact. And you can see a perfect example of how if we are given the time to properly work on these bills, Bill 5 specifically, that this government made a grievous error in removing in the preamble . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Don't worry; your clock stops. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I made a living off my quite loud, mellifluous voice for many years as a high school teacher. I can talk over top of these guys all night long. It's not a big deal. It really isn't a big deal at all.

Again, a perfect example, Mr. Speaker, of giving us a chance to work on a bill. We found an obvious error, where they removed the right for collective bargaining in working with the public service in the preamble. They realized – probably the lawyers in the back must have freaked out as well – and they accepted our amendment to make sure that this bill was a better piece of legislation. However, we were just getting started with that process.

There are lots of places where we could improve this bill considerably. This is a perfect example where we get cut off at the knees, Mr. Speaker, and have to debate this for one hour in third reading. We'll do our best. We'll use that time well, and we will hope that the government learns from that process and does not use closure with impunity because, quite frankly, it's undemocratic and Albertans expect better from the government.

Thank you very much.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 22 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:14 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For 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	van Dijken
Fir	McIver	Wiebe
Getson	Nally	Williams
Glubish	Neudorf	Wilson
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Eremenko	Metz
Batten	Goehring	Notley
Boparai	Haji	Pancholi
Brar	Hoffman	Phillips
Ceci	Hoyle	Renaud
Chapman	Ip	Sabir
Dach	Irwin	Shepherd
Deol	Kasawski	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Kayande	Tejada
Ellingson	Loyola	Wright, P.
Elmeligi		
Totals:	For – 45	Against – 31

[Government Motion 22 carried]

Time Allocation on Bill 8

23. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 8, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

The Speaker: Are there others? This is a debatable motion. The hon. the Deputy Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose to speak against this motion earlier. The Government House Leader mentioned that we are here to do people business. When we talk about people, they are facing a cost-of-living crisis. They are facing skyrocketing insurance costs under this government because of this government's policies. They are facing skyrocketing utility costs because of this government's policies. They are seeing chaos in health care because of this government trying to dismantle their public health care. They are facing a shortage of schools despite the government having a surplus. They would rather spend on pet projects like R-star but not invest in the communities where people want them to invest and have schools close to their homes.

8:20

I do know that in the northeast kids are being bused to other quadrants for more than an hour every day each way. That's what happens in northeast Calgary. If they were serious about people business, they would focus on people business, but with this Bill 8 they are focused on MLA and minister business so they can get better, bigger, and fatter gifts.

During the Committee of the Whole they did put closure on, and we tried to make this bill a bit better. We brought forward an amendment that would remove the cabinet's ability to set the gift limit. And guess what? The entire UCP caucus got on board the gravy train and voted down that amendment.

Then we brought forward an amendment to prohibit MLAs and ministers from getting tickets to games, to concerts with attendance over 10,000 people, because we know there won't be any people business. There might be good food, good booze, but no people business. And guess what? Again the UCP caucus came together to defeat that amendment.

Then we proposed that – okay – if you really want to change the gift limits, let's have the Ethics Commissioner look at it. But you know what? They didn't like that either. So they all got together, and they defeated that amendment as well. Then we brought forward another amendment that – okay – every gift over the \$100

limit should be reported and disclosed publicly. So they got together to get on board this gravy train. They defeated that amendment as well.

Let me say this. The UCP government has used closure motions more times in the last four years than any other government, than all the governments combined in the history of this province. That's undemocratic, that's heavy-handed, and that's shameful.

They were talking about the time debate on the bill. We have nine bills and 21 stages, and we merely have less than 21 hours of debate. If you divide it on 87 MLAs, it's two to three minutes each MLA. I have not heard from any member, other than one person who moved the bill, on this bill, what they think, why their gifts should be bigger and should be better. Not one person spoke to this bill.

I think this motion and these attempts to close debate, curtail debate on the bills of importance to the public, importance to people, is antidemocratic. That's the UCP thing to do; use their majority, use their numbers to ram through their own agenda.

That's not people business. I think people in our communities, in our constituencies, in our province deserve far better than this. They want a government focused on the cost of living, focused on public health care, focused on public education, focused on public housing, focused on making sure that sick people are not dying on the streets of this province instead of lining your own pockets. I think Albertans deserve far better.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 23 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:24 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For 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	van Dijken
Fir	McIver	Wiebe
Getson	Nally	Williams
Glubish	Neudorf	Wilson
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For – 45 Against – 31

[Government Motion 23 carried]

Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading

Bill 8
Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023
(continued)

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? Seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Often when I have the opportunity to speak especially to conservatives, I ask them, like: okay; what is it that you're truly trying to conserve? A lot of the times, you know, I challenge them. I mean, are you trying to conserve existing power structures? The further we look back in history, you see the inequity that has existed where certain people don't have access to opportunities, never mind having access to power, to the opportunity to actually change their future. The reason for that is because of the existing power structures, that have always existed. Like, colonialism is but one of them.

8:30

Right here in this bill what we have is the Conservatives taking us back to an old Conservative method of being, which is entitlement. Entitlement. Here we have a bill that's basically giving opportunities for stakeholders to wine and dine members of the cabinet, MLAs, to be able to give them the gifts that they need. Mr. Speaker, you just have to go back in the history of this Legislature to the one-time Progressive Conservatives to see how that culture of entitlement actually worked. Let me tell you that those stakeholders that were giving out gifts and favours and things like that weren't doing it just for the sake of trying to give out a gift. They actually wanted something in return.

This bill actually reeks of that, going back to those times where stakeholders, people of particular interest were able to get members of cabinet, MLAs, in their back pocket. That's exactly what I would believe we're trying to avoid, Mr. Speaker. As we grow as a democracy, we want to be able to strengthen it. We want to make sure that people have access to power, that their voices are represented within this Legislature.

Here we have a government that is putting forward a bill that has absolutely nothing to do with the actual problems that are being experienced by everyday Albertans in today's day and age. Mr. Speaker, this is a shame. It's a shame that this province doesn't have a government, especially at a time like this, when inflation is where it's at, where people are living paycheque to paycheque – I've had constituents come to me and say: I'm just a paycheque away from not being able to make my mortgage payment. We all know what happens when you can't make the mortgage payment. You default. The bank ends up taking your home. And what happens to that person? They're houseless. They're having to move in with other family members. Stresses are created on these individuals. They're going through economic turmoil.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The reality is that Albertans deserve better than this, Mr. Speaker. When people are going through the economic turmoil that they're going through, being concerned about not being able to make it to the end of the month, starting to put expenses – regular expenses, monthly expenses – on their credit cards because they're trying to make it to the end of the month, month after month after month: these are the things that we should be concerned about in this House right now. Instead, we have Bill 8, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, where the government is trying to make favour so that

stakeholders can give better gifts to MLAs and, specifically, members of cabinet.

It's a shame, Mr. Speaker, that we're even debating this bill at this time, when we should be concerned with the plight of everyday Albertans and what they're going through and making sure that they have greater opportunities, access to those opportunities, making sure that they can make it to the end of the month, making sure that their wage is actually increasing over time rather than how it actually has been happening. Wages haven't increased over the last 10, 12 years for a lot of Albertans, yet costs continue to skyrocket and go up. Whether it's groceries or rent or whatever it is, tuition at our postsecondaries, costs continue to go up and up and up, and this government has done nothing. Instead, it has even taken the cap off utilities, taken the cap off insurance, making decisions that are making it harder and harder for Albertans to make it to the end of the month.

I know that stakeholders have to be consulted, but Albertans deserve a voice inside of this House, too, and that's what all of my colleagues on this side of the House are doing. We're raising the concerns of everyday Albertans. Call it fearmongering if you want, but we know the truth. We're here to represent everyday Albertans and the realities that they're going through, and we'll never stop doing that. We're voting against this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 8? The Member for Sherwood Park has risen.

Mr. Kasawski: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Earlier on we had a chance to debate this with the Minister of Justice and keeper of the seal of Alberta . . .

Is it the Great Seal of Alberta or just the seal of Alberta?

An Hon. Member: A fantastic seal.

Mr. Kasawski: . . . with the Minister of Justice and the fantastic seal of Alberta. I got the sense that we were going to have a potential discussion here, so I'll bring it back to some of the points, and at the end I'll invite the Minister of Justice to respond.

This is the bill that the Minister of Justice is leading with, so, you know, his words on this matter. They carry a great deal of weight. When he's talked about this, he has talked about other jurisdictions. Minister, you have said that there are other jurisdictions that are already doing this with the way they handle expenses, so I'll invite you at the end of my time to come and respond to that, because I haven't been able to find it. When our researchers looked, they could not find any jurisdiction within Canada that did not have a limit of at least \$250, Mr. Speaker. Having those limits is important.

I'm just going to take a step to give a chance for the Minister of Justice, then, to get prepared for how he'll respond and inform the House of those jurisdictions where these changes are being made and that we're just following suit or just keeping up with the changes in the modern times.

I'll bring it back to sport. Mr. Speaker, I play a sport called ultimate Frisbee. It's unusual to most people in that it's self-officiated. There are no referees. How do we play the game? We have rules. We have guidelines. In this case, we have a spirit of the game, which is important to the sport. People play this sport around the world. They play it with great intensity and great joy.

Today we had the minister of tourism coming to us and announcing a great event in the riding of the Minister of Technology and Innovation, the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. We're going to have the Summer Games. Our children from across this province are going to come and play sport with rules. So when we invite them, we don't just say: come to Sherwood Park – we've got great facilities – and just have fun. They come and they

play a sport with rules. Whichever sport that's going to be, there are going to be rules to it.

Having those rules and limitations – there are time limits. There's what's allowed in terms of a team sport with interaction with each other. There might be contact; there might be no contact. There might be distances. There are limits. We know about teaching our children sport. There was a great member's statement today on sport and how important that is to our children.

Coming back to our work and back to that member's statement, he was talking about how all of those athletes are going to be professionals – maybe not professional athletes, but they're going to be professionals – and they learn it through sport, sport with rules.

Back to ultimate Frisbee. Most of the time people make fun of me playing ultimate Frisbee because there are no referees.

Member Irwin: We wouldn't.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you very much. It's a great sport. There are great rules to it, and we compete.

We have brought forward some amendments today, and those amendments would create guidelines to work within this. The Minister of Justice is also bringing some great parts of this bill, which have to do with our justice system and increasing access to justice, and then at the same time has brought in these pieces that we don't understand, that I don't understand, because rules and regulations and guidelines are important.

8:40

We thought we could maybe, you know, strike the ability for cabinet to determine the gift limit amounts. Like, instead of self-officiating, we would say: there are going to be rules here; the limits are going to be set. But that wasn't acceptable.

We thought we could prohibit sports tickets and concert tickets. That was interesting. When I became a member and had my orientation, I thought it was very interesting that CFL tickets and NHL tickets were particularly excluded from gifting, I guess back to an era in time, back to the 1992 period, where maybe there were people giving too many tickets to MLAs. Maybe they were being invited to too many suites. Maybe there were people being offered season tickets. Maybe with the discretion in the self-officiating world of the future, that we're moving towards, it's going to be okay for MLAs to accept season tickets. But we thought: maybe we'll just bring that back; we'll prohibit sports tickets and concert tickets. But that was removed.

We thought that maybe in this House we don't have a great sense of what an appropriate gift is. Maybe it's not \$200. Maybe it's not \$250. Maybe it's more or less. Maybe we can have an external group determine what that limit is; let's form an independent body. That amendment was not accepted.

We thought that maybe we could bring this discussion into the House for what was acceptable. Maybe we thought we could disclose publicly what these gifts are and that that would just, you know, shed light on the matter, and then there would be nothing to hide. But these things were all unacceptable.

So, inspired by the minister of sports' talk about the professionals that are going to be rising up in Alberta through sport and then going back to the Minister of Justice's comments about how we are just catching up with other jurisdictions and moving towards the future, I welcome the Minister of Justice to speak to this bill in the time that we have allotted.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill at this time? The Member for Calgary-Currie has risen.

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 8, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, and to talk about a piece of the bill that we haven't heard a lot about yet, and that is in regard to the conflict-of-interest changes. One of the main components of Bill 8 is to amend the Conflicts of Interest Act so that the Premier or anyone in that caucus can't be held accountable if they're found breaking the law right before the election. This would ostensibly suspend investigations during general elections, which strikes me as a pretty clever tactic but not a terribly opaque one, to basically avoid accountability when it matters the most.

I really struggle to think about how members of the UCP across the way can stand before their constituents on their doorsteps and say with authenticity and earnestness that a finding related to a conflict-of-interest investigation can wait until after the election, like that information doesn't matter. It matters tremendously. And we would hold everyone on this side of the House to the same account as we would on the other. I think every Albertan should as well. To stand before an electorate and say, "No, that's okay; nothing to see here; we're just going to push pause on something that has tremendous and grave impact on one's ability to do their job in this position; don't worry about it" – truly, if the tables were turned and we were government and we put forward this bill, which, frankly, would never happen because transparency, accountability, democracy are the values that we stand firmly by, if we did it, this government wouldn't give us an inch.

It got me kind of thinking, like: well, what's a fair analogy here? I want to say that I'm a parent, Mr. Speaker. I've got two lovely kids, and they are excellent negotiators, as I'm sure other parents in this room can sympathize with, and like most kids, they hate cleaning their rooms. They hate it. We all know it, right? Aunties and uncles and grandparents all know that kids hate cleaning their rooms. So when dinnertime arrives at our house, I might ask that they clean their room before they have dessert. Imagine if they said: actually, Mom, we both know I don't usually clean my room when you ask, but I'll take my dessert now, and then you can see if I follow the rules.

It's kind of what's happening here. In this case the UCP are like: "Sure, kids. No problem. I don't know if you followed the rules, but would you like one scoop or two?"

Mr. Eggen: Three.

Member Eremenko: Three.

You can imagine that that's not ultimately going to create a healthy relationship and a healthy dynamic between parents and kids, electorate and elected representatives, Mr. Speaker.

Once already this evening I've talked about the importance of giving salient information to Albertans before they go to the polls so they can make an informed decision when they cast their ballot. It is our responsibility to ensure that the electorate has the information that they need if they choose to go and exercise their right as citizens and cast a ballot on a referendum or in a general election.

Now, hypothetically speaking, if the leader of a party was running to be Premier and if that leader happened to be the subject of an investigation by the Ethics Commissioner and if that leader was – I don't know – just hypothetically found to have broken the rules of the Conflicts of Interest Act, I think that information would be pertinent to an election. I think that that would be critical information that the electorate would need to know because it matters, Mr. Speaker. How else are they making these decisions?

