



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 18, 2024

Day 26

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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

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Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP)
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
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Deputy Premier
Elmeligi, Sarah, Banff-Kananaskis (NDP)
Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC),
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Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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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)
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Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC)
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(UC)
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Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
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Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),
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Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
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Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 28

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Rowswell
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Wright, J.

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Hunter
McDougall
Sinclair
Sweet

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 18, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, it being the first sitting day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Kendyll Stadnick. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker: The Legislative Assembly is grateful to be seated on Treaty 6 territory. This land has been the traditional region of the Métis people of Alberta, the Inuit, and the ancestral territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Iroquois, and the Nakota Sioux people. The recognition of our history on this land is an act of reconciliation, and we honour those who walk with us. We further acknowledge that the province of Alberta also exists within treaties 4, 7, 8, and 10 territories and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have a number of guests to introduce to the Assembly today. Today's wonderful rendition of *O Canada* was sung by Kendyll Stadnick. Kendyll, a born and raised Edmontonian, works for the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers and has been singing *O Canada* for over 20 years. She's performed the Canadian anthem for many large public groups and events. I ask that you please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

I'm also honoured to introduce two councillors from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills in the Speaker's gallery today. It's my pleasure to introduce Laura Lee Machell-Cunningham and Carrie Fobes. They are both councillors in Kneehill county and are here for RMA. I invite you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

And, hon. members, it's my pleasure to introduce – if I had a favourite mom of a member of the Assembly, it would be this particular mom of the hon. Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women. Ms Josie Fir is here today. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has a school group to introduce.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House 61 students from Callingwood school, who I hope are from two different classrooms, and they're accompanied by Carol Scheibel from the school. I wish them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mrs. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise and welcome students of école Lacombe Upper elementary school. I would ask you to please rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Notley: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly students from St. Martin Catholic school who are attending School at the Legislature. They are grade 6 students, and I believe they may be here with Megan Alexandruk. I hope they can all rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the wonderful grade 6 class of St. Stanislaus school. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you Dr. Vanessa Sheane, the newly installed president and CEO at Northwestern Polytechnic.

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you the team representing Bhartiya Cultural Society of Alberta, including the president, Arvind, and the head priest, Pandit Pankaj. We ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce through you and to you Kayla Taylor. Kayla is an incredibly hard-working member of my staff team, and when not in the office Kayla is a student at Mount Royal University. We simply couldn't do our work without amazing staff like you. Please rise and receive the warm welcome.

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

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you Lisa, a social work practicum student completing her practicum in my office. She has enjoyed seeing how what we do in here trickles down into the everyday lives of folks. Lisa, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and through you some amazing leaders from Big Lakes county: Jim, Tyler, Janelle, Lane, Ann, Dave, Jeff, and Robert. They are all from my riding of Lesser Slave Lake and some of the best people in the province. Please rise today and enjoy the warm welcome of this Chamber.

Thank you.

Mr. Getson: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce Mr. Parveen Kumar, CEO of Ambika venture industries, and also Dr. Darshan Ball, CEO of Paramount Agro group. When Alberta is calling, it also reaches out across the pond, and these gentlemen are representing India very well. Our friends, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Ms Lovely: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and through you the teams representing the Alberta Gujarati Association, Gujarat Cultural Society, Garvi Gujarat Association of Canada. They are here to commemorate Holi, the Festival of Colours, and to invite the House for the Holi celebrations on March 23 in Edmonton at the Bhartiya Cultural temple. We ask them to rise and please accept the warm welcome of the Chamber. Thank you for being here.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has statement 1.

Arts and Culture Funding

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans in all corners of our province enjoy art every day. From murals on the side of buildings to the performing arts in local theatres, Alberta is surrounded by art that makes our lives richer, and it humanizes us. Not only does it help create beautiful moments; it helps spur our creativity, and it also helps us build and expand our economy. In 2021 Alberta's culture industries, which include film and TV, performing arts, visual arts, book and magazine publishing, contributed \$2.7 billion to Alberta's economy and sustained over 19,000 jobs.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to see that, if passed, Budget 2024 is taking a responsible approach to funding the arts in Alberta. Last week we saw two major investments into the arts in Alberta by the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, the first being an investment into Edmonton's thriving cultural scene with a \$12.8 million investment into the Winspear Centre. Not only will this investment help revitalize Edmonton's downtown core; it will also create hundreds of pre- and postconstruction jobs and ensure that arts are accessible for all. The second announcement was a historic investment into the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. If passed, Budget 2024 will provide the AFA with record-level funding totalling \$40 million by 2026. These funds will go towards helping individual artists, art organizations, and institutes that bring the arts to Albertans.

The members opposite may think that these funds are only for the urban hubs of Alberta, but they're wrong. This funding is for all artists and all Albertans in every corner of our province. We must ensure that the arts are supported in the province, and through Budget 2024, if passed, this government has dedicated funds that will ensure the arts are accessible to everyone because, Mr. Speaker, when the art thrives, Alberta thrives.

Thank you.

Transition from Coal-fired Energy Production

Mr. Ellingson: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the visionary leadership of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the government she led,

Alberta is about to be permanently off coal power. While this alone would be a huge achievement for Alberta, it is being realized a full six years earlier than planned. While not long ago Alberta relied on coal for 80 per cent of its electrical supply, we are now seeing periods of time where there is zero coal-fired electricity in the mix. It is being called the largest emission reduction policy in Canadian history, and its success even surprised some of those who helped draft the policy.

Even despite this government's habit of saying one thing while doing the opposite, they are celebrating these policy choices as well. The Premier and environment minister use these policies, created and promoted by the NDP in government, when they promote Alberta abroad. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of policy you get when you have a government focused on cleaner air, affordable power, and working with everyone to get the best policy for Albertans, a government that is committed to delivering needed reforms, to moving Alberta forward; in short, an NDP government.

It doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. It is because of work like this, done by the previous NDP government, that we saw a boom in renewables, creating jobs, adding billions in investment. Albertans could do with fewer of this government's bans on renewables and bad policy choices. I am proud to stand in this Chamber to celebrate the end of coal power along with my colleagues who made Alberta an even better place with cleaner air and a better power grid for families, for industry, and for workers.

Thank you.

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

Holi

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Holi is a wonderful custom and celebration, and I extend greetings from the government of Alberta on this colourful celebration we call Holi. Holi celebrates the start of spring, the end of the winter, and the flowering of love. It's a day to connect with people, laugh, play, forgive, and forget. The event originated in Bharat, India, but now has expanded throughout the Indian subcontinent, Fiji, and many places around the world. We recognize how important celebrations like Holi are to Albertans, and we want to express our support for this auspicious celebration.

Holi, often known as the Festival of Colours, is a lively and a cheerful celebration observed across the world. The festival is marked by a variety of colourful traditions, each with their own significance. One of the most well-known aspects of Holi is the throwing of coloured powders known as gual. The practice represents the celebration of diversity and the triumph of good over evil. During Holi people of all ages come together to play with colours, throwing them at each other and covering one another in vibrant colours. Another important tradition of Holi is the lighting of bonfires the night before the festival and the singing of the traditional folk tunes to enhance the vibrant spirit.

Holi holds a special place in my heart as an occasion to rejoice in the rich customs and culture of my family and to spend time with those we love, cherishing happiness and togetherness. May this festival bring joy, happiness, and prosperity to you and your family. Let us all come together to celebrate this beautiful festival and embrace the diversity that makes our province and our country so great.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Support for LGBTQ2S-plus Albertans

Member Tejada: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are coming together to support all kids. On Saturday in Red Deer I joined parents and young people who are speaking out against this government's harmful policies that target queer, nonbinary, and trans youth. They're demanding safe spaces in schools and the right to use their pronouns, and in Westlock yesterday the community came together to show that their town is a welcoming place to be after painting a crosswalk rainbow became too controversial for the far right.

Sadly, the 2SLGBTQIA community is under attack in this province, and leading the charge is the Premier with her rhetoric against trans youth and the UCP organizers in Take Back Alberta. TBA's leader posted a hateful, violent image of a burning pride flag last week. It didn't take long for that apology to ring hollow. Did the UCP condemn this like they'd do for any other flag burning? Of course not.

Make no mistake; young people see this violent imagery and are scared, and that is the intent. They should have a government on their side, not making things worse, but instead a UCP MLA is fund raising from this hateful rhetoric tomorrow. He's selling tickets to hear a former candidate, Torry Tanner, spew lies about our public education system after she falsely claimed that teachers are showing pornography in classrooms. Those comments were so bad that the Premier did the right thing for once and kicked her out of the party.

But instead of cancelling tomorrow's event, the UCP is doubling down. Another UCP constituency association from Calgary is now promoting the event. In their promotional e-mail they write further lies about teachers sexualizing children and using the school system to exploit kids.

Mr. Speaker, this is dangerous rhetoric that should have no place in Alberta. Just what do the UCP think is happening in the schools that they govern? If the government truly believed in doing the right thing, they'd stop the attacks on teachers and queer youth, roll back these harmful policies, and cancel tomorrow's event.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Northwestern Polytechnic

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to highlight the valuable contributions of Northwestern Polytechnic to the growing community of Grande Prairie. This polytechnic shows the hard work, can-do attitude, entrepreneurial spirit, and determination of our community to meet the growing demands of northern Alberta's labour market.

Today I also want to highlight our new president, Dr. Vanessa Sheane, who on January 31 this year was installed as the 11th president of Northwestern Polytechnic. As someone I see as a humble leader, Dr. Sheane has continued to show compassion when needed, humility in a state where things need to be righted, strength of character to make challenging and hard decisions, and willingness to set a course forward for the polytechnic. It takes vision and hard work, and I want to thank you for that.

In the north, where skilled labour, engineers, and health care professionals are in such high demand, Northwestern Polytechnic plays a critical role, providing unmatched trade and apprenticeship training alongside many university programs. This government just invested \$11.3 million into the power engineering program at NWP, which exemplifies our dedication to ensure a state-of-the-art learning environment for our engineering students.

Furthermore, this polytechnic has amazing partnerships with industry titans like Finning, Caterpillar, and Harley-Davidson. This

underscores its role as a connecting point between education and industry, facilitating seamless transitions into the workforce.

As well, Northwestern Polytechnic's nurse bridging program, which empowers internationally trained nurses to integrate into Alberta's health care system, addresses the many shortages of health care professionals in Grande Prairie and the region.

This institute stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to training and supporting the north that not only shapes the present but paves the way for a brighter future for northern Alberta.

Thank you.

Government Policies

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, affordability is currently one of the most dire issues facing Albertans today. The UCP likes to shift blame elsewhere; however, the expenses Albertans are facing lie directly on the UCP's shoulders as a direct result of their policies.

Let's take utilities. The government chose to remove the cap on utilities, and now Albertans are paying hundreds more each month, lining energy providers' pockets while Albertans struggle to pay their mortgage. And for those hoping to purchase a new home, the UCP have increased new home purchase fees. Auto insurance, property taxes, and tuition have all become more costly as a result of the UCP government. In fact, the largest increase in tuition in the country over the last five years happened here.

We hear from Albertans struggling every day who have been forced to choose between food on the table or a roof over their heads, and the blame lies at the feet of the UCP's decisions to download more costs onto Albertans while the government focuses on anything but affordability. The government could take action to help Albertans tackle affordability today, but they have shown their priorities again and again.

Instead, this government continues to break its promises to Albertans, and it's focused on bringing in a provincial police force that no one is asking for, bringing political parties into municipal politics, privatizing health care, dividing families, and creating unsafe educational environments for kids, and this is just in the last few weeks. I'm sure the removal of the \$200 gift limit for MLAs right before Christmas was a relief to struggling Albertans, for whom a gift of \$200 or more would mean feeding their children or being able to put enough gas in their vehicle to get to work.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and her government have constantly flip-flopped on their promises. The Premier should save her flipping for pancakes at the Stampede this summer and make a real attempt to keep just one of her promises to Albertans.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Hospital Construction

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, when the Premier claimed she was going to improve health care in Alberta, she either had no intention of keeping that promise, or she had no idea what she was talking about. First she told pregnant women in Lethbridge that they should go to Calgary to get the care they need, and then just this Saturday she said that people in Edmonton should drive to Red Deer if they need a hospital. To the Minister of Health: can at least she admit that sending people a hundred kilometres away to a different city for another hospital is actually not a good idea for anyone?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we want Albertans and, particularly, Edmontonians to get the service that they require in Edmonton. Of course, we are going to make sure that the Stollery is going to be a stand-alone Stollery, because right now they're spread over four different sites. I'm sure the members opposite would agree that little children shouldn't be spread out over four different sites – 11 different – so we are going to make sure, once that Stollery is built, we will have additional spaces. The members opposite, when they chose the south Edmonton site, didn't actually plan for where it should go.

Ms Notley: Construction of the Stollery is not a replacement for the south Edmonton hospital. The fact of the matter is that an adult uses the equivalent of four children's beds, and not a soul in the UCP can give us any idea when the Stollery would even be built. And now we're hearing of patients being sent down the highway to a hotel in another city because of bed shortages here in Edmonton. To the minister: why does she believe highway health care and motel medicine is anything but a failure of her job?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, we don't believe anything of the sort. We want to make sure that every patient gets the right level of care and then, once they've received that care, that they transition to the next appropriate site. In fact, we have over 500 patients every single day who successfully transition out of hospital. Five hundred: that's a lot of patients. I know Alberta Health Services has a very good discharge policy, which they have in conjunction with . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Transition to a motel is not a success: news flash. The UCP cancelled the south Edmonton hospital, they're risking the Red Deer hospital with their doomed P3 scheme, and they're telling people to go to other cities. To the minister: is the UCP intentionally killing Alberta's public health care so they can bring in more private care for the rich, or is this crisis the result of profound, incredible, unprecedented incompetence by this minister?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I find it rich that the members opposite during their term cancelled the Red Deer hospital, but now they want to be the champions of it. How ironic that those people on the other side could not support the Red Deer hospital. In fact, as a citizen of Red Deer I heard oftentimes that, you know, the highway goes up to Edmonton; the highway goes down to Calgary. Red Deerians were committed to that. That's what they were told by the NDP. That's unacceptable. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is next.

Hospital Discharge Policies

Ms Sigurdson: Last week we learned that an Edmonton man was told that he would be moving to a facility for long-term care but was put in a taxi to a Travelodge in Leduc. He was not given a choice of where he was going, there wasn't room for his wheelchair next to the bed, and he struggled to access the bathroom. Mr. Speaker, this is not how those requiring long-term care should be treated. Will the Premier apologize to this Albertan for this absolutely shameful treatment?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I was very concerned when I heard about this situation. I did talk to Alberta Health Services, and they assured me that all of the processes in terms of discharge were

followed. This individual was discharged to a nonprofit organization that chose that particular site. We have over 500 successful discharges each and every day, and we will continue to make sure that patients do get the health care that they need and are transitioned to the right sites. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. The only one with the call is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: During her campaign for the leadership of the UCP the Premier excitedly announced that part of her long-term care strategy would involve hotels and motels. I quote: I have to figure that there's got to be a more comfortable place for them to go; I was thinking maybe a hotel may be a better environment. End of quote. I don't know who in the UCP needs to hear this, but a motel room does not count as health care. Will the Premier confirm that this practice will never occur again, or are they considering this a promise kept?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, again I reiterate: over 500 successful discharges each and every day. Discharge planning generally begins at the time a patient is admitted. When a patient no longer needs acute care . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. the Minister of Health is the only one with the call now.