We hustle, we wear out those shoes so that we can meet people on their front doors, in the coffee shops, at the community associations so that we can talk about the things that matter. I

remember ages ago – this was my third campaign, Mr. Speaker, when I finally was elected. Truly honoured to be here. And I remember someone from this caucus said: there is no job interview quite like an election; you have 40,000 two-minute job interviews, and it is in that split moment that a person needs to decide if they can count on you, if they can trust you to be their elected representative.

So if you have been found to be in breach of the Conflicts of Interest Act, it matters. It matters immensely. I would actually suggest that if an investigation was begun before an election, that investigation should be prioritized and expedited so that findings from that investigation could actually be made public ahead of election day. If the person was found not at fault, then they'd be vindicated, and the electorate could proceed as they see fit. If they were found to be in breach of that act, well, then maybe that's a ding on their job interview, Mr. Speaker, but it would still be up to the electorate to make the decision on whether or not that person would be an effective and trusted elected representative. The key word here is "the electorate." Let's let them decide, not this government through their sneaky amendments to existing legislation that will prevent transparency and salient information being available to Albertans so that they can make the most informed decision possible.

But Albertans can't do their job if we don't do ours as elected representatives. I'm very honoured and proud to stand here with my colleagues on this side of the House doing our job and making sure that the offices of the Legislature are also empowered and capable to do their independent jobs of investigating, of following concerns, of following complaints, and getting the job done.

I would like to quote the minister from the press release for Bill 8 about four weeks ago, where he said that voters are entitled to proceed during an election without undue influence; these amendments help eliminate some of those influences. I agree that electors could be influenced by an investigation, because what it would unearth – wait for it. It could unearth the truth. If this government is leery of the truth having undue influence on the decisions of an electorate, then, Mr. Speaker, I think we have much bigger issues.

Thank you.

8:50

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has risen.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise tonight to speak to Bill 8, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. I want to just do a little bit of a recap of how we've got here. Tonight is probably the last evening and opportunity that we're going to have to debate in the House. We just watched government push through three time allocations to stop debate in this House.

It's just really disappointing. I think that when we are coming to this place to talk about concerns, to talk about what Albertans want to talk about, we're definitely not hearing it from that side of the House. I think they're perhaps afraid of us being the voice of Albertans and saying what we're hearing when we actually talk to people. It sounds like they're afraid of that. I have to say that when I look at the legislation that they've brought forward during this session, it is completely out of touch with what Albertans are talking about.

I know that they didn't run on getting out of the CPP, yet here we are in the Chamber talking about pulling out of that. We're on this side of the House talking to Albertans about what matters to them, and they're saying: hands off my CPP. That side of the House doesn't want to hear it. When we're up here standing, talking about

what we're hearing every day from our constituents about things that matter, they want to stop that. It's really disheartening to know that we're in this place, we have an opportunity to share the voice of our constituents, and we're being shut down.

But here we are, Mr. Speaker. We've had opportunities to talk in this Chamber about the CPP and how Albertans don't want to leave it, yet this government is going forward with it. We talked about Bill 6, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2023, that gives them godlike powers to make decisions that, quite frankly, they should not be making; the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023, Bill 5, that just gives taxpayer money to boards, commissions, their friends, paying them whatever they see fit.

Now we're at Bill 8, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act. What this does, essentially, Mr. Speaker, is that it allows constituents, stakeholders, lobby groups, individuals that have perhaps influence on government to give elected officials gifts, which is something that we can already accept. We're able to accept gifts. We have to report it. There's a set amount. But what this piece of legislation is doing is actually allowing people to provide gifts to elected officials in quite high amounts.

Now, when I'm in my office and I'm going through my e-mails and when I'm out in the community talking to people, I can say with a hundred per cent certainty that no one has ever asked me: if only I could give you a more expensive gift. It has never happened. It's not something that I can say I've ever experienced, and I've been elected since 2015. In all of my years of serving the incredible community of Edmonton-Castle Downs, no one said: jeez, as an Albertan I really wish I could give you more expensive gifts.

But here we are. This is their Bill 8 in the First Session of this Legislature. The priority of this government is to get themselves better gifts. When asked about it, both the Premier and the ministers have said: well, we're just coming in line with other jurisdictions; we just want to make sure that we're in line with what other areas of the country are doing. So we looked into it, Mr. Speaker, wanting to know what other areas of the province are doing.

I would just like to read out, perhaps for the first time for the minister to hear this and perhaps for the Premier to hear this – but let's just go through with what other provinces' gifting limits are: B.C., \$250; Saskatchewan, \$200; Manitoba, \$250; Ontario, \$200; Quebec, \$200; Nova Scotia, \$250. Now, here is one that did change in 2021. It was \$500 and now it's \$200.

Member Eremenko: Oh, it went down.

Ms Goehring: It went down, Mr. Speaker.

It's P.E.I. [interjection] Right?

I'm just so confused with what being in line with other jurisdictions means to this government. What were they trying to accomplish? Are they trying to trick us into thinking, "Well, other provinces are doing it; we should, too"? I just don't understand. Other than personal benefit for these members on the opposite side of the House, what are they planning on doing?

I know that Albertans are struggling, Mr. Speaker. We have seen a record number of people accessing food banks. I have people calling my office pleading to get help to get a physician, people pleading to get a job. There are moms that I talk to that are working two, three jobs, don't see their kids, can't afford child care because if their kids are in out of school care, they don't qualify for the subsidies. So they're working; their kids are in school; they can't afford basic necessities.

It is so out of touch with what Albertans are asking for to ask for elected officials to be able to accept a higher amount of gifts. It's back to the good old days with the Conservatives lining their pockets. It's quite offensive, Mr. Speaker. Making sure that they

can accept expensive things is really quite gross in this place when we're talking about what Albertans are talking about, which is necessities of life. Food, utilities, insurance, health care: those are the things that we should be debating. Those are the things that should be talked about, and their Bill 8 is giving permission to get more expensive gifts.

I strongly, strongly encourage the government members to really reassess what their priorities are and what messages they want to give to Albertans. It's just not a good look, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage the members to really consider and not vote yes for this. We've seen a tradition of them unanimously supporting each other. I would hope that one time perhaps they can look at what is important and realize that this is not it. With that, I will close my comments.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again, one more time, to speak to Bill 8, which is a pretty self-serving, tone-deaf piece of legislation, and it's completely out of touch with the realities of Albertans. Instead of focusing on issues facing Albertans – cost of living, health care chaos, lack of schools, lack of housing, six people dying every day on the streets of Alberta because of drugs – government is focused on making their gifts bigger and better, and this needs to stop.

I will move an amendment that will give government an opportunity to shake their heads and shelve this bill. I guess it's a face-saving opportunity for them. I will distribute the amendment and then speak to it briefly.

9:00

The Acting Speaker: Member, you can proceed. The amendment will be RA1, a reasoned amendment.

Mr. Sabir: The Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall to move that the motion for third reading of Bill 8, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, be not now read a third time because the Assembly is of the view that it is not in the public interest to permit the Lieutenant Governor in Council to increase the value below which gifts accepted by Members of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council do not need to be included in a disclosure statement filed with the Ethics Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons why this bill should not be before this Legislature. It should not be a priority for members of the government to set their own limits. What this amendment is essentially saying is that it's not in the public interest for this government to decide the amount below which they don't have to disclose their gifts to the Ethics Commissioner. Right now that limit is \$100, and this bill is removing that limit so that they can prescribe any limit behind closed doors as they see fit. That's unacceptable. That's not found anywhere else in this country. Our gift limits are in line with the rest of Canada. It's only the UCP that thinks that they need bigger gifts, better gifts, and that they should be the ones who should decide what needs to be included in ethics disclosures.

Earlier they rejected our proposal to ask the Ethics Commissioner to set that limit. I think it's not in the public interest that the government should proceed with this legislation. This is an opportunity for the government to reconsider this and focus on what matters to Albertans and not on their gifts.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other speakers on RA1? The Member for Calgary-Glenmore has risen.

Ms Al-Guneid: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my first time to rise and speak on Bill 8 and to speak in support of this amendment. Just to be clear, Bill 8 will introduce self-serving amendments to the Conflicts of Interest Act. I want to be super clear here: we are in an affordability crisis. People cannot even afford their energy bills, their rent, their groceries, and the government of Alberta is proposing legislation to make it easier to change dollar limits and rules around gifts for elected officials.

So one more time and to be clear: the proposed changes here would remove the legislated limits on gifts that MLAs can receive. This is the UCP legislation, Mr. Speaker. It's like: all they want for Christmas is legislation that will get them more gifts.

Mr. Speaker, an important issue in democratic societies is government ethics. What is the difference between a gift and a bribe? A gift is something of value given without the expectation of return. A bribe is the same thing given in the hope of influence or benefit. It is well for government officials to remember the old saying: there is no such thing as a free lunch. There is never a free lunch, colleagues, and government ethics are a serious matter. The Premier actually cited inflation and the increased price of tickets as a motivation for this increase of gifts. We know that inflation is a national problem right now. We do know. We talk to our constituents, and we hear from people that they cannot afford the cost of living, their rent, and their groceries. This is the true impact of inflation on people and not the gift crisis that the members opposite are experiencing right now.

The Minister of Justice has claimed that these changes will bring Alberta in line with other jurisdictions. I feel we were in line with the Member for Sherwood Park and the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. We seem to be on the same wavelength here. We looked at numbers in other provinces to see how they're managing the gift crisis, and I'm happy to help the government learn about the gift limits in other places. I'm going to maybe repeat it one more time: B.C., \$250; Saskatchewan, \$200; Manitoba, \$250; Ontario, \$200; Quebec, \$200; Nova Scotia, \$250; New Brunswick, \$250. P.E.I. actually amended it from \$500 to \$200. So why does the UCP think they need to go higher on gift limits?

In summary, Mr. Speaker, we won't support this legislation because, unlike the UCP, we believe in the importance of prioritizing the interests and the concerns of everyday citizens over political self-interest. Albertans are facing significant challenges such as skyrocketing rents and a cost-of-living crisis, emergency room wait times, access to doctors, and safety for their pensions. Yet instead of focusing on what matters to Albertans, the UCP is prioritizing legislation to serve their own interests and gifts. This legislation does not represent the reality of everyday Albertans, and we will not support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Justice has risen to speak to RA1.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to the amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. We certainly will not be supporting that amendment.

As we've already discussed but just to reiterate – you'd think that the members opposite completely forgot – the bill before this Assembly today makes changes to a number of different acts, changes that are incredibly important to improving and increasing access to justice in this province. Now, they're only focused on one

of these acts. Maybe that is the NDP form of a compliment since they seem to agree with the vast majority of Bill 8 as proposed. [interjections] Now, Mr. Speaker, they're getting worked up, but they're going to get a lot more worked up in just a few moments.

The debate has so far focused, Mr. Speaker, on the proposed amendments to the Conflicts of Interest Act. The opposition has, as is par for the course, made a number of assumptions throughout their debate and deliberations, throughout the amendments that they proposed here about this bill, clearly without ever reading Bill 8 or taking the time to learn about how it operates. The Member for Sherwood Park has been getting up and asking me to address some of these situations. The Member for Sherwood Park has become the prime example of making assumptions with respect to Bill 8 without actually knowing how this bill or the amendments will actually operate.

I'd like to begin by reiterating to the Assembly that the bill proposes to allow key concepts to be clarified through regulation, Mr. Speaker. That's a concept of efficiency that the members opposite will never understand.

9:10

Now, the member opposite for Sherwood Park got up and said that he's done his research, that he's worked hard, that his team has done some incredible research. He couldn't quite remember what the name of the website he used to conduct his research was, but he asked the Minister of Justice for some help. So the Minister of Justice is happy to provide some help to all the members opposite here. He's asking me whether his research was right. I can tell all of the members opposite that your research is absolutely wrong. Your researchers got it wrong.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs got up and reiterated more misconceptions with respect to the jurisdictional analysis. Calgary-Glenmore got up and eloquently reiterated one more time a number of misrepresentations with respect to the jurisdictional analysis across this country.

So let me help the members opposite with a little bit of fact, Mr. Speaker. I decided to look at a number of different jurisdictions. Let me start with the greatest jurisdiction of all, my friends.

Mr. Getson: Alberta.

Mr. Amery: No. The Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, under the Conflict of Interest Act, for the dear friends of our members opposite who sit in Ottawa, their threshold is \$1,000 for gifts.

Then I decided to look at other provinces and jurisdictions. Here's an interesting one, Mr. Speaker: the members opposite's dear friends in Manitoba, the NDP government in Manitoba. Their section 7(2): "A member, or their family, must not accept a gift or benefit that is more than \$1,000 in value." One thousand dollars.

I then decided to look across the rest of the country. Mr. Speaker, the maximum threshold in Newfoundland: \$500. Here's another little bit of information: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, British Columbia, all higher than Alberta. Every single one of those jurisdictions that I mentioned has a higher threshold than we do here in Alberta.

It is embarrassing for the members opposite, it is embarrassing for the Leader of the Opposition to be standing up in this House along with members opposite to spew misconceptions about the proposed Bill 8, Mr. Speaker. Now, the members opposite have gotten up over and over and over again. The Member for Calgary-Elbow got up and said that he was appalled – appalled – at Bill 8. You know what Albertans are appalled by? Albertans are appalled

by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who said that hydrocarbons must go away, attacking tens of thousands of people in this province. Albertans are appalled at those members, who supported on and on again . . .

Mr. Getson: He doesn't recognize referendums, either.

Mr. Amery: He doesn't recognize our referendums.

. . . the carbon tax, voting against a motion that we brought forward in this House, Mr. Speaker, that relates to getting rid of the carbon tax. They talk about the cost of living, yet they have no shame in standing up in this House and supporting the carbon tax over and over and over again.

Albertans are appalled at six credit downgrades from that former Minister of Finance. Albertans are appalled at spending billions of dollars and going into debt so that they could supply shower heads and light bulbs, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are absolutely appalled at the 97 tax increases that that government made when they were here in power.

Mr. Speaker, this is in line with many other jurisdictions in Canada, and Bill 8 should stand as it is. The assumptions that they make make no sense to me, they make no sense to the members of this House, and we will be voting against this proposed amendment.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen to speak.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 8, my first opportunity to do so during this Legislature. Now, the Minister of Justice just brought forward some justifications for why he believes this government deserves to be able to set its own gift limits wherever it wishes, without scrutiny from anyone else. The minister just gave us his great arguments about why the fox should absolutely be trusted to guard the henhouse.

Now, the minister is right. He said, you know, that this bill makes a number of changes, indeed, to a number of different acts to improve access to justice, Mr. Speaker. To improve access to justice. What is just about a government taking the power unto itself to, without ever speaking to Albertans or with no scrutiny from the Legislature, set its own gift limits? There is nothing just about that; there is nothing accountable about that.