Member LaGrange: When a patient no longer needs acute care, their care team works with the patient and their family to prepare them to leave the hospital and will work with them to determine the most appropriate place to go. Care teams can include social workers, nurses, transition co-ordinators, allied health professionals, and physicians, and, Mr. Speaker, the individual, the patient, has an opportunity to have input into that. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Sigurdson: This Albertan who was left in the Travelodge was moved out of the hotel. He then spent 14 hours in an emergency room without being admitted. He called it a terrible situation, and on this side of the House we agree. Albertans deserve better, and I hope no one else is ever subjected to treatment like this from their government. How many other Albertans have been or are planned to be subjected to this Premier's motel medicine?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, over 500 successful discharges each and every day. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, over 500 successful discharges from our hospitals, from those allied professionals and health care professionals that work so well and so hard for us each and every day to make sure that they give excellent patient care to individuals. Then, when they are ready to leave the hospital, they're discharged to the most appropriate site. In this particular case, a nonprofit provider was chosen, and that person chose the site. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

Social Studies Curriculum

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The danger of the new curriculum is that it will, quote, kill any love of social studies for a whole generation of young people. From where I sit, that's a pretty

bad review, and it comes from a member of the curriculum development specialist group asked to provide feedback to this government. In fact, this group has disavowed the new curriculum because the UCP ignored their expertise. Can the minister explain why, after such a colossal curriculum failure in 2021, they have once again ignored the experts?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We haven't ignored the experts. We've consulted quite widely on the social studies curriculum, and of course there are varied perspectives that occur. I don't think any two Albertans have the same views when it comes to social studies or any kind of historical event, so there are diverse opinions. We recognize that, and we welcome everyone's opinion and everyone's feedback. Earlier, in October, we had a public survey that solicited almost 13,000 responses from Albertans, and we're happy to hear from more Albertans.

2:00

Ms Chapman: Another expert said that the redraft, just like the one in 2021, is, quote, very white and very Eurocentric. The new curriculum also, quote, lacks the integrity needed to address the TRC calls to action. It is critical that our students learn about Indigenous history and the lived experiences of Indigenous communities today. I expect the government to understand the role education can play in reconciliation. They failed on this account in 2021. Why have the UCP failed again?

Mr. Nicolaides: Again, Mr. Speaker, everybody has an opinion on the social studies curriculum, and we're interested in hearing their opinions and their views. When it comes to reconciliation, it's absolutely critical that we teach the importance of . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Nicolaides: When it comes to reconciliation, it's absolutely critical that students learn about the history of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and francophone communities in our province and in our country, and in the draft curriculum they'll do exactly that. That will happen in grade 1, in grade 2, in grade 3, in grade 4, in multiple grades in the draft curriculum, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Chapman: Thank you. Members of the curriculum specialists group have made it clear that the curriculum cannot move ahead given the egregious disregard for expert advice and feedback. In fact, they say that this curriculum would be a, quote, detriment to future generations. The social studies curriculum is 20 years old. It needs an update, but that update has to be a high-quality, accurate, and engaging one, which it clearly is not. To the minister: is the government going to move ahead with this curriculum, or are they going to finally create a curriculum based on expert advice?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, the curriculum is based on expert advice, and we've consulted widely, with a wide range of experts, including subject matter experts, individuals and professors from our universities and colleges that are experts in history, political science, geography, economics, and other areas. Right now the public is invited to provide additional feedback. We're happy to incorporate additional feedback and make modifications. We'll be piloting the new social studies

curriculum this September, with implementation beginning in September 2025.

Renewable Energy Development

Dr. Elmeligi: Mr. Speaker, last month the Premier announced her half-baked plan for renewable energy development, and last Thursday she released the no-go zone map for renewable power projects based on pristine views. These regulations go against the recommendations from the AUC report, that the UCP commissioned. To the Premier: all any industry ultimately wants is clarity and predictability, so why does she insist on pushing chaos and nonsense when it comes to crucial renewable projects?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities has risen.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's why we took the advice from the AUC and made sure that we protected our pristine landscapes. It means different things in different jurisdictions. In fact, Australia has renewable zones away from their beaches, which are their primary tourist areas. In Alberta it means protecting our Rocky Mountains and our foothills. That's exactly what we did, and we've had good response from industry, meaning that we struck the right balance.

Dr. Elmeligi: Well, in several places the new renewable policy goes against the AUC report recommendations. The AUC report recommendation said that views aren't really a quantifiable measure for development. Under the current restrictions the government is saying no to 57 projects and \$14 billion in investment, all because they claim to be worried about these views, all of this from a government that has spent years on a crusade to get their friends the right to mine coal on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. To the minister: is this hypocrisy intentional, or was Corb Lund right when he said that ill-informed politicians . . .

Mr. Neudorf: Mr. Speaker, I know that when I google "Alberta," one of the very first things I see is our pristine views in our national parks and our provincial parks. You know what other sites people come to see in Alberta? Our UNESCO world heritage sites. All of these areas are protected because we want to make sure that people come to enjoy those views. It does mean different things in different regions. We have struck the right balance. In fact, most of industry if not all of industry is saying that we got it just about right, and the municipalities that live in these areas are even more thankful. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Dr. Elmeligi: Mr. Speaker, the AUC report was clear that any prohibition on development intended to protect a view has to apply equally to all forms of development, but inside the UCP's new no-go zones for renewables there are hundreds of oil and gas facilities, not to mention the government's favourite, open-pit coal mines. Why doesn't the minister understand that renewables aren't a threat to existing energy projects or to prime agricultural land? They are the path to ensuring that Alberta continues to be a leader in the energy sector.

Mr. Neudorf: We absolutely do. That's why these no-go zones are only for vertical impact, which impacts only wind turbines. All other types of development may be subject to visual assessment, and that has happened, as in the law before. It will continue to

happen, and we will make sure that those principles are applied for any development. We want to make sure that we protect our pristine viewscapes. We have worked with industry, and we have provided pathways where they can continue to develop if it's done in a responsible way with an agricultural-first lens. We're proud of the work that we're doing in this sector.

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

Provincial Police Agency

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Governments are supposed to be truthful. The UCP made countless promises during the campaign, actively misleading Albertans, but we know the truth. They promised they wouldn't touch pensions, and we all know what's happening there. Now comes Bill 11, which paves the way for this government to create a provincial police force, after promising Albertans they would do no such thing. To the minister: did this government forget about its promises during the campaign? Why are they pursuing this when Albertans clearly don't want it?

Mr. Ellis: It sounds to me, Mr. Speaker, like the member opposite is opposed to accountability and transparency. That's what I'm hearing.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Mr. Ellis: We're trying to have accountability and transparency for people that are doing policelike functions. It is only fair. They are out there. They're part of ALERT. They're part of helping municipalities. They're out there helping the RCMP. They're doing highway patrol. They are performing the duties of police officers. We need to keep them arm's length from government, and that's precisely what we're going to do.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:08.

Mr. Sabir: Given that this government promised to cut people's taxes and that everything was going to be sunshine and rainbows and given that their plan now is to hike taxes, forcing Albertans to pay for a police force they didn't ask for, and given that Red Deer . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Sabir: . . . already considered what the impact of a provincial police force would be on their community but rejected the idea because it would cost taxpayers \$13.5 million every single year, to the minister: why does this government not care about additional tax burden on Albertans?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, we have had over 20 municipalities take us up on our police transition grants. We are offering independent studies to see what is going to work best for this community. Now, we know that the members opposite are opposed to helping Siksika Nation, that the members opposite are opposed to helping Enoch. We are trying to help individuals, especially our First Nations community, create some form of independence, and that's precisely what we're going to do. We're going to help all communities in this province because we know the policies of the NDP-Liberal government and the feds are just nothing but a disaster. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sabir: Given that Albertans opposed the UCP police force in that it would cost Alberta families thousands of additional dollars every year in taxes and given that the Minister of Advanced Education once said, and I quote, "I absolutely do not support an Alberta police force" and given that the red tape reduction minister during the campaign assured the people of St. Albert that the UCP had spoken to the municipalities and had then decided not to pursue this, can the minister please inform us who actually supports this police force? It's not the people of Alberta, and apparently it's not their own people.

2:10

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to augment and support all municipalities in this province: the RCMP, Calgary, Edmonton, many, many mid-size municipalities who have asked for additional supports. Let me tell you something. Here's an example of what we receive: on behalf of all front-line members we want to express gratitude to the minister for his leadership . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Ellis: . . . and we want to assure him of our full support and encourage him to continue the commendable work he is doing for public safety in Alberta and for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are going to continue to support law enforcement, we're going to continue to support municipalities, and we are going to make sure that Albertans are safe.

Water and Waste-water Infrastructure

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, as the population continues to grow across the capital region, the need for effective water and waste-water services also continues to grow. We know that water is a precious resource that is vital to building our communities and attracting more industrial investment. As the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville I was pleased to attend an announcement this morning in my constituency regarding important investments to our water and waste-water infrastructure. Can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors tell us what is being done to support the health and resiliency of water systems in the Edmonton area?

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

Mr. Dreeschen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Actually, Budget '24 has \$481 million in municipal grants going to water programs. I'd actually like to thank the members for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, Drayton Valley-Devon, Leduc-Beaumont, Morinville-St. Albert, and Strathcona-Sherwood Park, who all advocated for the \$50 million Arrow Utilities project. It's been a great example of partnering with the province and municipalities that will actually save millions of litres of water from the North Saskatchewan River and just a great example of conservative environmentalism.

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

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the response. Given that this government's \$50 million investment in the capital region waste-water treatment expansion project is needed to help meet the needs of the area's growing population and given that this substantial investment demonstrates this government's commitment to communities like mine in the Edmonton area, can the same minister please tell us why

this investment is so important to industry and the residents of the surrounding area?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Actually, 13 municipalities are part of this project, with 300 kilometres of pipelines around the city of Edmonton. It'll actually reduce utility rates for the 400,000 people that live around the Edmonton area, and it actually will create a revenue stream to sell used water for industrial purposes and, as I said, save 35 million litres of fresh water from the North Saskatchewan River. This is just a good legacy project for the Edmonton region, unlike the legacy of the current NDP leader, whose only legacy was an \$80 billion debt that she saddled Albertans with for generations.

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

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that this investment to support water and waste-water treatment demonstrates the government's commitment to effective water management and given that this investment will also support a new model for industrial water reuse, can the same minister tell us how this investment will support local businesses and save fresh water in the Edmonton area?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's actually 35 million litres per day from the North Saskatchewan. That's actually 14 Olympic-size swimming pools that'll be saved every day when this project is up and running, and it will also help support hydrogen production like Air Products in Sturgeon county. As well, it's just another great example of conservative environmentalism, that actually does something for the environment, that isn't just rhetoric or more taxes. Another example is the April Fool's tax that's coming, with a 23 per cent increase in the NDP-Liberal carbon tax. Empty words and rhetoric do nothing for the environment, but projects like this actually do. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Municipal Political Parties

Mr. Kasawski: Mr. Speaker, the UCP has a long list of things that they like to do that Albertans have never asked for: first, the Alberta pension plan, then a provincial police force, the Grassy Mountain coal mine, and now it's municipal political parties. In their own survey over 80 per cent of Albertans said that they do not want political parties on municipal election ballots. Experts have described municipal parties as distasteful to voters, and most importantly Albertans did not ask for this. Can the minister explain why they are introducing yet another piece of legislation that Albertans do not want or need?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, what's really at issue here is whether the member that asked the question is in favour or not. Last week at the municipal conference he gave a speech about how he disliked municipal political parties and then immediately after asked them all to join the NDP. Too often I'm not sure what side of the fence this member is on. He likes to always take both sides of every issue, and then he can say, "I told you so" no matter what happens. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kasawski: Not the answer I was looking for.

Given that municipal political parties are more likely to politicize local governments by allowing municipal politicians to act out of party interest rather than public interest and given that the government has circulated two surveys on the issue, both of which are overwhelmingly rejecting this idea, why is the government still entertaining municipal political parties? Why can't the government accept that this just isn't a good idea?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little surprised to hear the member opposite just admit that he acts according to the party's interests and not the public's interest. On this side of the House it's quite the opposite. We use our group together as a way to make the public's voice louder, to magnify the public's interest. The folks over there may be beholden to their union bosses and their party bosses, but over here we serve Albertans, only Albertans, and municipal people will serve Albertans because they're more like us than they are like the folks over there. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Kasawski: Albertans do not want another layer of political partisanship in government. The duty of local council members is to be nonpartisan, to focus on improving our cities and our municipalities, not engaging in party politics, and given that affiliations to political parties will only polarize local issues that do not need to be politicized and create another barrier to get anything done, will the minister actually listen to Albertans this time and stop this unwanted piece of legislation now? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. McIver: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, it's only on the other side that being in a political party gets in the way of them serving the public. They actually ought to realize that municipal leaders will serve the public whether they're in a political party or whether they're not. The other thing that the member has obviously missed is that I assured people that nobody running municipally will ever be required to belong to a political party, and political parties will never be allowed to be affiliated with either provincial or federal political parties. Decision-making will be local even if they have a party.

Immunization Rates

Dr. Metz: As of March 15 there were 16 active cases of measles in Canada. It is the most contagious respiratory virus on the planet, as 9 out of 10 people exposed will be infected if they are not immunized. In Alberta there are many communities with very low rates of immunization, with one of the lowest at 32 per cent. What is the minister doing to assure a rapid public health response in communities with such low rates of vaccination?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, childhood immunization rates are of concern. Not just for Alberta but right across Canada there has been vaccine hesitancy, so what we're doing is that we have increased the amount of public awareness that we're doing. We've actually upped the budget by five times for this year. Also, we're making sure that there are health care providers, nurses going into the schools, providing immunization, and continuing to follow up with parents.

Dr. Metz: Given that the 2023 vaccination campaign was significantly delayed and then hampered by orders not to use the words "COVID-

19” or “influenza” during the usual fall health promotion campaign and given that 1 in 1,000 people who get measles will get encephalitis, a brain infection which is characterized by seizures, coma, and often very poor recovery, will the minister do the right thing today and join me in personally encouraging measles vaccination to overcome the UCP’s . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Health Services in conjunction with Alberta Health continues to prioritize immunizations right across the province. We are continuing to go into schools. We prioritized the elimination of the backlog for school immunization that has resulted from the pandemic disruptions. We are continuing to reach out to families to notify them. We encourage every Albertan to look at their immunization records and ensure that they are, in fact, covered, because there is a wide range of coverage that has happened over the years.

2:20

Dr. Metz: Given that public health is the responsibility of this government and given that public health requires promotion of prevention strategies, because the public needs to be informed and encouraged to act, and given that this government needs to step up and acknowledge that vaccination has an important role in saving lives and that indeed they need to encourage Albertans to get vaccinated, as it’s a public service, will the minister consider special efforts in communities with very low vaccination rates?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is not actually listening to the answers. In fact, we are doing that. AHS completed a thorough update to their immunization website to include discussion about vaccine hesitancy. AHS established a new immunization strategic priority working group and is developing a five-year work plan with actions to improve immunization rates. We have virtual clinics. We are going into the schools. We are continuing to reach out to parents. We’re reaching out to all Albertans. Public health, of course, is very concerned about this, and we are concerned as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont is next.