The minister talked about how the bill simply allows key concepts to be clarified through regulation, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, that puts me in mind of some of the previous things the UCP government has decided that it needed to clarify through legislation. They clarified through legislation – I believe it was Bill 21 – that they believed they had the right to unilaterally tear up the master agreement with physicians in the province of Alberta, something which the government then subsequently had to walk back. They clarified that they had the right to create entirely new legislation without ever setting foot in the Legislature. That was Bill 10 in 2020. They also had to walk that one back.

This is a government that is in the habit of passing legislation to afford themselves new powers, and again that's what we have them doing here in Bill 8. Now, if the government wanted to set new limits like other jurisdictions, certainly they could codify that in legislation. The minister talked about: well, other jurisdictions have higher limits. Do those other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, allow the government to simply go in the backroom and with the stroke of a pen set what their new limit is going to be? I didn't hear the Minister of Justice mention that. I'm guessing they don't, but that is a power this government has decided it deserves to take unto itself.

Now, it's surprising in some ways, Mr. Speaker, not surprising in others that this government is so quickly digressing to the levels of grift and approaching the levels of corruption that we saw under Conservative governments previously in this province. Now, of course, we've heard a lot of heckling from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but he hasn't stood and talked about the years he spent in PC governments here in the province of Alberta as those governments exercised all kinds of grift on the taxpayer, through which he sat silently. He didn't speak up at all then to have the backs of Albertans. He likes to speak up a lot in this House, but he didn't like to speak up for Albertans then.

We think back to the scandals that were brought forward under Elections Alberta, where illegal donations were made to the PC Party. *Maclean's* magazine – pardon me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McIver: You're choking on those words.

Mr. Shepherd: I'm choking on the corruption of the previous government, in which the Minister of Municipal Affairs sat silently, Mr. Speaker, where all these incredibly embarrassing scandals went on.

Maclean's magazine wrote about the death of the Alberta PC dynasty, of which the Minister of Municipal Affairs was a part, and talked about how political financing disclosures added to the picture, showing PCs consistently relied on donations from corporate clients of government – contractors, builders, professional associations – that would make heads rotate and/or explode almost anywhere else on this continent. Indeed, that kind of exceptionalism, Mr. Speaker: this government is bringing it roaring back.

Back in that time, you know, the town of Whitecourt, Mr. Speaker, was one of the entities that was found to make illegal donations. They spent just about \$2,000 in taxpayer money for councillors to attend the PC Party fundraisers. Now, the mayor at the time, he said: well, we were doing our jobs as council; we were lobbying the government for the betterment of our community, and sometimes you have to pay for that.

Now, this current government apparently agrees that they should be paid for that. They have to get better gifts. The Premier has to be able to see the whole hockey game, not just spend 20 minutes in the skybox, in order for her to be able to hear the concerns of Albertans.

9:20

Back then the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, Mr. Shayne Saskiw, who was at that time a member of the Wildrose Party while the Premier was the leader, spoke up, and he said: well, this is the understanding; you have to donate to that governing party or you're not going to get grants, and it's widespread; it shows it doesn't matter if you change the leader of the PC Party, the culture of corruption and entitlement remains the same. Apparently, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't change if you change the name of the party either, because we have it coming back in spades under the UCP government, who is racing to achieve the levels of entitlement and grift that took 44 years for the PCs to reach.

Now, we have seen that this is a government that loves to give gifts to its friends as much as it loves to get gifts from its friends and feels that it should be able to get even bigger gifts from its friends. We look at the \$253,000 that they paid to the Premier's friend and personal mentor Preston Manning for his embarrassment of a COVID review and report, which was immediately turned for partisan purposes; \$175,000 in contracts awarded to Alberta Counsel, a legal and lobbying group run by, oh, the same Mr. Saskiw who criticized the PC government previously for so many of their grifts, the corrupted practices, and indeed sole-source

contracts. Speaking of which: \$142,500 in sole-source contracts to the Premier's leadership campaign manager, Mr. Matthew Altheim; \$130,000 in contracts to the former president of the Wildrose Party, Mr. David Yager.

This, Mr. Speaker, while this government refuses to do anything to help Albertans with skyrocketing costs. Not a thing. They will not lift a finger to help Albertans who are struggling with the soaring costs of rent. They sat back and watched electricity rates quadruple in this province and would not do anything to help. Now, of course, we had a small rebate program coincidentally aligned with the provincial election; it disappeared shortly after. They couldn't be bothered to do the work to help and to extend that rebate to hundreds of my constituents who live in condominium buildings. That was too much effort for this government. They could not find a way to do it, but, boy, they sure found a way, and quick, to ensure that they can get bigger and better gifts for themselves.

This is not a government that has the backs of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. It is not a government that is here to make their lives better. This government is here to make their own lives better, and that is what Bill 8 is. Sure, there are other pieces here that are good, but this is the piece that sticks in the craw of the opposition and I think many, many Albertans who are still waiting for this government to take action to help them. But it sure moves quickly to help itself.

I'll be voting in favour of the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Any others wishing to speak to the amendment RA1? The Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 8, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. Hard-working Albertans are struggling. Quite a number of members on this side of the House spoke about the challenges that Albertans are facing: unaffordability and cost of living, among many others. There are three things that come to my mind when it comes to the debates that we have been dealing over the past couple of weeks and particularly today, with the number of bills that we talked about or debated on. It's mainly three things. One is that this side of the House is talking about the importance of accountability, and quite a number of bills – the proposals and the amendments that we have made speak to that core of accountability. The second piece is transparency. How do we report? That includes a number of other bills that we debated, including Bill 8. And the third piece is public consultation. Why doesn't the government want to get input from Albertans? So those are the core issues with a number of bills that have been tabled that we have a problem with.

In terms of Bill 8, Mr. Speaker, the issue of lifting the cap, let's speak to a hypothetical here. If a cabinet member or the Premier travels, let's assume to a Gulf state, and receives gifts, how do we deal with that? Albertans will have an issue in terms of the transparency and the accountability, which will ruin the trust that Albertans will have of the institutions, which is the core, the most important aspect of democratic society.

The Minister of Justice spoke about how it is higher than the other caps that have been reported by members, whether it is \$50 or \$100. Let's assume that it is. But what is the limit? If a huge number of gifts come from outside, that our elected officials receive, whether it is within the country or whether they are on travel on a mission, how do we account that, what is the transparency, and how do we report that? How will the public trust its institutions?

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will support the amendment that has been tabled, and I will reiterate that it is very important that we think about transparency, and it is very important that we think about accountability regardless of the positions that we have been

entrusted with. Because we have been entrusted in the position that we are in today, it doesn't mean that we make the rules and bend rules that are in our favour. We need to be speaking about, campaigning on issues that affect people's lives, whether it is affordability in housing, whether it is affordability in the cost of living, among many others.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that I support the amendment, and we should not debate Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-McClung. There is just under two minutes left for debate.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll use that time wisely. I want to commend the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall for bringing in this amendment that is very timely considering the recent COP 28 visit that the Premier and a number of people have been engaging in. It makes one wonder about the timing of this bill, because it seems to be coming into force just about the time after which the Premier and her entourage will arrive back from COP 28.

I'm just wondering, Mr. Speaker, if indeed there will be a need for the Premier and the official entourage from Alberta to file their customs declarations and show what they're bringing back from COP 28 in terms of gifts or gift bags or anything that they might not have had when they left Canada. What indeed are they bringing back? Now, will this legislation apply to those things that they may bring back from Dubai, from the sultan of Dubai, from the government? I don't know if indeed that will necessarily be a piece of legislation that applies in time to cover the planeloads of the people and cargo that might be coming back from COP 28. But it would be very interesting to have maybe voluntarily the Premier table her customs declaration and those of the elected officials that accompany her from COP 28 and see if indeed there are gifts that might meet these criteria.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Government Motion 23 I must now call the question, every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at third reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:29 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

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	van Dijken
Fir	McIver	Wiebe
Getson	Nally	Williams
Glubish	Neudorf	Wilson
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen

Totals: For – 33 Against – 45

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:35 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For 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	van Dijken
Fir	McIver	Wiebe
Getson	Nally	Williams
Glubish	Neudorf	Wilson
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For – 45 Against – 33

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a third time]

9:40

Bill 5
Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023
(continued)

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Horner]

The Speaker: Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has risen.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to rise and speak against the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023.

I certainly hope that after the hour that's allocated to this debate, we'll be able to hear some arguments and the members on the other side will perhaps come to their senses on this bill and we will vote against this bill.

One might have to ask, when we're talking about the compensation for boards and commissions, again, with so many of the other bills that we have talked about this evening, what the justification was. We've heard so many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle ask: you know, when you're out talking with your constituents, the typical Albertans, when you're in the shops, is this something that you hear, people coming to you saying that, wow, what we really need to do in this province is change the compensation for people on boards and commissions? This isn't what I'm hearing from people when I'm out in the community asking them what's important to them.

I think you've heard me speak already a couple of times about what really is important to the people in my constituency. I've already risen to speak a few times about the need for schools. I think I've already talked a few times about how so many parents that I have spoken to – about the challenges that they face in getting their kids into a school that is crowded, that doesn't have the teachers required to teach the number of kids in that school. But we have already heard from this government that that's not a particular concern to them, having voted down our private member's bill that would ask them to report on class sizes and make sure that we have the proper number of teachers and educational assistants there for those schools.

I certainly hear from my constituents about their need for health care and access to health care. I'm going to honestly say that when I was door-knocking and campaigning is where I really started to learn about how personal politics can be and the deeply personal, emotional stories that people were sharing about health care. Nobody was sharing with me deeply personal, emotional stories about the need for higher salaries on boards and commissions. I will say that one interesting thing, though, about these boards and commissions and, you know, who has the ability to appoint the members of these boards and commissions – and I'll share a story. I'm not going to disclose any names.

You've also heard on this side of the aisle my colleagues, you know, talk about, like, who's naming people to these boards and commissions? Is it their friends that are on these boards and commissions? I will say, interestingly, somebody that I know pretty well, who skirted around – even though a dear friend of mine, a supporter of our party, donated to our party in 2019. After the government of the day found out that she had donated to the NDP, she was removed from her seat on one of these boards and commissions.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, knowing that we're appointing our friends to these boards and commissions, the argument has been made about the need for these salaries to be flexible in attracting people to work in these positions. I think you've also, you know, heard earlier, on other bills, the understanding of the needs out there to attract talent into our province. You did see this side of the House vote in favour of Bill 7, knowing that we needed to make a move to attract talent into our tech sector. I think it is understood that we can wrap our heads around what's needed to attract the necessary talent into our province. But given the blanket nature of who this applies to, you might have to wonder: do we need that flexibility to attract people to be on the board of the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation? You might be able to, say, talk us into the argument of a postsecondary institution even though we're not necessarily going to buy that either, but why did this have to apply across the

board when maybe it wasn't necessary to be applied across the board?

When we think about, you know, not just that we're appointing friends to be on these boards and commissions, but let's talk about the fact that a lot of people who are on these boards and commissions are retirees, are professional board members, and there probably isn't the requirement for these people to be realizing these salary gains.

So I think – and of course my screen has died. My talking notes all disappeared.

Another thing that I'd also like to bring forward is that we know that this is kind of like a pulling back of legislation that the NDP put in place to put some controls around this, when we were in government, so it feels a little bit like we're stepping back into that summer of repeals that we went through with Jason Kenney.

I guess one of the other things I'd like to ask or muse about is this bill coming from, you know, ostensibly a Conservative party, being named the United Conservative Party. I would think that a Conservative party would be thinking about fiscal responsibility, and I'm wondering why a government that ostensibly would be thinking about fiscal responsibility would be opening the door for ballooning salaries on boards and commissions across the province. Potentially how many roles are we talking about? Hundreds? If every single one of those was increasing only by 10 per cent or 20 per cent, how much money are we talking about? Is that responsible, for a Conservative government to be spending this money in, frankly, quite an irresponsible way when these funds could be directed towards, say, teachers, educational assistants, nurses, doctors? Isn't that where we should really be thinking about salaries that are being earned and the benefits that are provided to our society and what Albertans are really asking for?

I think if that were our question, I think we would change our minds and that we would say no to Bill 5, which is what I encourage all members on each side of the House to do. Thank you.

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

Member Brar: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Premier and the UCP are removing all salary restraints for Alberta's boards and commissions, opening the door for the massive and shameful misuse of taxpayers' money as seen under previous Conservative governments. That's not what Albertans want, that's not what my constituents want, and that's not what I'm hearing from them.

My constituents are struggling to put a roof on top of their head, they are struggling to put food on their tables, their tuition costs have gone up, their insurance costs have gone up, their utility bills have gone up, and their pensions are at risk under this government. That's what they're worried about. That's what they are telling me.

I represent about 70 per cent of visible minorities in my riding, and they're worried about the recognition of their foreign credentials. I was glad when this government came up with the idea of starting a new committee, but I was again sad to see that they were trying to put their own friends on that committee as well, which we don't know how it will function, what resources it will have, and what will be the outcome of that. I mean, since the beginning of this session we have seen this government working very hard to provide gifts for themselves, to provide gifts for their wealthy insiders and well-known people. They are not focused on what Albertans need. They are not focused on what Albertans want. This bill does nothing to address that. This bill instead fuels their gravy train, and this bill will also set the stage for unbalanced bargaining.

9:50

I know the government doesn't like any consultations; we have seen that with the CPP, Madam Speaker. We have seen Albertans coming to our town halls in various cities in Alberta. We are holding in-person town halls. People are walking in. People are raising their hands to express their concerns and saying that they do not want this government to gamble with their pensions. They are sending a clear message to this government to keep the hands off their pensions. They do not want any Alberta pension plan. They are very happy with the secure – they are very happy with the current Canada pension plan that is already existing in this country.

Unfortunately, the Finance minister and the entire UCP have not listened to them; they are not responding to them. I'm sure they are also getting so many e-mails. I'm sure they are also being reached out to by so many constituents of theirs. I'm sure that people are reaching to them, but the unfortunate part is that this government is not listening to Albertans. That is the basic job of any elected official, to at least listen before forming any policy or start working on any public policy. It is so unfortunate. It is so embarrassing. It is so disheartening for all Albertans that they are not being listened to by this government.

On this side of the House we are doing what the government should be doing. We are doing what any elected official should be doing. What are we doing? We are reaching out to Albertans. We have opened up the survey. We are listening to business organizations. We are meeting with labour organizations. The Calgary Chamber has opposed their idea. Many labour organizations have opposed their ideas. I mean, there is not a single credible organization that has actually endorsed their idea of an Alberta pension plan, and no organization has ever told us that their priority is more gifts for the wealthy insiders, that their priority is for the UCP cabinet ministers.