Utility Costs

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents have been reaching out to me about the effects of the affordability crisis. The reckless spending of the Liberal-NDP coalition has caused inflation to soar and has been hard on Alberta families and businesses. With another scheduled carbon tax hike on April 1, the federal government is planning to make it even worse. Canadians are now taxed on every aspect of their lives. Our United Conservative government is committed to keeping life affordable. Therefore, to the Minister of Affordability and Utilities: what is our government doing to keep life affordable for Albertans?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the great question. Every Albertan is impacted by the cost of electricity, which is increased significantly by the carbon tax. That’s why my top priority has been to reduce the cost of power within our province. Not only will this lower Albertans’ utility bills, but it will also lower the cost of electricity for businesses and industry, making everything from your groceries to your fuel less expensive.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that my constituents are indeed concerned about utility prices specifically and also that the minister made a recent announcement about new rules for electricity generators and further given that these announcements will take some time to be implemented, can the same minister please share what these initiatives mean for Albertans and how these new measures will help lower utility prices in Alberta?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is taking action to lower Albertans’ utility bills by modernizing our electricity system. This includes enabling energy storage and self-supply with export, attracting investment to bring more dispatchable power online, improving our transmission and distribution planning, and strengthening our electricity system for the long term. This is just the start of the many announcements Alberta’s government is making over how we will continue lowering Albertans’ utility bills.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that our government has been working hard to support Alberta’s economy, promote business growth, and keep life affordable and given that my constituents in Leduc-Beaumont are counting on our government to secure Alberta’s future and advocate for Alberta’s continued success, can the same minister please share how our government will continue to keep life affordable for Albertans well into the future?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My ministry is working tirelessly to make the electricity grid more affordable and more reliable. This includes how the Utilities Consumer Advocate is helping Albertans find ways to lower their utility bills, including the affordability dashboard. Affordability is top priority throughout our entire government, and I’m proud of the work that my colleagues and I are doing, including our government’s announcement today from the minister of transportation, which will help keep water rates affordable throughout the entire capital region.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Provincial Police Agency

(continued)

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all deserve to feel safe in our homes and in our communities, rural or urban, as we walk our dogs, ride the bus to work, or head out for the evening. We also deserve to feel like our government values us in the work we do and listens to us as well as those who represent us. But that listening didn’t occur before this government’s introduction of Bill 11. In fact, the workers involved didn’t know anything about this bill until 30 minutes before its introduction. Why wouldn’t this government want to consult with the very employees who are at the heart of this bill? Are they afraid of what they will hear?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I guess I will repeat this again: on behalf of all front-line members we want to express our gratitude to the minister for his leadership; we want to assure him of our full support and encourage him to continue the commendable work he’s doing for public safety in Alberta and for Albertans.

Thank you.

Ms Wright: Given that the minister has mused publicly about using sheriffs to fill the role of police officers and given that I've reached out to stakeholders who characterized the announcement as a surprise and who have reported back that they don't know of a single sheriff who was consulted in advance, how many provincial sheriffs did the minister consult with? If not workers, who is this government listening to?

Mr. Ellis: You know, Mr. Speaker, I know it's tough for folks to understand when you're from Edmonton and Calgary, a municipality where, when you call 911, the police actually show up to the call, but these are some of the challenges that people face in rural Alberta. There are times in the night, actually, where there's no police coverage. There are times in the night where 911 is called and an officer might not come. We are continuing to try to augment and support our RCMP. We're continuing to try to augment and support policing right here in Alberta. So I think that if the member opposite and the members opposite want to support policing, want to support law enforcement and public safety, they need to support the bill.

Ms Wright: Mr. Speaker, just wondering who the minister talked with.

Given that there are sheriffs and police officers doing incredible work every day across our province, given that these folks are trusted by those communities they serve, and given that this government has broken trust with Albertans by failing on affordability, making health care worse, and by gambling with Albertans' retirement security, doesn't the minister think Albertans deserve to be consulted on critical issues that directly impact their lives?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, again, this is about accountability, it is about transparency, and it is about oversight. We are creating an oversight body because these officers are performing policelike functions. It only stands to reason that they be arm's length from government. Again I ask what the members opposite – on one hand, they kind of want to defund the police, and on the other hand they want to control the police. I think they need to figure out which way they're going. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Federal Carbon Tax Increase

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hard-working Albertans are experiencing an affordability crisis, but the federal Liberals and their NDP allies refuse to recognize the significant impact the federal carbon tax is having on this crisis. The federal government's plan to increase the already ridiculously expensive carbon tax on April Fool's Day from \$65 per tonne to \$80 per tonne is a vicious and absolutely terrible joke. This increase is a slap in the face to Albertans who already struggle to make ends meet. To the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance: what is our government doing to combat the federal carbon tax increase?

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret. Alberta's government: we've been working hard to ensure the Liberal-NDP coalition know how damaging and punitive the carbon tax is. As the member mentioned, going from \$65 to \$80 a tonne April 1 will certainly hit all Albertans at a time when they can least afford it. Affordability is still top of mind for Albertans and Canadians across the country. People have probably seen that that isn't just coming

from Alberta. The Premier has joined with six other Premiers to sign a letter asking for the carbon tax to be scrapped.

Mr. Bouchard: The NDP supported this carbon tax, a tax that significantly impacts small business across the province. Given that small businesses in Alberta are the backbone of our economy and are having to make difficult decisions to stay afloat and further given that the carbon tax hike will significantly compound the affordability crisis Alberta families are already facing, could the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance please explain the long-term economic implications the federal carbon tax has on our economy?

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. It's sincerely damaging, and it's probably a place where the members opposite could do us a favour and call the mother ship and talk to the mother party and let them know that most of the potential leaders of their party are now saying that they stand with us and want the carbon tax scrapped. So whatever they end up calling it – the Not, Nearly, or Never Democratic Party or the Nenshi Democratic Party – it's clear that they don't support the carbon tax going forward either. Neither do Albertans. If this is already costing us \$710 a household, the madness . . .

2:30

Mr. Bouchard: Given that a poll by Angus Reid this past November found that 42 per cent of Canadians strongly oppose the carbon tax and support abolishing it and given that while members opposite were in government, they did nothing to combat affordability but, rather, hiked up taxes and further given that now members opposite repeatedly complain about affordability while disregarding tangible solutions like standing up to their big bosses in Ottawa, could the Minister of Affordability and Utilities please expand on the tangible ways our government plans to support Albertans who will financially struggle with this carbon tax increase?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities has risen.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is working tirelessly to ensure that Alberta is the best place to invest. Our province has the lowest tax burden in Canada despite the NDP's promise to hike those taxes in the last election. We continue to create a strong environment for more investment in our energy sector. More reliable power generation will be brought online and continue to lower Albertans' bills. This is just part of the work that my colleagues and I are doing to make life more affordable and more predictable for all Albertans.

Affordable Housing

Member Irwin: The UCP's budget does nothing to address the housing crisis across our province and particularly nothing for Edmonton and Calgary, the two largest cities in Canada facing the highest rent increases. This minister continues to claim that his government will build 13,000 affordable housing units in 10 years. However, experts say that by 2030 Alberta needs far more housing than this; we will actually need 44,000 more affordable homes. So I'll do the math for this minister: the UCP are 31,000 affordable homes short. What's he going to do about it?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, our housing starts in Alberta are 57.23 per cent higher than last year, which was already a record.

We're having another record year building tens of thousands of homes across the province, bringing supply into our market, making sure that everybody has a home, which is in stark contrast to the NDP, who, as we know, want them to live in tents, whose housing critic spends her days trying to make sure everybody lives in tents and can't get help.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Mr. Nixon: We're getting the job done here in Alberta.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:32.