Not a single constituent of mine has ever mentioned to me that they would love to give this government, this cabinet more power. Not a single one to date. I am so disappointed with the work that I have seen with this government. Instead of listening to Albertans and instead of listening to the people who represent Albertans, instead of debating on various issues, instead of debating on the topics and on issues that matter to Albertans, this government is bringing forward motions to close the debate. I mean, that is not democratic; that is antidemocratic.

I have seen so many students sleeping in their cars. I have seen so many students calling me to find a room in Olds College because they are struggling to find a room there. We held a town hall at the University of Calgary where my colleagues – our leader, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, was also there – listened to the students. They have spoken clearly that their tuition costs went up. They have spoken clearly that they are facing a housing crisis. It's not a problem; it is a housing crisis that this province is facing.

We are seeing a health care crisis. Emergency wait times have gone up. We have seen 13-hour emergency wait times under this government. There is a centralization of the ambulance dispatch time that has created so much chaos in our health care system. They promised to fix the health care system in 90 days, Madam Speaker. It has been more than a year since, and Albertans are still waiting for the change in the health care system.

Instead of fixing the health care, what they have done is they have appointed Lyle Oberg, who tried to start the private health care hospital in Canada. Before the shovels could get in the ground, he was sued, Madam Speaker. We have seen that this government has failed on every front, whether it is pensions, whether it is hospitals, whether it's recruiting more doctors. That is why I request all the members on the other side – because I'm sure all members on this

side are voting against this bill – to stand up for Albertans and vote against this.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this evening to be crisp and intelligent. Perhaps not as crisp and intelligent as the Member for Calgary-North East just was in his remarks, because it certainly was a fountain of information to be reckoned with in his retelling of the history and bad record of the Conservative government so far in treating Albertans with the dignity and respect that they require in an era of high inflation and rising costs, when they're begging for government to be attentive to their needs. Yet this government insists on rolling out pieces of legislation which are anything but reflective or relevant to the needs of Albertans right now.

Madam Speaker, I was not around in 1935 – well, my mother was born then – but that was the era, of course, when Social Credit first took place in this province, and I know that that was an era where we saw, you know, radio programming from Bible Bill Aberhart on CJCA. My goodness, we seem to be going back to a bygone era. We've got a Saturday radio program by the current Premier. So in other ways we're reverting back to what we were in 1935.

Some of the practices we're seeing, Madam Speaker, are reminiscent of another era. That one began in 1971, when the conservative Social Credit Party changed horses to the Progressive Conservative Party in 1971 under Peter Lougheed. In that era we see a modernization of the type of graft and corruption that this particular government of today seems to want to emulate. I'm not one who closes one eye to the graft and corruption that I see around me. I know that I had great expectations in 1971, when I was in grade 9, seeing a new era . . .

Mr. Williams: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction on a point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Williams: Members opposite bemoan the lack of time we have to debate. We're now minutes into this speech. I rise on 23(b)(i), not speaking to a relevant matter at discussion. I ask the members opposite, if they are going to bemoan the amount of time left in the Chamber, to speak to the question in front of us in the bill. We've heard history of 1971, a number of other matters, a wonderful story about Mr. Aberhart, who I respect deeply. Please speak to the matter at hand as we have limited time in our Chamber, and I'd like to debate the matters in front of the people of Alberta.

Mr. Sabir: Madam Speaker, it's not a point of order. The member was talking about how this bill will open the floodgates of corruption. That's pretty much relevant because that's exactly what this bill is doing. It's not a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: It may not be a point of order but perhaps an opportunity to provide some caution to the hon. member to debate the bill at hand, which is Bill 5, the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023. I will ask the member to continue with his remarks given my comments on the matter.

The hon. member.

Debate Continued

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Bill 5, Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023, is exactly what I was talking about, speaking in terms of historical references to the types of legislation that we've seen successive Conservative governments engage in, in providing themselves benefits and providing their friends benefits and providing those appointed to serve on public boards and commissions wealthy, wealthy wages or big, big paycheques in order to serve on boards and commissions.

Madam Speaker, why, my historical references were perfectly in order, and I was rather offended by the Member for Peace River's interjections in my commentary. I don't think it was warranted, but in any case I still will contend that the historical record shows that with this step now, where we're on in 2023, this current UCP government is following a tradition of payola and a position of people lining up at the government doorway looking for a large paycheque. You can hear the rumbling of the corporate worlds ambling up to the doorsteps of the Premier's office hoping to receive the rewards that they think they now deserve or are entitled to. The door has been opened once again to the type of entitlement that we saw in past eras in Progressive Conservative governments, in Social Credit governments, in Conservative governments successively, where they believe that indeed the public purse belongs to them.

10:00

That is not the type of government that we believe is necessary and is ever necessary, Madam Speaker, but that's what you get, typically, in a Conservative government era. You don't necessarily see a social democratic government being accused of graft. They may be accused of spending too much on the public, of caring too much for the individuals they serve, of making sure that families can keep their heads above water in trying times, but never have I ever heard of a social democratic government accused of spending money on themselves. They look towards spending it on doing something for somebody other than themselves, and that is the public that they serve. I always respect the social democratic way, and we look forward to Conservatives learning from us.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 5. I think it's a piece of legislation that does a number of things that we are deeply, deeply opposed to. One, it opens the door for increased pay and perks for the UCP's friends and insiders, the gravy train.

Second, it has implications for public-sector bargaining as well. Even though on this side of the House many of us, many Albertans, many of our constituents are thankful for public service employees, the organizations, the unions that represent them, and the work they have done historically like, for instance, weekends, paid vacations, sick leave, child labour laws, the eight-hour workday, overtime pay, health care in general, public health care, breaks during work hours, holiday pay. I can go on and on. But this government has always shown, I guess, a tendency to go against not just the public sector but those who represent them in the collective bargaining process.

With that, I think that that's not okay, and I do want to move an amendment that will protect collective bargaining of public-sector employees.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, this will be known as amendment RA1.

Hon. member, please proceed.

Mr. Sabir: The Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall to 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 because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not sufficiently protect the collective bargaining rights of public-sector employees.

So it's a pretty straightforward amendment. This bill does not protect collective rights of public-sector employees, and our public sector deserves far better than this from this government, from all of us. That's why I urge all members of this House to support this amendment, and I urge the government to support this amendment, to take time to go consult with the public sector, to go consult with public-sector unions, those who represent them, and get this right.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there members wishing to join the debate on amendment RA1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Certainly, the reason for this amendment is, in good sense, making sure that we don't have lopsided legislation. I want to reinforce what the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall just said around the importance of unions having an opportunity to represent public-sector employees. I will say that this government has, at best, a very shaky track record when it comes to respecting collective agreements.

One of the very first moves that the former Member for Calgary-Acadia did as Minister of Health was to totally disrespect and tear up the agreement that was struck with doctors in good faith, and I will say that that is one of the things that has contributed to the health care crisis that we're experiencing in the province of Alberta right now. When governments don't show respect, when employers don't show respect to collective agreements, it creates a chill, and it definitely has lasting impacts.

We've seen the number of vacancies and the number of turnovers in nursing staff increase significantly over the last four and a half years, while the UCP has been in government. Those who are leaving after their first year, registered nurses in particular: the number has doubled of people who are registered nurses who leave the profession within one year. For a large reason many don't feel respected.

The government could be coming into this place with legislation to focus on those nurses, to focus on the opportunities to rebuild respect and trust with health care professionals, who they say are needed, but instead what the government is doing is coming in here and steamrolling over thoughtful regulations that flow from legislation, to put caps on the amount of compensation for executive members, including those in agencies, boards, and commissions like those that they're now ballooning, and creating so much redundancy in terms of health care.

Whereas we used to have caps far below \$500,000 a year for the head of AHS, the government has decided that they're going to get rid of that, that they're going to give the minister the ability to determine this through some advisory councils maybe and land on their own recommendations. They certainly aren't giving that same provision around, you know, unions being able to set their own compensation. They're going to do that with their friends and insiders. And they're going to move from having one head for one health region to having many executives, many CEOs, many other opportunities to add bloated bureaucracy.

We used to hear members of the Wildrose talk about how they wanted to get more money to the front lines, but what we've seen so far is a significant number of postings for department staff, for executives to work in the health care system under the current government. This seems to be their priority, to create more levels of bureaucracy, more redundancy, more red tape, more executive positions, and they're going to blow the lid off what the compensation can be for those folks as well.

Madam Speaker, it definitely doesn't reflect the values of everyday, mainstream Albertans when it comes to the priorities of this House. We're only looking at nine bills from this government, and two of theirs, in fact, are around creating more opportunities for the rich to get richer, and at the same time they're looking the other way when ordinary working people are struggling to make ends meet and meet their needs when it comes to housing.

We've proposed bills to address the housing crisis. When it comes to health care, we've proposed bills to make sure that you are never forced to pay a membership fee to see a family doctor. The government of today says: well, that's redundant because we have the Canada Health Act. But I will tell you that if they actually believe in the Canada Health Act, they should have had no problem with reinforcing those tenets through our legislation and committing to making sure that we actually have them as a founding law in the province of Alberta.

I suspect that what they're hoping is that one day we won't have the Canada Health Act. I suspect that what they're hoping is that they can continue to force their privatization agenda. When they send out layoff notices to nurses saying, "You're probably going to have a different employer," well, they did that very same thing four years ago, and in their business plan they made it very clear that their intention was to reduce the number of registered nurses in the province of Alberta. Only because we ended up in a major public health crisis, only because those front-line health care workers were so desperately needed was the UCP derailed from their plans to lay off registered nurses.

Madam Speaker, this amendment, brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, I think is definitely worthy of consideration in this place. I think that the working people of this province deserve more respect than what they're seeing through the railroading through of high-priority bills to jack up executive pay and bloat bureaucracy from a government that once said that they stood up for the little guy. That definitely isn't what's happening in this bill.

Thank you for your time.

10:10

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

Member Loyola: Thank you very much. It's always a pleasure to address the House. You know, I'm a big fan of telling stories, as you well know, Madam Speaker. You've heard a lot of my stories in the past. You know what? Let me start with: once upon a time.

Once upon a time there was a Progressive Conservative Party, and this Progressive Conservative Party, well, had lots of friends and insiders that, you know, they'd actually go to and just name and put these friends and insiders on their agencies, boards, and commissions of the government of Alberta. It was a time of entitlement. It was a time of just making the rich richer, doing favours for all these buddies and insiders.

Let me tell you that the people were having enough of it. You know what? For Progressive Conservative government after Progressive Conservative government the people would tell them: hey, we don't want this; we don't like this anymore. And you know what? The Progressive Conservatives would have some kind of

infighting, they'd change their leader, and they'd be like: "Oh, we're reinventing ourselves. We're reinventing ourselves." And you know what, Madam Speaker? Months would go by... [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, order is what we need.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Literally, sometimes months would go by, and the public would come back and say, "Enough with this new party," and they'd go and they'd change their leader again. They'd come back and say: "Oh, we've changed our ways. We're not going to be entitled anymore, and we're not going to do the same."

And then – you guessed it, Madam Speaker – months would go by, and, oh, they'd have to find themselves another leader because, you know, the leader of the day would spend money on certain things: the top floor of the QE II Building turned into an apartment or a flight to South Africa on a public plane, that actually belonged to the people, you know, or private meetings throughout the entire province. They would just use public resources for private ventures, and the people were growing tired and tired and tired of it. Of course, all throughout this time these members from the newly invented progressive parties or the newly created, invented Progressive Conservatives would say: "Oh, no. We've learned our lesson. We're not going to do that again." Yet they'd continue putting their friends and insiders on the agencies, boards, and commissions.

Well, it finally got to a stage, Madam Speaker, where the Alberta public said, "Okay; we've had absolutely enough of this Progressive Conservative government," and they elected the Alberta NDP. Let me tell you that one of the things that the Alberta NDP did was that they put an end to putting friends and insiders on the agencies, boards, and commissions. You know what? One of the things they did was that to actually get on an agency, board, or commission, you actually had to apply. You had to go through an interview process, and the best candidate from the Alberta public was identified and then put on that agency, board, or commission.

It was a transparent process, Madam Speaker, and it was a time when Albertans started to trust their government because they saw that they were actually being transparent. But for some reason Conservatives don't learn their lesson, and then they end up taking us back to that culture of entitlement, and that's exactly what we see here in Bill 5, the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023. Not only are they putting their friends and insiders on the agencies, boards, and commissions of the government; now they're saying: oh, we're going to give our friends and insiders a big pay hike.

This at the same time where, as I was describing to you before, Madam Speaker, Albertans are trying to make it to the end of the month, some of them a paycheque away from being houseless, not being able to make the mortgage payment, some people having to forgo the actual basic needs of their children, some of them having to put monthly operating household budget costs on their credit cards because they just can't afford to make ends meet, because the members across the way, while at the same time that they've decided that they're going to give their friends and insiders a pay hike, decided to take the cap off utilities, take the cap off insurance, and make life more difficult for average Albertans trying to put food on the table.

Here we are, Madam Speaker, going back in time yet again with the Conservatives, but this time the two Conservative parties decided to get together – right? – and they called themselves the United Conservative Party. Oh, my goodness. And you can bet that they said, “Oh, no, we’ve learned our ways; we’ve changed our ways,” but here we are going back to the same culture of entitlement.

Well, let me tell you. You can bet that as one MLA I’m going to spend a lot of my time going out to the public, as I always do, and sharing the story of these Conservatives and how they continue to put in legislation that culture of entitlement, of helping their friends and insiders by putting them on these agencies, boards, and commissions and giving them a pay hike.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Getson: Looking forward to supporting your leadership.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Getson: I apologize, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre on amendment RA1.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Happy to speak in favour of the amendment because I absolutely agree that this bill doesn’t sufficiently protect the collective bargaining rights of public-sector employees in the province of Alberta. Now, the Minister of Finance insists this bill is necessary so we can recruit and retain skilled talent in key positions. That’s familiar language, something we’re hearing in a lot of jurisdictions across Canada when it comes to health care workers. In pretty much every jurisdiction across the country they’re trying to figure out what they need to do to recruit and retain health care workers. But while this government insists that we have to move immediately on this new framework for them to be able to pay more to recruit or retain a university president, the chair of the AGLC, or any number of positions that the UCP gets to directly appoint people to, perhaps their friends and supporters, they’re singing a very different tune when it comes to, say, doctors, nurses, or other health care workers in this province.