Member Irwin: Given that this minister continues to say that these units will be built in the future and that he continues to refer to housing starts but not actually talking about the affordable homes that we need now and given that one of the key ways that we could keep people in their homes and keep their homes affordable could be through temporary rent caps, which I'm proposing in Bill 205, will the minister explain why he has zero plans to address skyrocketing rent increases when his government could pass my bill today and keep people in homes today? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, February housing starts were up 17 per cent more than they were in January, and January was already a record month until we had February, which is another record month. We continue to break records in this province. We have the most affordable jurisdiction anywhere in the country because of the work that this government is doing. Industry, nonprofit, municipalities, and the provincial government working together to create tens of thousands of homes, and the NDP want to stop that with their rent control bills, which will bring in rent rates like Toronto and Vancouver. Well, Mr. Speaker, through you to them: no.

Member Irwin: Given that Albertans are hurting and that we've been inundated with countless stories of families and working people who are struggling to make ends meet, having to choose between paying rent and groceries – and it's not just those who are struggling to pay their rent; it's those who are also trying to pay their mortgages for the homes that they always have dreamed of owning – will the minister admit that Budget 2024 has no plan to support Albertans with their homes other than his dream-killing housing tax that makes it a whole lot harder for anyone to buy a home?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, our plan is creating record-breaking housing in our province. In fact, right now in Alberta 16,000 new low-income rental housing facilities are being built in our province. Do you know what that is? Another record. You know what? We are very proud of our record, but more and particularly we're proud of all of our partners who are working with us to be able to make sure that we continue to be the best jurisdiction in the country. Unfortunately, under that government's watch, the NDP government's watch, we saw wait times for affordable housing go up by well over 50 per cent. Shame on them. But we're getting the job done.

Fraud Protection for Seniors

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, seniors are the people who built this province, and we all owe them our gratitude. At a time when many are struggling, they deserve to live with respect and dignity. Unfortunately, there are many who do not feel this way. We have heard reports recently about scammers who are preying on the most vulnerable Albertans, often seniors and those who are less tech

savvy. To the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services: is there a plan in place to warn seniors and other vulnerable Albertans about new or ongoing scams?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, because of the NDP's heckling, I couldn't quite hear the full question, but what I want you to know is that we are investing in record-breaking ways when it comes to seniors as well in this province, both on housing but also social supports. We've increased all of our social supports when it comes to seniors as well as reduced their fees anywhere across government, and we continue to invest in our elder abuse programs, making sure that all of our seniors are protected in this province.

Member Boparai: Given that Albertans who are struggling, unable to pay their bills can be easily misled into trusting a sales pitch and lured by the hope of relief for their financial hardship and given that scammers routinely target government programs to sow confusion and pretend to be the CRA, a provincial benefit program, or others and given that the government typically puts out a public service announcement to warn people about the scam, will this government act swiftly to warn seniors and shut down the businesses seeking to harm them?

Mr. Nally: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me thank the member for the question. It only took nine months for him to ask it. I think that's great news because it took Calgary-Bhullar-McCall 18 months to ask his first question to me, so great job.

Now, in terms of what we're doing on fraud prevention, with the Consumer Protection Act, Mr. Speaker, we invest in education, we have consumer protection investigators, and all of that will make sure that we let seniors know . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. If the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall wants to ask another question, I encourage him to rise to his feet and do that at the appropriate time. Until then the hon. minister of service Alberta has the call.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, consumer protection is important in this province, and we have a consumer protection unit that takes those kinds of concerns seriously. They put out bulletins and educational items. If there's a specific example the member wants to share . . .

Member Boparai: Given that Albertans who are struggling are more likely to fall for a scam and end up losing money they can't afford to lose, with bills they cannot pay and a sense of shame they don't deserve, and given that the cost of living has gone up because this government broke the promises they made to make life more affordable for Albertans, will the government do something that actually benefits seniors, show respect for their elders, and help Albertans who are struggling more and more every day?

Mr. Nixon: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we take seniors' care very importantly inside this province, which is why we have indexed their payments, increased their payments, but also it's why we're investing \$9 billion in things like affordable housing, which is proportionately for seniors. We want to be able to make sure that our seniors can continue to live in the communities that they built. Unlike the NDP, who went down the road of things like divorce by nursing home or trying to remove them from rural communities into centralized areas inside the big cities, we continue to invest to be able to make sure that seniors can continue to live in our communities to benefit us but also to their benefit.

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

Economic Development and Job Creation

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta continues to be the economic engine of Canada, attracting individuals and businesses to our province to take part in the Alberta advantage. Recent economic indicators showcase Alberta's impressive job growth trajectory, a testament to the success of our government policies, including our competitive tax rates. Can the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade elaborate on the government's commitment to maintaining Alberta's status as a premier destination for job creation in the country?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the member for the question. Alberta's labour market continues to show strength, with about 100,000 more Albertans employed in February than the same time last year. Month over month we're up 17,400 jobs and about 27,000 jobs in the first two months of this year. With a highly skilled workforce, business-friendly policies, a diversified economy, and an affordable and exceptional lifestyle, Alberta continues to be the economic engine of Canada. Our province leads the nation in net employment growth, and recently the Canadian survey on business confidence showed optimism strongest among Alberta . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.
2:40

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in January and February of this year alone Alberta added almost 30,000 jobs and given that Alberta's job creation in February represents 43 per cent of all employment gains in the country, remarkable considering our province is home to only 12 per cent of the population of Canada, can the same minister provide insights into the strategies that have facilitated this incredible growth and how the government plans to sustain this positive momentum in the months ahead?

Mr. Jones: Addressing Alberta's labour market needs is a key priority for my ministry and others. By developing ministry-specific job-attraction strategies, the government is ensuring that workers have information on careers, education, and training and that employers have access to labour pools to help them fill vacancies in key sectors across the province so they can grow the economy, creating a skills pipeline to help address future vacancies and strengthen Alberta's workforce. These initiatives include things like a \$20 million provincial investment over four years in the Canada-Alberta jobs grant, the \$5,000 attraction bonus for skilled trades, and, of course, our aviation skills grant.

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's job market witnessed substantial gains over the past year and further given that the service-producing sectors, led by transportation, finance, insurance, real estate, education, rental and leasing, have significantly contributed to Alberta's job growth, can the minister provide details on how the government plans to further support and leverage the strengths of these sectors to bolster Alberta's economic standing on the national and the global stages?

Mr. Jones: The private sector accounted for almost all of our gains in February, with about 17,000 in net increase. We saw gains of 11 and a half thousand in trades; 7,400 in professional, scientific, and tech services; and 6,500 in business building and other support

services. We are seeing these gains as our population continues to increase, with about 175,000 new Albertans over the age of 15 in the last 12 months alone. People and companies from across Canada and around the world are coming here because of the quality of life and economic opportunities. We are keeping this momentum going with Budget 2024, which maintains Alberta's competitive advantage so businesses and industry can . . .

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

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 28, sponsored by myself, which reads as follows:

Be it resolved that the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be replaced as follows: that Hon. Mr. Sabir replace Member Irwin as chair and Hon. Mr. Sabir replace Member Irwin.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

Bill 12

Consumer Protection (Life Leases) Amendment Act, 2024

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 12, the Consumer Protection (Life Leases) Amendment Act, 2024.

The amendments proposed in Bill 12 will create additional protections for consumers, securing the life-lease model, thus enabling an affordable option for Alberta seniors.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 12, the Consumer Protection (Life Leases) Amendment Act, 2024.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite five copies of a report on the impact that COVID-19 has had on domestic abuse shelters and survivors in Alberta. It's a summary of multiple interviews and engagement with members of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and survivors and includes data as well as high-level takeaways for public policy-makers, communities, and shelter directors to impact their short- and long-term strategic plans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article by Ricardo Tranjan which is entitled Rent Controls Work: They Don't Reduce Housing Supply but They Do Limit Profit. It's an incredibly important read, especially for the minister opposite, to counter some of the . . .