You know, being able to pay higher salaries to positions where they can appoint their friends and supporters is a top priority, Madam Speaker – it’s the fifth bill that they bring forward in their first sitting in the Legislature – but improving pay for, say, family doctors: well, that’s something they’ve been dragging out for years. Indeed, they spent about two years attacking and undermining family doctors, wearing them down first, forcing them to have to close clinics, lay off staff, leave the profession, leave the province. Then they took a year or more to renegotiate and try to settle down and undo the damage they’d done and sign a contract that they probably could have signed if they’d just sat down at the table in 2020, at a time of crisis in our health care system.

10:20

Since then, Madam Speaker, while they rush on this bill and this new framework for potentially paying more to their friends and supporters, when it came to doctors, it’s just been a succession of committees and task forces and promises that they still actually haven’t bothered to follow through on yet. We’re at a time of crisis in our health care system, that the minister just admitted in question period today, that is made worse by the damage the UCP has done to primary care. That is worsening the hospital situation, the damage they did to the primary care system, but family doctors, while they rush on this bill, are being told: well, wait another six

months; we need another task force, and we’ll talk to you around budget time. I can tell you that that does not reflect the priorities of Albertans. That does not show a government that respects collective bargaining rights. That is why I support this amendment.

If we want to talk about nurses, Madam Speaker, regardless of this government’s claims, we are not recruiting or retaining enough nurses. That is seen by the closures that we continue to see every day across this province – ORs, obstetrical services, emergency rooms, urgent care centres, and more – because we lack the nurses that we need to be able to staff properly.

While they’re rushing, Madam Speaker, to get bigger salaries for the people that they appoint, nurses get a letter from AHS, I’m sure under instruction from the government, warning about potential reductions in positions flowing from the movement of functions outside the organization. I can tell you that far more Albertans are concerned about our ability to recruit and retain nurses than the president of the University of Alberta or whatever board or commission or agency this government is looking to appoint people to, but this government is not acting quickly to meet that. This government is not acting out of concern for that. They’re certainly not acting out of concern for collective bargaining rights, when it comes to things that are actually a priority for Albertans. We see that again and again.

We just had the government pass Bill 8, where they are awarding themselves the ability to collect bigger gifts. That’s not going to get a singular Albertan access to a family doctor, Madam Speaker. That’s not going to do anything for the folks that are waiting hours in the emergency room tonight or the folks that are triple bunked in the rooms or the folks that are receiving care in the hallways. But those are the priorities of this government.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I will be voting against Bill 5 when it comes to that, but in the time being I will vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 5. I know that we’re on a reasoned amendment of this bill, that it “be not now read a third time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not sufficiently protect the collective bargaining rights of public-sector employees.”

I just want to expand a little bit on that to all members of this House through you, Madam Speaker. The minister, according to this legislation, will be determining the membership of employer committees and councils and associations. That gives an extraordinary amount of authority and power to that minister. Of course, you know, we want to have good processes in any healthy democracy because that is really how the best people are put in those positions, but what this legislation does is kind of disregard all of that. The UCP: we certainly know by their track record that they have repeatedly put friends and insiders into key government positions and into key boards, agencies, and commissions over and over and over again.

One of the most egregious examples, that I’d just like to remind the members of the House about, is the appointment of Janice Harrington as the Health Advocate. She was the CEO of the United Conservative Party, and after the election in 2019 the government at that time appointed her as the Health Advocate. Did she have the qualifications to be the Health Advocate? Did she have experience in that sector? Why was she chosen for that position? Because she was a friend of the current government. Of course, that didn’t serve Albertans. At that time the government closed, actually, the Seniors Advocate office and said: oh, it’s okay; the Health Advocate’s office will deal with everything. But, again, with the appointment

Janice Harrington, who was, you know, a card-carrying UCP member, executive director, the CEO of the party, was put in that position and very little was done during her tenure. I'm very glad she's no longer in that position.

I am concerned with this legislation because, of course, the minister can determine who those people will be on those boards, agencies, and commissions going forward. I know that when the NDP was government, we had a very rigorous process of selection, and we looked at many factors to make sure that we had the best candidates. You know, we looked at diversity issues. We looked at gender, race, people with lived experience, because we know that who is at the table makes a difference, but if everyone who's at the table is just doing the government's bidding, then so many – so many – Albertans are forgotten because it's from one perspective. It's a privileged perspective oftentimes that doesn't understand what it's like to be in the LGBTQ community, to be a single mom, to have lived in poverty, any of these examples. We need all people to be at the table, and this bill is showing us that the UCP cares not at all regarding that. They're just throwing away sort of any competence that that committee or agency or board or commission would have because they don't seem to care that any kind of rigour in that process is done.

You know, this is why this amendment is so important and that all members of this House should support it. This bill should not be read – how many times? – a third time for other reasons also because of the whole taking out the Auditor General's authority to oversee agencies, boards, and commissions. I mean, that, again, is a principle of democracy, that there are independent offices of the Legislature and they oversee government agencies, boards, and commissions. Cavalierly, this bill just strips the Auditor General from any responsibility, and that's quite surprising because I've listened to the UCP talk ad nauseum about how much they care about democracy, how much they care about fiscal responsibility, and it flies in the face of all of that. It's so here in black and white that it's like: oh, no, no, no; we don't need any kind of fiscal oversight to look at this. That's also another significant reason that this bill should not be read a third time.

The final thing I just want to say is that, again, it does remove the controls on the executive compensation. You know, that, of course, is very concerning, especially in the time we are here in our province, where we know that many Albertans are suffering, people are suffering because the price of insurance, the price of electricity, the price of groceries, the price of gas have all gone up very significantly along with interest rates. This has created much hardship for Albertans, and we need to be supporting that, but instead of that, we're just thinking about who is being appointed again to these boards and commissions. These are the UCP insiders, the friends of the UCP. They're going to be given exorbitant salaries, and the cap that was in place is going to be taken off. Again, this is a huge concern.

These three things – the lack of oversight by the Auditor General, the removing of controls on executive compensation, and, of course, the erosion of, really, fairness in the public-sector bargaining that this bill brings forward – are why I certainly stand to say that this amendment, where the bill is not read a third time, should be supported by all members of this Assembly if they care at all for the people of Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

10:30

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West on amendment RA1.

Mr. Ip: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak in favour of this amendment, and certainly I will take some time to speak against this bill. Time and again this government has demonstrated that they are not on the side of ordinary Albertans – surprise, surprise – and let me just say that I am proud to be on the side of the House where we represent the interests and the priorities of everyday Albertans. We're focused on their priorities, unlike the members opposite.

I keep asking myself this question and trying to understand this. Why this bill? Why now? And the answers from this government don't quite add up. First, retaining and recruiting talent as the principal reason for this bill doesn't quite cut it. As members opposite know, we already have a generous compensation scheme for boards, commissions, and agencies comparable to the rest of this country. In many cases we have, actually, some of the best compensated senior leadership in this country.

And let me just add that there is no justification for the University of Alberta president, as an example, or any top executive to make 28 times more than an entry-level worker; in some cases it's actually more than 28 times. You know, I ask the members opposite to think about the – and some of the folks in this House would remember or recall the Auditor General report in the early 2000s that came out with some scathing conclusions on unchecked excesses in agencies, boards, and commissions. I want to ask members opposite: do we really want to go back to that time? Apparently so, from this bill, because that's exactly what will happen. We've seen this movie before, and, Madam Speaker, Albertans do not like entitlement. If there is one thing that is the start of the end of a government, it's really entitlement.

This government has demonstrated that it is so out of touch with everyday Albertans, as my colleagues have already mentioned. I do want to remind them of the priorities of Albertans and what I'm hearing on the doorsteps in case they're not hearing the same things. I've heard from families who are now spending, in some cases, 70 per cent more on groceries; children and parents with children who require specialized supports, yet there are no EAs in overcrowded classrooms. In my riding there isn't a single high school despite being the fastest growing riding or one of the fastest in the province. So many children – you've heard the story over and over, whether it's in Edmonton or parts of Calgary or other parts of this province – travel long distances each way, sometimes over an hour, to go to school. I've met in my riding, a reputationally relatively affluent riding, seniors who skip meals because they are on fixed incomes, and this is the only way for them to make it work because of rising grocery bills.

This government's priorities are misplaced. Rather than fund teachers, educational assistants, support for seniors, this government would rather fund hundreds of thousands of dollars, maybe even collectively millions, to their friends and supporters.

This is shameful, Madam Speaker, but I'm also worried about one other thing that we don't often think about. What I'm worried about is the slow erosion of our structures of accountability, the safeguards that exist to put limits on power. Unchecked power, as we have seen in other jurisdictions like our neighbours in the United States and other jurisdictions around the world, will slowly but precipitously erode our democracy. It creates mistrust and cynicism in our electorate. It erodes trust.

That's important, Madam Speaker, because we are here, you know, by the trust of the electorate. It is a privilege not to be taken lightly, so by taking away the Auditor General's authority in this bill, by removing any caps and controls, it simply will take away the only accountability structures left in order to keep this government in check.

But there's this larger theme that I want to speak to because whether it's Bill 5 or Bill 2 or Bill 8, this government's agenda is the same, and it's quite clear. There is a through line. It's self-serving. It's about three things, Madam Speaker. It's about power, it's about entitlement, and it's about avoiding transparency and accountability, and that is incredibly dangerous. Considering that this government continues to consolidate all power with the Premier and cabinet, my question to them is: what do they have to hide? Why are they trying to limit debate and ram through legislation in the night, hoping no one will notice?

As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has mentioned, this bill gives the government the ability, potentially, to create more levels of bureaucracy without accountability. Ironically, I have to say that that's not typically a conservative position. Let me just say that that's because this government is not a principally conservative government. This government has demonstrated that it only cares about power, not about everyday Albertans. They are eroding our safeguards and structures of accountability while increasing sweetheart deals, compensation, and perks for themselves and their friends as part of the UCP's gravy train.

Some Hon. Members: Choo-choo.

Mr. Ip: Everybody is asleep. That's okay.

Again, that is shameful. The reality is that this legislation doesn't represent the needs of everyday Albertans. We simply on this side of the House cannot support it. When you compare the UCP government's priorities and the needs of Albertans, the difference is stark.

Let me remind the members opposite of the challenges of Albertans again, and I know I'm sounding like a broken record, but I have to say that it's the reason I'm here. I'm here to fix the challenges that Albertans face, or at least try very hard to, and Albertans that I speak to are facing significant challenges such as skyrocketing rents and a cost-of-living crisis, detrimental emergency room wait times, challenges accessing a doctor. They're concerned about the safety of their pensions. Hard-working Albertans are struggling with so much, and so many that I speak to want to see new schools to address overcrowding in growing communities like mine.

Instead of championing the urgent needs of the people, the UCP seems more focused on indulging in pension gambles or rewards for their friends. There is a through line, actually, you know, through all of the three bills, and they're ultimately prioritizing legislation to serve their own interests. And that's wrong. Albertans deserve a government focused on their priorities, one that will uphold integrity, honesty, and a commitment to making evidence-based decisions.

I'm asking members of this House to heed this warning. You know, again, I feel like I've seen this movie before. Albertans do not take lightly to politicians who line their own pockets and those of their friends. Think of the no-meet committee. Do you remember that? Or the sky palace? Do you remember that? I think, more dangerously, it doesn't just damage their own reputation; it damages the reputation of this House. It erodes trust. I think that for the sake of this very, very important institution, I certainly hope that there will not be another scandal of the UCP . . .

10:40

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 22 I must now call every question necessary for the disposal of Bill 5.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:41 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

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	van Dijken
Fir	McIver	Wiebe
Getson	Nally	Williams
Glubish	Neudorf	Wilson
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 34	Against – 45

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 22 on third reading of Bill 5, the Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:46 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For 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	van Dijken
Fir	McIver	Wiebe
Getson	Nally	Williams
Glubish	Neudorf	Wilson
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Wright, J.

Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen
10:50		
Against the motion:		
Al-Guneid	Ganley	Loyola
Batten	Goehring	Metz
Boparai	Gray	Notley
Brar	Haji	Pancholi
Ceci	Hayter	Phillips
Chapman	Hoffman	Renaud
Dach	Hoyle	Sabir
Deol	Ip	Shepherd
EGgen	Irwin	Sigurdson, L.
Ellingson	Kasawski	Tejada
Elmeligi	Kayande	Wright, P.
Eremenko		
Totals:	For – 45	Against – 34

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a third time]

Bill 2
Alberta Pension Protection Act
(continued)

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Horner]

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has the call.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to lend my voice to the chorus of Albertans who are firmly and soundly against this bill. When I consider the merits of this bill – and, for me, right now there really aren't any – I will think about my mom and dad, who a number of years ago were privileged enough to retire. They worked really, really hard, and certainly during the course of that hard work they were very lucky and privileged to have access to private pensions. But I know – and I know this because I had conversations with them – that the knowledge that the CPP was going to be there for them during their retirement factored into their ability to really lean into their retirement, and it took a lot of that worry away to know that financially, at least, they would be okay as they moved from their 60s and 70s to their 80s and beyond. It's about dignity in retirement, and it's about valuing seniors.

For me, it's really concerning that so much of the decision-making on this issue . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms Wright: It's concerning that so much of the decision on this issue will end up resting in the hands of a very small group of people, particularly when the issue is one that cannot be walked back. If we leave, we cannot return. Knowing my mother, boy, I know she would have had some totally choice words about this one. This, Mr. Speaker, is why people are concerned. They are afraid, and they are worried, and it isn't fearmongering. It's just fear, and it's a well-founded concern and fear because Albertans know that this is a government that is not to be trusted.

There are so many issues and so many gaps with this bill as it stands. I don't understand why, if there is a referendum, it doesn't have to be binding. What, then, is the point? There is nothing in the act which allows for the proposed question to come before the Assembly and be debated. Again, why not? Folks across the aisle will often speak about how important it is to have transparency, to

make sure that we have a debate, yet they are unwilling to have that debate on such an important question.

I continue to think about my mom and dad, but I'm not only thinking about my mom and dad. I'm also thinking about my grandparents and those people of my grandparents' generation, my mom and dad's friends who are a little bit older, all those folks that they worked with, folks prior to 1966, before the CPP, and the kinds of lives that our seniors were often living. Too many of our seniors prior to the CPP were living in abject poverty, but since the CPP poverty for seniors has decreased immensely, and it's made a difference. In particular, it's made a difference to women. The CPP and how it works, the trust that Canadians feel in this plan is something that shouldn't be discounted by a government that says that it's in the business of working on behalf of everyday Albertans. My mom and dad were everyday working Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Everyday Albertans do not want the instability this brings, and they don't want the worry and concern that it brings.

Now, we've heard lots – lots and lots – today about how it's important to explore, that we need to explore the notion of an Alberta pension plan. Well, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we've actually explored that, and it's called an NDP caucus town hall. I was at one only a couple of weeks ago, and there was no doubt: Albertans don't want to leave the CPP. Folks want this government to keep their hands off the CPP. Now, exploration could have looked like a government survey, maybe even a workbook, but unfortunately both those items created by this government lead participants to the conclusion that the government is looking for, so really they cannot be considered a true and unfettered exploration of what Albertans really think about the prospect of leaving the CPP.

Not only that, but among many other concerns I have about this bill is the knowledge that there are so very many workers who have come to Alberta to work in oil and gas, in construction, and in our renewable sector, in the trades. They might not be residents here, but they spend many of their working hours, even working years, here. They fly in; they fly out. They work here, and they continue to contribute to their CPP without worry or cause for concern. Earlier today I spoke to a group of stakeholders for whom this is of great concern. They worry about the future livelihood of their members, of the folks they work with every day, and they also have grave concerns about what it means in terms of future job opportunities given the level of uncertainty this bill creates.

That uncertainty is happening right now. Why on earth, during a looming shortage – and we know there's a shortage of workers in the trades – would anyone want to even come and work in Alberta when they know that years later they could potentially be grappling with two different pensions? There's no guarantee that all those necessary agreements will be in place in time. For those folks who work here temporarily or folks like my daughter, who began her career here but lived in B.C., the issue of moving to an APP is a concern. What will happen to their contributions? What will happen when they're ready to retire? Will they have a choice about whether or not they can stay with the CPP? Are they worried? Yes, they are. Do they want to have to deal with more paperwork and red tape? No, they don't.

In other jurisdictions referendums must have a nonpartisan information component, and they allow for public funding of opposing sides, specific groups and organizations that are able to position their point of view within limits. As a former teacher this really appeals to me. This is equity, and this is providing people with the information that they need. But instead of that, we have a government that has spent so many dollars on a series of telephone town halls which are lopsided in their views. Instead of operating

on “Let’s actually listen to what Albertans are saying,” we have a government that doesn’t really want to listen.

I thought what I might do now is share a couple of opinions from some hard-working everyday Albertans who have e-mailed me, from my inbox. From a constituent who says:

I am writing this in response to the announcement today that the UCP will be going ahead with pursuing a removal of Albertans from the Canadian pension plan and a subsequent implementation of an Alberta pension plan. I, like many Albertans, am staunchly not in support of an APP and am writing to you, my MLA, to state as much. Given the current track record of the UCP, teachers’ pension fund through AIMCo, the skyrocketing electricity rates, the handing out of billions to oil and gas as an incentive to clean orphan wells, the uncapping of insurance rates, et cetera, et cetera, I have absolutely zero confidence in this government to manage my or anyone else’s pensions.

Additionally, the idea that we would just abscond with 52 per cent of the CPP’s assets is a delusion of grandeur and, frankly, abhorrent. There is already proof that the numbers in the report are heavily skewed, no doubt attempting to establish evidence for an already preconceived result. Again, I as an Albertan want no part in the removal of my pension from the CPP.

And I as an MLA will not be voting for this bill.

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

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m happy to once again rise to speak to Bill 2, the Alberta Pension Protection Act. Let me say again that I cannot in good conscience support Bill 2. As Bill 2 currently stands, only the contributions of Albertans who are already part of the CPP are protected, so anyone who joins after, meaning our children, our grandchildren, will not have their contributions protected. Quite frankly, any MLA in this House who supports Bill 2 is only looking out for themselves and their party and not Albertans. The retirement security of millions of Albertans is at stake. This bill is nothing but a gimmick, a sham, and, quite frankly, an insult to Albertans who have worked hard for many years for their pension. I’m sure this will be put in the shredder the second it no longer benefits the UCP. And who will ultimately suffer? Albertans. Albertans deserve to have their voices heard when this UCP government continues to gamble with their retirement security. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is downright shameful. How can this UCP government ignore thousands of Albertans who are vehemently in opposition of this ridiculous plot?

11:00

As it stands right now, Bill 2 allows for notice to be given under the Canada pension plan prior to holding a referendum, and results are not binding on the government. The CPP has provided retirement security and predictable income for seniors since the 1960s and has received huge global praise. We all contribute with the understanding that when it comes time for us to retire, we can expect a steady stream of income where the risks are being managed directly by the plan.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that hundreds of residents in Edmonton-South have reached out to me by e-mail, by messages, and even coming into my constituency office vehemently against this bill and angry and frustrated and tired. I could speak at length sharing hundreds of these e-mails and messages. I’ll start with my constituent Ken. He recently shared with me and said: MLA Hoyle, I want to tell you . . .

An Hon. Member: Name.

Member Hoyle: I’m reading his e-mail. Pardon me. Okay. Member for Edmonton-South,

I want [to tell] you [that] . . . the UCP [needs] to keep their hands off of my CPP! For many Albertans, the CPP is their main source of retirement income. It’s absolutely not worth the risk. According to many pension experts,

he says,

pulling Alberta out of the Canada Pension Plan is “pure spite” and there’s nothing in it for us Albertans. The risks and huge extra costs will be very devastating.

Ken says:

Why is this government so out of touch with Albertans? We cannot trust them!

At a time when economic uncertainty and rising costs of living are impacting every single Albertan – we’re in a housing crisis – the last thing we need is to gamble away Albertans’ pensions and add more worry and stress and concern.

Another resident of mine in Edmonton-South, Ruth, a senior and retired nurse, recently e-mailed me saying:

I’m sick and tired of this government focusing on the wrong things! We Albertans need stability, [and] accountability, and support! What about our healthcare and better access to hospitals?

This is Edmonton-South, of course, where there is no hospital access.

What are they thinking [this government]? They don’t care about us seniors. Where’s the dignity? When will this end?

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are concerned with many, many things, and losing their retirement security is not one of them. My colleagues and I know that speaking against this bill is about protecting the retirement security of millions of Albertans. During the election the Premier told Albertans: “Look, no one is touching anybody’s pensions. Pensions belong to pensioners. It belongs to Albertans, and no one is going to be touching their pension.” This is another example of the misinformation that the UCP keeps running on because they don’t want to talk about their record. Well, our record shows that we were right to stand up for Albertans. We were right to believe the Premier when she talked about her considerations to leave the CPP. And now we are right to stand up and demand that this shameful attempt to gamble away Albertans’ pensions be abandoned.

Our in-person town halls are repeatedly standing room only from Edmonton to Red Deer to St. Albert. Albertans everywhere are showing up in droves to voice their concerns, and if the Premier and her caucus actually agreed to in-person discussions, they would know that.

Now, I understand the members opposite may be scared to engage with everyday Albertans on this topic. If they’re receiving even a fraction of the phone calls and e-mails that me and my colleagues are receiving, they would have a sense of the sheer volume of Albertans that oppose this bill. But rather than have conversations with Albertans, the government has wasted millions on misinformation campaigns around its proposed Alberta pension plan. This government has no interest in actually hearing what Albertans want when it comes to protecting their pensions. They cannot even ask straightforward questions on online surveys.

As I’ve said repeatedly in this House, I cannot support this Bill 2 that many Albertans do not want; therefore, I encourage all members not to support Bill 2. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is next.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise tonight to speak to Bill 2 again, the Alberta Pension Protection Act.

You know, this is something that I think every member in this Chamber has heard about extensively. I know that government members have heard about it because we're CCed on the e-mails. I know that it's something that Albertans are talking about, definitely, but they're not in support of it. The majority of Albertans that we talk to are afraid that this piece of legislation is going to pass when no one asked for it.

We've had town halls on this side of the House. We want to talk to Albertans and hear what their concerns are, and we're not afraid of that, and what we're doing in this Chamber is allowing that voice to be heard. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it's falling on deaf ears, and it has been limited to one hour of debate.

So here we are in the middle of the night, at 11:10, trying to plead with the government to do the right thing, to listen to Albertans. Unfortunately, that has not been what's happening in here. We've put some significant amendments forward and asked this government to look at them, to listen to what Albertans are saying, and just take a pause, take a break, just perhaps wait, take an opportunity to really listen.

The government stands up and claims that they're listening to Albertans and they're consulting, and that just simply isn't true, Mr. Speaker. We hear from so many in the province that are afraid. There are so many that are accessing CPP or are planning their retirement right now and are nervous about what that looks like for them and their future.

I can tell you that when we talk about the CPP, there's a pride in being Canadian and having this pension that so many in our country have worked for and are looking forward to take part in. Part of belonging to the CPP is being Canadian, and it gives you the luxury to live and retire in any province across the country. I worry that people are going to be discouraged from coming to Alberta because of the fear of what this government is going to do with their money.

This government certainly does not have a good track record when it comes to investing or taking care of finances. We saw war rooms. We saw a whole bunch of advertising happening for things that are simply not true, Mr. Speaker, and I worry about what corporate is doing when they're looking at this. I know when we were debating in the last session about their sovereignty act, that put alarm bells in through corporate companies considering coming here or not considering coming here because of the fear of what Alberta is doing.

So many that we've spoken to talk about the importance of being Canadian. They don't want to separate. They want to be part of Canada. They identify as Canadian first, and when we have a government that's put forward a sovereignty act, that is now talking about pulling out of the CPP, that frightens Canadians. It frightens investors who want to potentially come here and invest in our province. When we have such an unstable government that is making these decisions that go against the rest of Canada, that's a significant concern, and I'm worried about our economy. When people look at coming to Alberta, they want to see things like a stable pension plan; they want to see things like doctors and nurses and a strong education system. That is not what this government is showing them. They're saying: "You know what? We're going to do what we want to do despite the rest of Canada." That is not something that brings investors to invest in our province. It scares them away.

11:10

This is a province that has so much to offer. We have so many that have contributed to our CPP, and the fact that people are considering not coming here because they're afraid of their future is absolutely terrifying. The fact that this government isn't listening to the majority of Albertans is quite frightening. We know that the

majority of Albertans are saying: absolutely not; hands off our pension. They know it, too. Why they're not acknowledging that is quite concerning. The way that they've surveyed the province isn't even about asking the one simple question: do you want to stay in the CPP; yes or no? That wasn't an option in the survey.

When we hear them say, "Trust us on the referendum," I don't believe that we can, and Albertans don't believe that they can trust them either. This wasn't something that they campaigned on. This is their second bill. It's quite concerning that they are going so significantly against what the majority of Albertans are asking for. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that members really consider listening to those that elected them and stop this piece of legislation and not support Bill 2.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will end my comments. Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy to stand and speak in favour of Bill 2. This is a super-duper bill. I attended the NDP town hall, and I attended it in good faith. I appreciated seeing Albertans. Unfortunately, I was hearing lies and misrepresentations. It's very disappointing.

Mr. Sabir: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is called.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Sabir: I rise pursuant to 23(h), (i), and (j). As I was walking in, I did hear the words "lies and misrepresentation." I think the member has been around for a while now. He knows better than this. He is using language that is unparliamentary and that will cause disorder in the House, and it should be ruled a point of order.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was just about a week ago when the hon. minister of environment was accused of lying. This was said outside of the Chamber, and when you ruled that it was not a point of order, you did so under the pretense that you cannot comment on things that were or were not said outside of the Chamber and off the record of *Hansard*.

I contend that the member that just spoke and against whom this point of order was called did not call the members liars, but he said that he heard lies and misinformation. I don't see how you can rule on this point of order against that member given the precedent set recently, almost a week ago. If, in fact, the member said, "Members opposite lied in this Chamber," or "A member lied," or was misrepresenting the facts or doing indirectly what you can't do directly, I get it. That is a point of order. But you have set precedents, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage – this is not a point of order.

The Speaker: It's difficult to know, in fact, what the member was about to say because the point of order was called prior to him concluding his sentence. So for you to ascertain what the member was going to say, whether he was going to refer to the town hall or whether he was going to refer to the language that the opposition used yesterday or the day before or whichever it was that he was referring to . . . [interjection] Well, you can't tell him what he was referring to now that you've made the argument. The hon. the Speaker will also be able to rule on any point of order, and for you

to imply that, “I don’t know how you could rule,” the good news is that the Speaker gets to rule on every point of order, be it this one or subsequent points of order.

I’m happy to have the ruling brought up from just a number of days ago because I am of the opinion that you’ve misrepresented the ruling that was made. Now, I concur – or here’s what I will say. The use of the word “lies” is regularly going to create disorder. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on a number of days was making an accusation about herself, not about someone else, and the hon. member has already said that he would be more than happy to use another word, which he is about to do.

Debate Continued

Mr. Stephan: Sure, Mr. Speaker. I mean, there are a lot of adjectives that can be used, but I was hearing many untruths. I was hearing many false things. I heard a lot of fearmongering. And a couple of days ago, actually, in the Legislature, unfortunately, the washed up prior Premier of this province accused me of saying that I said at the town hall that we were going to eliminate CPP premiums for businesses. That was . . .

Mr. Sabir: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is called.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Sabir: Again, 23(h), (i), and (j). What I heard: that “washed up” Premier, former Premier of the province. I think that’s language that is disrespectful, insulting, and certainly will cause disorder in this House. It should be ruled out of order.

The Speaker: The hon. member? Would anyone like to argue this point of order or shall I rule?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I have a sneaky suspicion that this will not be the last time I’m on my feet during this speech because the Member for Red Deer-South clearly has a certain effect on the members opposite. Maybe it’s the truths that he speaks, maybe it’s his conviction in his principles, maybe he’s just smarter than the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, but I can assure you that the member has the best intention. [interjections] If there are other submissions from the members opposite, they are more than welcome to stand up after I’m finished my remarks, but until then I appreciate the same courtesy provided to the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that this is not a point of order. It’s a matter of debate whether or not the hon. Leader of the Opposition is, in fact, in that state of her career or not. I suspect that leadership races that have already commenced on the opposite side would suggest that they’re going in a certain direction, but that’s not for me to, you know, confirm or deny. I’ll let the members opposite start booking their campaign events. I don’t think it’s a point of order.

The Speaker: Are there others?

I am prepared to rule. The hon. Member for Red Deer-South certainly used language that is likely to create disorder, particularly referring to a specific member inside the Assembly and ways that they may or may not be. It’s likely to create disorder. I would like the hon. member to apologize and proceed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Stephan: Sure. I’ll apologize.

Mr. Speaker, the person who lost an election twice stood up in this House and said that I said that CPP premiums would be eliminated for businesses, and that was untrue. Very disappointing. It’s important that when we make arguments, we don’t make things up. Let’s stay to the facts, and I want to confront the untruths and the fear with the truth. Now, the truth is – and I only had two minutes to speak at this town hall, and I was respectful of the process that the NDP had. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Stephan: Well, Mr. Speaker, they’re just trying to interrupt because they can’t handle the truth. I’m happy to share not only with the members opposite but, most importantly, with Albertans the truth about an APP.