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the five requisite copies of a *Calgary Herald* article titled Bill 205's Rent Caps Not the Answer: Just Ask B.C. and Ontario, where they have 12 of the highest costs of living.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Horner, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Act Members of the Legislative Assembly pension plan annual report for the year ended March 31, 2023.

On behalf of hon. Minister LaGrange, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta annual report 2022-23, College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta 2022-23 annual report, College of Opticians of Alberta annual report 2022, College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta 2022 annual report, College of Chiropractors of Alberta 2022-23 annual report, College of Alberta Dental Assistants annual report 2022-23, College of Alberta Psychologists 2022-23 annual report, College of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta annual report 2022-23.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. At 2:07 the Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rose under 23(h), (i), and (j), specifically (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." In response to the question from the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall – and I do not have the benefit of the Blues – I heard the Deputy Premier say: it sounds like the member opposite is opposed to accountability and transparency.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question at the time was specifically talking about this government, during an election, having committed to not pulling out of the CPP; offering a tax cut which they have not done; building a south Edmonton hospital, which they have cancelled; and the subject matter that the question focused on, that they would not move forward with an Alberta provincial police force, which they are now proceeding through with Bill 11. All of this certainly calls into question the integrity of a government that would campaign on one thing and do another. However, to suggest that the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall is opposed to accountability and transparency would be a point of order as it is referring to him as an individual member.

I would draw note, Mr. Speaker, to your ruling on November 22, 2023, page 298.

I have provided many, many, many comments with respect to referring to individual members and what they may or may not intend to do, and if you refer to a caucus or a government or an opposition, this is significantly less personal in its nature.

It is this distinction that caused me to call a point of order, Mr. Speaker, as I certainly know that the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall is not opposed to accountability and transparency in any way, shape, or form. I hope this will be ruled as a point of order. I will note that in the remainder of his responses the Deputy Premier referred to "the members," in the plural, referred to us as a caucus, and certainly that would be in order, but referring specifically to the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall would be unparliamentary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of things that I will address in this point of order. First off, I will say that it is not a point of order; rather, it's a matter of debate. To suggest that the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall is in favour of accountability and transparency, I say, would not be accurate given the record from 2015 to 2019 while they were in government, but I digress.

What I do suggest is that without the benefit of the Blues I cannot comment exactly on what the hon. Deputy Premier and minister of public safety had said; however, with kind of just my chicken scratch notes, something to the effect that the member opposite is opposed to accountability and transparency. That is certainly a matter of debate. Nothing has been suggested about what that member intends to do but, rather, how that member approaches or feels about accountability and transparency.

2:50

I really think that this is not a point of order. In fact, probably one of the weaker points of order because, Mr. Speaker, this is talking about general feelings toward something. That's not supposed to be a slight against the Opposition House Leader; rather, just to suggest that without the ability to call into question someone's thoughts or their arguments or their intent, why are we here? This is a robust Chamber of debate, and I believe we're having that.

I would also, though, suggest that, on a side note, it would be a point of order to be discussing the finer details of a bill that is on the Order Paper and that is slated for debate. That is not a debate at this moment, but I would say that going forward, the members opposite would be careful with the nature of the questions as they ask questions about bills that are currently being debated. That's what the actual debate is for.

The Speaker: Are there others that wish to provide a submission to the point of order?

Prior to my ruling, which I am prepared to give, I would like to remind and refer all members of the Assembly to chapter 13 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, under rules of order and decorum, page 639. It says, "a Member may not direct remarks to the House or engage in debate by raising a matter under the guise of a point of order." I am of the opinion that that is exactly what we have here. We also saw in both the Government House Leader's response and the Official Opposition House Leader's remarks a continuation of debate from question period, which, of course, is not the point of a point of order.

To the hon. the Official Opposition House Leader, it is my guess – and I don't remember the esteemed ruling that the Speaker gave on that particular day, but I'll almost promise that it was in reference to someone implying that someone was a liar, that they were being dishonest, not a matter of debate around whether or not someone is in favour of accountability and transparency; more a matter of a personal accusation that they may or may not tell the truth. This is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

At 2:32 the Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At 2:32 I rose as the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services said – and again I do not have the benefit of the Blues. I believe the quote was that the housing critic spends her days making sure everyone lives in tents. There have been similar accusations lobbed across last week. Essentially, my point of order is on 23(h), (i), and (j), making allegations against another member, imputing false and unavowed motives to another member. In this case the Minister of Seniors,

Community and Social Services is directly stating that the housing critic, in attending her community members, wants to make people live in tents.

Now, often the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services has made similar accusations to the NDP caucus and whatnot. I find the point of order here because he's accusing an individual member of a motive that she does not hold and has done this repeatedly. I have looked back at previous rulings, and I believe this is a point of order because we've discussed something similar to this multiple times last session, specifically around the Coutts blockade because it was a matter of public record that members from the UCP did go support that illegal blockade that caused nearly a billion dollars of damage and included people conspiring to murder police officers. They went and attended there, and it would have been inappropriate for us to then attribute motives to those who attended that illegal blockade.

A very different situation here. We have an MLA there to support constituents who were being dehousing. On the other side we have MLAs going to support what was known to be an illegal blockade. In both cases, though, attributing specific motives to a member would have been inappropriate, and I believe this is a point of order. Having the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services repeatedly announce what the MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is intending with her support of her constituents: it's against the practice of this House. I believe it should be ruled a point of order in order to raise the decorum in this place and to depersonalize the nature of some of this debate. I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services was answering the question, it was difficult to hear what he was saying because there was quite a raucous crowd on the opposite side, but what I do understand the member was saying is that as a government we are taking significant strides to deal with homelessness in the province of Alberta. The policies that we are putting forward and the money we're putting forward, including \$840 million over three years, will help deal with the homelessness problem we're dealing with in the province. In contrast, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on a number of occasions has been seen standing out front taking pictures of tent encampments, opposing this policy. By definition this is a matter of debate because we believe that our course of action is correct and theirs is the opposite. They would not and the member in particular would not like to see our policy and our funding go through to support people who are living on the streets.

We do not believe that tent encampments are a safe place, Mr. Speaker. It is a place where people are being human trafficked; they are being subject to sexual assault; drugs are being trafficked. They are finding dead bodies in these encampments; they are finding children in these encampments. It is a horrible place, and the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has stood in front of these encampments advocating for us to keep them there. Again, not trying to relitigate the policy; that's for debate here in the Chamber. What I would say is that the member opposite: her actions speak very loudly, and for the minister to suggest that that's what that member wants – also, I do believe the member suggests the NDP policy in general is what they want to go with. So it is a matter of debate, and I don't think this is a point of order.

The Speaker: Are there others wishing to provide commentary? The Opposition House Leader, but the Government House Leader will have another opportunity to respond.

Ms Gray: Only to say that I believe that the Government House Leader was attributing false and unavowed motives to a specific member through his argument, and I find that objectionable.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader. I'd prefer us not to continue ongoing debate inside a point of order, but I will allow him to respond.

Mr. Schow: I would agree, Mr. Speaker. I'd prefer not to continue this dog-and-pony show. I was simply making an argument. I'm not making a personal attack on anyone opposite – that is not for this Chamber – but I'm making an argument.

The Speaker: Are there others wishing to join in the point of order debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to rule, and I do have the benefit of the Blues. At 2:32 the hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services said the following:

bringing supply into our market, making sure that everybody has a home, which is in stark contrast to the NDP, who, as we know, want them to live in tents, whose housing critic spends her days trying to make sure everybody lives in [a tent] and can't get help.

Hon. members, I am sympathetic to the arguments of the Official Opposition House Leader, particularly on a point of some public discussion that I'm sure some members in this Assembly will recall with respect to other events that take place in the public and create a large amount of public discourse. How members choose to engage in those events is, of course, up to each of those members, but I will note that the ongoing usage of accusations of members' decisions to attend those activities or not did rise to the level of a point of order after much encouragement from the Speaker for members to make other choices in how they will raise those points or those issues.