11:20

I shared with my friends at the town hall why I’m excited about an APP, and it’s this. There are three main reasons why I’m excited about an APP for Albertans. This will save billions for Alberta workers, for Alberta businesses while positioning us to improve pension benefits and increase security for Alberta retirees. That is why an APP is very good for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, let’s talk about: first, an APP benefits Alberta workers. The members opposite talk, they shriek, they screech about concerns about inflation and affordability. We’re all concerned about that. I’ve said in the House that since 2019 Trudeau has jacked up CPP premiums for Alberta employers by over 40 per cent. You know why they’re so defensive? It was their former leader who has lost an election twice. She was the one who corroborated with the worst Prime Minister ever, Canada’s first NDP Prime Minister, the joke of a Prime Minister for Canada, who hopefully gets kicked out as soon as possible.

Alberta workers have suffered – suffered – under this awful NDP government until they kicked them out, Mr. Speaker, which is a really wonderful thing. Of course, they’ve lost twice now, you know. We’ll hear, I’m sure, of some exciting retirement plans. I understand it may not be in the province of Alberta, but we’ll just move on away from that.

Mr. Speaker, here’s the thing. Alberta workers can save hundreds, over a thousand dollars each year under an APP. That’s really the crux of it, right? That can be a very big deal for Albertans. You think about it. You know, we helped with affordability. Earlier this year there was over a billion dollars paid by Alberta taxpayers to help those less in need with affordability payments. Under an APP we can save even more. The great thing about it is that it doesn’t cost Alberta taxpayers. We simply keep in Alberta the money that Alberta businesses and workers would otherwise ship off to Ottawa.

I know that’s what the members opposite – they don’t really care. I mean, they ran up the deficit just like Trudeau runs up deficits, shipping the money out of Alberta, right? We’re not going to have that, Mr. Speaker. We want to keep that money in the pockets of Alberta workers.

Mr. Speaker, there’s a lot of hypocrisy and weakness in the members opposite, who don’t comprehend that by having our own APP, we’d be in a position to reduce payroll taxes. That is a very powerful benefit. The members opposite are just sticking their heads in the sand. They don’t even want to understand this opportunity. They’re not even giving it a chance.

Let’s talk about: an APP also benefits Alberta businesses. Again, unfortunately, the former Premier who’s lost twice an election – I can tell you something, Mr. Speaker. This individual will not get a third time to lose another election. Sailing off into the sunset.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that businesses are under siege in Trudeau's Canada, the Trudeau-NDP axis. Trudeau's Canada is a fiscal train wreck, sort of like how the NDP were running this province into the ground. Trudeau has smashed through a trillion dollars in debt, accumulating more debt than all Prime Ministers before him combined. Trudeau's gross negligence, waste, and disrespect for taxpayers will be millstones around the necks of our children and our children's children.

Alberta has the highest per capita GDP in Canada, rejecting Trudeau's woke socialist values of mediocrity and virtue signalling, producing nothing. Trudeau's Canada appears to resent Alberta with policies that single out Alberta, seeking to attack, hold it back, and drag it down. Mr. Speaker, we've got to protect ourselves. You know, it's very unfortunate that the members opposite are Trudeau's bosom buddies. They're partners. They're partners in crime.

Mr. Sabir: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order has been called.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). I'm also trying to draw your attention to relevance here. We are talking about a serious – serious – issue, people's retirement security, and for the last I don't know however minutes I have not heard one thing that would be relevant to why this bill should not be referred.

The second thing: referring to us as someone's "bosom buddies" and "partners in crime" and all that language is disrespectful and is not good language. It will cause disorder in this House, and I would urge you to rule this out of order or at least provide this member caution that we stay on course.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, what I heard was a riveting speech about defending Alberta's best interests. If going forward the Member for Red Deer-South has to preface each of his speeches with "trigger warning," by all means, but the members opposite clearly can't handle the truth, as the member has already said in his statement. I don't think this is a point of order. I rather think that he is saying things that are displeasing to the members opposite, which is part of our job here in this Legislature, to defend Alberta's best interests, which we believe we're doing with Bill 2. That is what the member is talking about. I do not believe this is a point of order, but I leave it in your very capable hands.

The Speaker: Are there others?

I am prepared to rule. I would only just say that the Speaker is, of course, reluctant after just a couple of minutes of dissertation from a member on a particular piece of legislation for me to agree on a point of order with respect to relevance. I'm a hundred per cent confident that this would be a negative impact to members in the future.

Having said that, I do know that when members speak specifically to the legislation that is before the Assembly, that always helps improve decorum. I encourage the hon. member to consider that as he uses the remainder of his time.

Debate Continued

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's sum it up as follows. An Alberta pension plan can produce a game-changing competitive

advantage for Alberta businesses. We can have the lowest payroll taxes in the entire country, incenting job growth rather than discouraging job growth. That is something that the members opposite do not understand. Unfortunately, under the members opposite private-sector jobs shrunk, shrunk under this awful government.

But I want to talk about the third thing, and that is Alberta retirees. How do they benefit? Mr. Speaker, currently under the CPP the asset expenditure ratio is under 10, and what that means is that current CPP assets are able to pay for less than 10 years of benefit expenditures.

11:30

In a sense, current contributors from Alberta, our young adults who are currently paying into the CPP: their money is not being used for their pension benefits. They're being consumed by anyone else. Mr. Speaker, under an APP, the asset expenditure goes up over 20, and that doubling of asset expenditure creates more security for Alberta retirees. As well, because we're not having to ship billions of dollars every year to Ottawa, we get to keep that money in Alberta. We are better positioned to increase not only the security for Alberta retirees but also to enhance and protect their benefits.

It's very disappointing for me, Mr. Speaker, to see the members opposite undermining something that would bless Albertans. I encourage them to support this bill. Face the truth: this is good for Albertans. Please educate and inform yourselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has the call.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's see if we can get this back on track for the last 30 minutes.

Okay. The pension bill. I just want to start with another gentle reminder that Albertans don't want this. Just in case there was some lack of clarity around what democracy actually is and what our job is, our job is to represent the needs of Albertans. That is what they elected us to do regardless of which party they voted for. That is our job.

Just preparing for this moment in the Legislature, I quickly went into my e-mail inbox and had another look, just to see if I could find an e-mail, one e-mail, that was pro Alberta pension plan. And you know what? I did. I found one.

Member Irwin: One.

Dr. Elmeligi: One.

But I found many, many, many more that were very much against an Alberta pension plan. Many more. There are things in those e-mails, there are words that are very difficult to read. I'm reading things from my constituents who are saying that they are utterly horrified at the idea of an Alberta pension plan; that an Alberta pension plan is ludicrous, flawed, and outrageous; that this idea is spiteful, it is a government picking yet another fight with Ottawa for no reason; it's all about the war on Ottawa, it's not about serving Albertans; that this Alberta pension plan takes unnecessary risks; that it creates instability; and that it reduces trust in government. I read those words and I take that very seriously because I want my constituents to trust me and, in fact, I really would like for them to trust everybody in this House, but it's very clear that they don't.

Let's just review a little bit of some UCP history around pensions. In 2019 the Alberta NDP introduced Bill 203, which would have required consultation for altering pension management directives and rules, and that was voted down by the UCP. In 2020 we introduced Bill 208, which would have required a further

referendum on whether AIMCo should be the investment manager of an Alberta pension plan, and that was voted down by the UCP.

Let's just for a moment go back in time and remember that whole AIMCo fiasco. Let's just take a minute to remember how the UCP government wanted to take Alberta's teachers' pensions that were managed by the Alberta teachers retirement fund, which generated excellent returns of nearly \$20 billion worth of investments for 84,000 current and retired teachers, but in spite of that excellent track record the UCP forced Alberta teachers to move their funds to AIMCo. Adding insult to injury, the UCP Finance minister at the time promised that teachers would retain control over that investment strategy and then under a ministerial order was like: "No, no; just jokes. Actually, you can't." And what happened there?

An Hon. Member: What?

Dr. Elmeligi: Yeah.

He imposed a ministerial order of his own investment management strategy on those pension funds. And what happened after that? The Alberta Teachers' Association sued the provincial government to get better control over their pension, and they won, so they did, and they were able to have control over their teachers' retirement fund and over their pension. What all of that does is it creates uncertainty. It continues to build a lack of trust in government to actually listen to the needs of Albertans and to address the things that they care about, and it actually ended up going to the courts, which takes up legal time and legal capacity.

We keep hearing from the Minister of Finance that this cake isn't baked. I've heard that half a dozen times at least in question period when we've asked about the pension, that the cake isn't baked, so don't worry about it; it's not a done deal.

Ms Ganley: Half-baked like most of their ideas.

Dr. Elmeligi: Yeah. It's a half-baked idea, for sure.

If it's not a done deal, why are we debating a piece of legislation that will support it? Not to mention that the consultation around the Alberta pension plan is a sham. If you are asking people what they think about an Alberta pension plan, maybe one of the questions in the online survey should be: do you support moving to an Alberta pension plan? But it isn't a question in the online survey; Albertans haven't been asked by this government how they feel about the concept of moving from a Canada pension plan to an Alberta pension plan. They haven't been asked that outright as a question, and the reason for that, I think, is that the members opposite know what the answer is. The answer is: keep your hands off my CPP.

This whole situation . . .

Mr. Schow: The Speaker's there. Not the camera.

Dr. Elmeligi: I like talking to the camera, though.

This whole situation is invented by the members opposite to pick a fight with Ottawa, and it just continues to build a lack of trust in Albertans. At the end of the day, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move an amendment on behalf of my hon. colleague from Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. I'll keep a copy of that. The amendment is that

Bill 2, Alberta Pension Protection Act, be not now read a third time because the Assembly is of the view that the provisions respecting [the] referendum procedures would not establish the necessary conditions for a fair and impartial referendum process.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this will be referred to as amendment RA1.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am going to limit myself a little bit to time here. Okay. Boy, there are a lot of reasons; I could go on at length about why these referendum provisions are problematic. They are problematic in the main because they are nonbinding. Honestly, this bill is supposed to represent what the UCP is doing with respect to pensions as democratic, but it is quite the opposite. Fundamentally it is antidemocratic.

It is antidemocratic for three reasons. One, the UCP hid this from the public during the election. They had the opportunity to have this conversation, and they told the public they weren't going to do it. Now, a lot of Albertans were extremely skeptical because Albertans are smart, and they know that the UCP can't be trusted. But, you know, they did probably convince some folks. Mr. Speaker, I'm a big fan of honesty, I guess, is what I'm a big fan of, and the UCP specifically – specifically – told the public this wasn't a thing they were going to do, and it is the second bill they introduced immediately after that election.

Secondly, the referendum isn't binding, and that's exactly what this amendment refers to. They're saying that they're going to have a referendum to, like, bind the government to make sure that they act in the interests of the people, but, Mr. Speaker, the referendum isn't binding. They are running around representing to the people of Alberta that this is a bill that will ensure that there is a referendum that is binding, but the language in the bill makes it clear that the referendum is not binding.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, the government is using money, \$7.5 million to be precise, to advertise at people to misrepresent the state of play. They are running around with this 53 per cent number. Like, I mean, the number isn't just wrong; it's dumb. Fifty-three per cent is a dumb number. It's obvious that it's not correct. It doesn't take some sort of complicated math or some sort of complicated analysis to see . . . [interjections]

11:40

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Ms Ganley: . . . that Alberta is not entitled to 53 per cent of the CPP. The only reason this number has been advanced is to create a fight. [interjections] They can yell all they want. Albertans know this number is fake. The Member for Red Deer-South got to witness the number of Albertans in Red Deer who know that this number is fake. They were well schooled, in my view.

Mr. Speaker, this is, further, part of a larger issue. It's part of a larger issue. The UCP are fundamentally against our social safety net. They have passed bills to break up AHS, to erode public health care, to allow increased privatization. They have taken Alberta to the lowest per-student funding in education in the country to erode our public education system. Class sizes are ballooning under this government. They have fired 20,000 educational assistants in an effort to ensure that Albertans don't have access to public education. And here is the third piece of their plan. They are attacking public pensions. They are trying to remove from Albertans their access to a pension, their access to the right to retire in dignity. Why?

Well, my theory is this. Public health care, public education, pensions, our social safety net: they increase equality. They increase the ability of people to participate in society regardless of their station. These things mean that people aren't set back, that

they aren't cut off, they aren't bankrupted by getting sick, that your educational attainment is based on your merit and your effort rather than on your parents' bank balance. They mean that every senior has the ability to retire in dignity. Fundamentally these folks don't like equality. They like the system whereby insiders profit and everyday Albertans suffer.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is extremely problematic. It doesn't do what the UCP claim. Everything they have to say about it basically is incorrect or false, and I think that is highly problematic. I think what is more problematic is that these folks are using this as a means to pick a fight with Ottawa, to win political points, with zero regard – with zero regard – for everyday Albertans and the impact that this will have on their lives. This is a government that is focused on their own political means. They should be focused on people.

Mr. Speaker, we were sent here to represent the people of Alberta. That is who we should speak for. The people of Alberta have been clear. This is a terrible bill. They don't want it, and those folks proceed anyway.

Thank you.

Ms Hayter: Earlier today I shared that our caucus has heard from over 38,000 Albertans through our survey on pensions at albertasfuture.ca. That's 38,000 people that have filled out a survey saying that they do not want the Alberta pension plan. You know, more and more people are sharing their voices and speaking out against these proposed changes. Our town halls have been overflowing with crowds, and you have to wonder: why is that? They want to come and let people know that they don't want to leave the CPP and be part of the Alberta pension plan. They're mad. Our residents are mad. I am very proud of the fact that the MLA for Calgary-Foothills and I are going to host a town hall so we can actually listen to the residents that live up in the northwest and let people have that opportunity to share with us how angry they are, and to be able to hear how it's going to impact each of their lives.

You know, I'm sure that every single one of us on this side of the House are going to continue to be bringing the messages and the concerns from our constituents about leaving the CPP and their request for us to stop this destructive proposal.

You know, whenever I've gone door-knocking, I have yet to have somebody say to me: I want to leave the CPP. In fact, the last time I went door-knocking, I had elderly ladies holding my hand and saying: "Please," without inserting my name, "fight for me. I don't want to lose the CPP." They were holding my hand and saying: please, just fight for me.

Mr. McDougall: Fearmongering.

Ms Hayter: It's interesting that you're saying that. They also told me that during the election they were not told that you guys were planning to pull out of the CPP, that everybody was going to stay there and you guys were good. Then earlier today, when I asked if you guys were listening to Albertans, we heard the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler say, "There was a straw poll done in the spring. It was called the election." I'm left wondering because it kind of feels to me – and I know it feels to my constituents – like a bit of a bait and switch.

Albertans have made it very clear that the opposition has a plan, and I urge – tonight I hope that we can all think about the people who are living on CPP and how they are paying their bills and choosing between rent and food. We are gambling with our parents' and our grandparents' stability.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Varsity has risen to speak.

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cannot support Bill 2, and I certainly support the amendment that we not read this into the next stage. Not only is this Alberta Pension Protection Act not needed, because the Canada pension plan has supported Canadian retirement for 60 years without drama, but it also is ranked one of the top-performing pensions in the world. It is a Canada-wide plan that means stability and safety.

My good friend the MLA for Calgary-Foothills also reviewed the data and found that there was a relationship between the price of oil and the spread between contributions and benefits in Alberta. In 1989 the price of oil was \$67 a barrel, and 10 years later it declined to \$23 per barrel. During this time the spread between what we put in and what we took out decreased. Does this government really want to tie the viability of our pensions to the price of oil? We have a lot already riding on that price of oil. It's time we got off that roller coaster.

It's also important that our pensions be protected from political meddling from any government. We must not put Albertans at risk of higher premiums like Quebec pays, and we must not subject Albertans to the APP to make them vulnerable to the economic and demographic downturns of Alberta's population. We must not ask Albertans to accept a phony plan to walk off with over half of the CPP assets.

Every Albertan that I have spoken to is unwilling to risk political meddling and bad investments except one. I found one, too, that said that they wanted this, and he felt that this was because it was the first step for Alberta to separate from Canada; we needed to get our pension money out.

In hearing from constituents, they don't want this pension, they don't want to look greedy to other Canadians, and they're very concerned about the portability. They're concerned that their children who moved away for a period of time and, hopefully, will return to Alberta will have difficulty between having two different pensions. They're worried that if they want to retire to B.C. or back to their original home in Atlantic Canada, they will have difficulty. They're concerned that agreements between Alberta and other parts of the country may not in fact be so easy to organize after we've just swindled our fellow Canadians out of a lot of their pension benefits. I would like us to continue to hear from Albertans, and we will continue door-knocking and with our pension town halls.

11:50

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Just under one minute left.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an absolute honour to rise in this House. I may have the last word on Bill 2, the Alberta Pension Protection Act, which absolutely does not protect Alberta's pensions, and I'm going to use this remaining minute to urge those members opposite to start listening to their constituents, to stop – stop – with the misinformation, and actually, for once, serve in this Legislature and represent the people they were elected here to serve. We've heard from countless Albertans, and they've had one clear message, and that message is: hands off our CPP. [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Order.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 21 I must now call every question necessary for the disposal of Bill 2, the Alberta Pension Protection Act, at third reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:52 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

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	van Dijken
Fir	McIver	Wiebe
Getson	Nally	Williams
Glubish	Neudorf	Wilson
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 32	Against – 45

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:57 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For 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	van Dijken
Fir	McIver	Wiebe
Getson	Nally	Williams
Glubish	Neudorf	Wilson
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen

12:00

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For – 45 Against – 32

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

Bill 9

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion. I see the hon. the Official Opposition House Leader has risen.

Privilege

Threatening a Member

Ms Gray: Thank you. I rise not to speak to Bill 9 but to raise a point of privilege at this time. The matter of privilege is regarding threatening comments made by the Government House Leader against the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud during bill debate earlier this evening. As per Standing Order 15 I am raising this question of privilege in the Assembly immediately after the words were uttered and the events occurred, having taken the time to speak with members involved and to make arguments to you, Mr. Speaker.

The prima facie case is that the Government House Leader was overheard to say to me, speaking about the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, control her and, quote: deal with her, or I will deal with her. I'm raising this having just now had time to debrief the members involved. This is a classic case of privilege, a physical threat being made to this member. To be very clear, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud views the comments as a threat. It has made her feel unsafe and threatened. Her ability to perform work as an MLA is impeded by feeling threatened in this place.

I would appreciate it if you would make available to both government and opposition the audio from their microphones or a version of the Blues that captures the dialogue occurring at the time. As I have also gone back to review the video, this was heckling during a very raucous moment in the Chamber, and I do not believe it will be found on the Blues, yet it was an important back and forth in this place. This happened at approximately 9:15, as the Minister of Justice was concluding his comments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, given the language used, I believe that any reasonable person would conclude that the words uttered by the Government House Leader were meant to convey a threat and even imply violence. In other words, they were meant to intimidate. In *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* by Maingot it states:

Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. The assaulting, menacing, or insulting of any Member on the floor of this House or while he or she is coming or going to or from the House, or on account of his behaviour

during a proceeding of Parliament, is a violation of the rights of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the third edition, states on pages 107 and 108:

In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, Members should be able to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. Assaulting, threatening, or insulting a Member during a proceeding of Parliament, or while the Member is circulating within the [Parliament] Precinct, is a violation of the rights of Parliament. Any form of intimidation of a Member [is verboten] with respect to the Member's actions during [the proceedings] in Parliament could amount to contempt.

Now, *Erskine May Parliamentary Practice* discusses intimidation on page 146, and it states:

To attempt to intimidate a Member in his parliamentary conduct by threats is also a contempt, cognate to those mentioned above. Actions of this character which have been proceeded against include impugning the conduct of Members and threatening them with further exposure if they took part in debates;

There are also a few examples, Mr. Speaker.

threatening to communicate with Members' constituents to the effect that, if they did not reply to a questionnaire, they should be considered as not objecting to certain sports; publishing posters containing a threat regarding the voting of Members in a forthcoming debate; informing Members that to vote for a particular bill would be regarded as treasonable by a future administration; summoning a Member to a disciplinary hearing of his trade union in consequence of a vote given in the House; and threatening to end investment by a public corporation in a Member's constituency if the Member persisted in making speeches along the lines of those in a preceding debate.

I would also draw your attention to the House of Commons procedural information page, which indicates that "matters that have been found to be prima facie include . . . the intimidation of members."

And a similar situation, Mr. Speaker, on December 5, 2017, made by the Government House Leader of the day, Mr. Brian Mason, when there was an alleged threatening gesture. He felt that there was a prima facie breach of privilege due to how the government viewed the threatening gesture made by a member of the opposition.

The Government House Leader is in a position of power in this place. We've seen him call points of order on the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud many, many times. If he was referring to calling a point of order, he would have done that. "Deal with her, or I will deal with her" is threatening language, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I will conclude that it is my opinion that this is not a matter of debate. It was meant by the Government House Leader to threaten and attempt to intimidate the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud in the performance and execution of her parliamentary duties. I believe this is a prima facie question of privilege. That being said, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to review the audio and to be certain of what was or was not said would be, I believe, incredibly important in this case. I would appreciate the opportunity to potentially amend or add onto these arguments having had the opportunity to review a real transcript of what transpired, because this is of a very serious nature.

Thank you for hearing my arguments, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, I do agree with the hon. Official Opposition House Leader that a matter of privilege is serious and ought to be dealt with in an appropriate manner. I'm sure all members will be aware of Standing Order 15, which deals specifically with privilege, and in particular the notice that may or may not be required with respect to matters of privilege arising and

the Assembly dealing with them at the earliest possible opportunity. It's important, I think, that we point to Standing Order 15(5):

A Member may always [rise on] a question of privilege in the Assembly immediately [following] the words [that] are uttered or the events [that have occurred to] give rise to the question, in which case the written notice required under [subsection] (2) is not required.

The standing orders proceed to say that

the Speaker may allow such debate as he or she thinks appropriate in order to determine whether a prima facie case of breach of privilege has taken place and whether the matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity, and if the Speaker so rules, any Member may give notice no later than the conclusion of the next sitting day.

The other important note here in Standing Order 15, for the benefit of all members, is that

if the Speaker is of the opinion that the matter may not be fairly dealt with at that time, the Speaker may defer debate on the matter to a time when he or she determines it may be fairly dealt with.

I think we've heard from the Official Opposition House Leader the accusations that have been made with respect to privilege. She has made some requests of the Speaker. It is a well-known fact that at this point in time the Speaker also doesn't have the benefit of the Blues, and the Speaker would be reluctant to rely on such an accusation without an accurate record of such comments. I certainly will need to go to Parliamentary Counsel prior to making audio available. That would be a first inside this Assembly. The Speaker is certainly reluctant to make such a decision after midnight.

12:10

I do think it's reasonable for me to provide the opportunity to the Government House Leader if he would like to make comment. He's welcome to do so. If he'd like to defer to the next sitting day – that day perhaps is uncertain. I would never presuppose a decision of the Assembly on whether or not the business of the Assembly will conclude this evening or if it would be at a later date. If that business does conclude this evening, the matter of privilege would not be dealt with until the next sitting day, which, in fact, may be in the new year.

Hon. Government House Leader, if you choose to comment, you can do so, or you can defer to the next sitting day.

Mr. Schow: Defer.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I think it is in the best interest of the Assembly given Standing Order 15(3) – and I'll repeat it.

If the Speaker is of the opinion that the matter may not be fairly dealt with at that time, the Speaker may defer debate on the matter to a time when he or she determines it [to] be fairly dealt with."

I am of the opinion that this matter cannot be dealt with fairly this evening, in which case it will be dealt with at the next sitting day. For this evening I consider this matter dealt with and concluded, and we will deal with it at our next sitting day, at which point both the Official Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader will be able to provide additional comments based on the information that comes from Parliamentary Counsel with respect to the Blues or audio that may or may not have been heard.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: Hon. members, before the Assembly is third reading of Bill 9, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. It is a debatable motion, as you all know. Are there others wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the Government House Leader to close debate.

Mr. Schow: Waived.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a third time]

The Speaker: Hon. members, prior to calling on the hon. the Government House Leader, I would like to make a couple of very brief comments and thank yous. I'd like to provide a thank you to all members for your participation in the debate this evening and throughout the legislative session. I would also be remiss if I didn't thank the table for their dedicated service to our Assembly in their role and, of course, the hundreds of other individuals who come to work every day to make our democracy work, to support our Assembly, whether it's through our safety and the Legislative Assembly security staff, the Sergeant-at-Arms and his team, *Hansard*, broadcast, visitor services, the pages, all of the people who go into making our work possible. We owe them a debt of gratitude, and I hope you'll join me in thanking them.

Lastly, in both of the respective lounges I have provided a very small token of my appreciation to your constituency staff. I hope that it will make it to its intended destination.

My last comment for this evening is this. I believe that there is a severe winter storm warning for central Alberta and Calgary. It is now past midnight. I would be reluctant to tell members what to do, but I strongly encourage you to go home, get a good night's rest, and travel when safe to do so. I was in this Assembly when we lost a member of the Assembly. Previous to that occasion I would have driven home tonight, but it is just not worth it.

Please take care of yourselves. Have wonderful, happy holidays. Merry Christmas. God bless you, all. Have a wonderful 2024.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate all your remarks. I appreciate your diligent efforts as well. Thank you very much. At this time I do want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and tomorrow a Happy Hanukkah as well to our Jewish friends. I appreciate all members and their diligent work throughout this session and the first sitting of this 31st Legislature.

Now I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Government Motion 17 the business of the 2023 fall sitting is now concluded.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:15 a.m. on Thursday]

Bill Status Report for the 31th Legislature - 1st Session (2023)

Activity to Wednesday, December 6, 2023

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, 2023 (Smith)

First Reading — 10 (*Oct. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 57-58 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft.*), 96-97 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 145-47 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 147-54 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 2 — Alberta Pension Protection Act (Horner)

First Reading — 89-90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 154-55 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 274-85 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft.*), 336-43 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft.*), 394-400 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 424-30 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 522-30 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft.*), 552-59 (*Dec. 6, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 565 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., adjourned*), 583-90 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 3 — Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2023 (Williams)

First Reading — 22 (*Oct. 31, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 90-93 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft.*), 180-87 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft.*), 272-73 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 307-09 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 334-36 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)

Bill 4 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 55 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 159-63 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 155-56 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 187-90 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 309-13 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 336 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)

Bill 5* — Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023 (Horner)

First Reading — 55-56 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 156-57 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 190-97 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft.*), 265-72 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft.*), 403-09 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 430-35 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 456 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*), 519-22 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., recommitted*), 559-62 (*Dec. 6, 2023 aft., adjourned*), 563-64 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed with amendments*)
Third Reading — 515 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., recommitted to Committee of the Whole*), 564-55 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., adjourned*), 575-83 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 6 — Public Health Amendment Act, 2023 (Amery)

First Reading — 90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 157-58 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 313-20 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft.*), 435-38 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 456-62 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 462 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)

Bill 7 — Engineering and Geoscience Professions Amendment Act, 2023 (Sawhney)

First Reading — 111 (*Nov. 6, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 158-59 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 273-74 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 400-03 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 423-24 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 514-15 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed*)

Bill 8 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (Amery)

First Reading — 209 (*Nov. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 299-307 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft.*), 438-41 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 515-18 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft.*), 546-52 (*Dec. 6, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 564 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., adjourned*), 569-75 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 9 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (Schow)

First Reading — 478 (*Dec. 4, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 513-14 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 546 (*Dec. 6, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 590-92 (*Dec. 7, 2023 eve., passed*)

Bill 201 — Alberta Health Care Insurance (Access Fees) Amendment Act, 2023 (Brar)

First Reading — 90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 114-25 (*Nov. 6, 2023 aft.*), 234-37 (*Nov. 20, 2023 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to on division; not proceeded with*)

Bill 202 — Education (Class Size and Composition) Amendment Act, 2023 (Chapman)

First Reading — 209 (*Nov. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 237-46 (*Nov. 20, 2023 aft., adjourned*), 358-64 (*Nov. 27, 2023 aft., defeated on division; not proceeded with*)

Bill 203 — Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act (Dyck)

First Reading — 111 (*Nov. 6, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 364-70 (*Nov. 27, 2023 aft., adjourned*), 479-86 (*Dec. 4, 2023 aft., passed*)

Bill 204 — Municipal Government (National Urban Parks) Amendment Act, 2023 (Lunty)

First Reading — 332 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 486-92 (*Dec. 4, 2023 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 205 — Housing Statutes (Housing Security) Amendment Act, 2023 (Irwin)

First Reading — 510 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed*)

Bill Pr1 — St. Joseph's College Amendment Act, 2023 (Sigurdson, L)

First Reading — 289 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills*), 421 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., reported to Assembly; proceeded with*)

Second Reading — 455 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 515 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 530 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed*)

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