As for today, I will provide a strong level of encouragement for the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services to not make such direct and personal attacks inside this Chamber. It wasn't initially ruled a point of order previously, it won't be today, and I hope that I don't have to because there will be a change at least in the tone and tenure. That doesn't mean that the content of the debate cannot continue, but the way that we debate it, I think, is important. This isn't a point of order today but a strongest caution possible. I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

3:00

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(1) in order to proceed with government business.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a request for unanimous consent to proceed to government business. This will require unanimous consent of all members of the Assembly as it is a departure from the schedule before the Assembly.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) in order to proceed to consideration of Government Motion 28.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a request for unanimous consent to proceed immediately to Government Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Motions

Committee Membership

28. Mr. Schow moved:
Be it resolved that the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be replaced as follows: that Hon. Mr. Sabir replace Member Irwin as chair and Hon. Mr. Sabir replace Member Irwin.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18. Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? I'm just going to seek clarification from the table.

Final call: is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?

The hon. the Government House Leader to close debate?

[Government Motion 28 carried]

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

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Members, I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 203 Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act

The Deputy Chair: We have up to 120 minutes to debate in Committee of the Whole. Are there any members wishing to speak at this time? The Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am very honoured to rise today and speak about Bill 203, my bill that I've been able to put forward, Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act. This is an important bill. Really, the core of what this is, why this is so important is that every single one of us has had a friend or a colleague reach out to us, state that there have been problems in them being able to get a job, the job that they are entitled to, the job that they have put time and effort into. But the challenge is that they have gotten their education and their credentials somewhere other than Alberta, maybe somewhere other than Canada. This bill, this foreign credential advisory committee: this is the purpose of this, to be able to streamline, look at the credentialing process, and be able to advocate for and make recommendations to create a more streamlined and efficient credentialing advisory system.

The great thing about this, Mr. Chair, is that this is going to be the first of its kind in Alberta, and it will be the first of its kind in Canada. This is significant because it gives us the advantage in order to bring the workforce, bring that international flavour, bring that international newcomers skilled labour force to work here in Alberta.

One of the things that I do want to speak on is just the – why this is also important is that we have an Alberta advantage. Alberta is the backbone of our nation. We are recognized internationally not just for our great workplace but for our wages, for the opportunity

for family, the opportunity for a future, the opportunity for growth, the opportunity for business to be able to grow and flourish thanks to our low taxes here but also because we have something that is very special. That is our people, and people want to participate in a growing economy. They want to participate in a growing opportunity, to raise their family, and be able to have hope. This is what this government is about, bringing that hope and that Alberta advantage here.

Mr. Chair, we need our international newcomers to be able to be here working on the ground. We've seen incredible investment right across the board. We've seen Dow petrochemicals make the announcement recently, which is going to need several thousand jobs. We've seen various other investments in agrifoods, in tech, even in health care; they all need specific needs. This is an opportunity for highly skilled individuals to be able to utilize their skills, be part of the Alberta advantage, and be able to get to work.

Now, we know that utilizing international skill sets can sometimes be a challenge here. One of the challenges I just received this last week from a young man from my constituency: he decided to go to school in another Commonwealth nation. In fact, it was England. He's talking and writing to me, and he's saying: Nolan, how can I get back to Canada when my credentialing doesn't matter? How is some young man from Alberta going to another first-world, excellent, top-rated university not able to come and practise and utilize his skills here? This is, Mr. Chair, just a huge challenge, and we need to be able to fix it. This is what this is about, and I am very, very thankful to be able to bring this bill forward.

Now, this bill is also, as I said, going to be the first of its kind in Canada. This reviews the rules that govern the recognition of foreign credentials and will make recommendations on how to improve the process for recognizing those foreign credentials, especially for professions with current and anticipated labour shortages. Right across the board, Mr. Chair, we are going to see significant labour shortages in various areas from health to tech to trades. As I mentioned, Dow petrochemical has come in; they're going to need a workforce, and we have the skill here in Alberta in order to do this.

I also want to talk about the mandate of the committee. The mandate is to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials in Alberta by doing some of the following: by reviewing the legislation, by reviewing the rules, including those established by the credentialing bodies, the professional regulatory organizations that govern the recognition of the foreign credentials. This is so important because we don't want to lower the bar of excellence here in Alberta, but we do need to improve the pathway to getting that, that speed of excellence. There is no way that somebody should be having to retake almost their entire schooling here in Alberta just because they didn't take an Alberta degree. Mr. Chair, this is such an important mandate that I hope that people right across this House can support.

As well, by evaluating the process in other jurisdictions in Canada to see how they're doing, how they're advancing the recognition of foreign credentials and identify areas of success – one of our areas of success has been our MOU with the Philippines on nursing. I see this in my constituency, that when we see a bridging program for nursing, it gives the opportunity for, specifically, people who are trained in the Philippines to be able to come, be able to upskill quickly – there's a path forward – and be able to get to work, taking advantage of that Alberta advantage and being able to take care of their families, being able to take care of them both here and, for many of them, right across the world.

Then, thirdly, this committee is also going to make recommendations to the minister in accordance with section 7 that, in the opinion of the committee, would make Alberta more

prosperous, particularly by approving the process for recognizing foreign credentials and facilitating the recognition of foreign credentials in specific professions with current and anticipated labour shortages.

3:10

Now, this committee is made up of five different ministries. It's made up of Jobs, Economy and Trade; Tech and Innovation; Health; Advanced Education; and Immigration and Multiculturalism. Mr. Chair, this is strategic. This makeup is very, very important for the future success of Alberta. We're seeing the trades and jobs in general just exploding. We are driving. We are the economic engine of Canada. We need trades, and we need the opportunity to have that conversation at this table, to say: how are trades going to be involved? How can we streamline this from other countries, utilizing their skill sets, and be able to implement them here on the ground as we grow our economy?

In the tech sector we know that the future here in Alberta – we have a growing tech sector. We need to see and be able to utilize and have that conversation with them as partners and be able to recognize where they're needing to grow and also be able to utilize their talent from across the world and get them here in Alberta.

In Health we're seeing a great restructuring by our Health minister, and part of that is getting health professionals with the qualifications from across the world here in Alberta and being able to get them to work. This is the Alberta advantage: doing it quickly and being able to confidently say that you're qualified. So this is very important.

In Advanced Education they're training and upskilling, and we need them as part of this conversation to be able to bring the polytechnics, the universities, the colleges, who can then train and upskill.

Finally, Immigration and Multiculturalism. They know the stories. They know the challenges. They know the credentials. They know the promises that we've made, and we need to be able to follow through on those promises, hear the stories, hear the experience of our newcomers here in Alberta, and be able to seek out and continue working on those stories.

Mr. Chair, this bill is about bolstering and promoting Alberta. It's promoting Alberta by streamlining the recognition of foreign credentials here by bolstering the sectors that need the greater workforce, and this is just about improving the process so we can continue to move forward, grow our economy, and welcome newcomers here.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to the rest of the debate here today.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to provide comments? The Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak on Bill 203, Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act. Bill 203 establishes a committee with the mandate to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials in Alberta. Responsibilities listed include reviewing legislation and rules related to foreign credential recognition, evaluating processes in other Canadian jurisdictions, and making recommendations to the minister. Apart from the enriching of our cultural and communal fabric, foreign-trained newcomers play a crucial role in propelling the growth and prosperity of our province's economy. As internationally trained newcomers relocate to Alberta with their families, they introduce fresh perspectives, expertise, and experiences. This growing infusion of diverse cultural elements strengthens our social cohesion, making Alberta

not merely a hub of economic promise but also a desirable place, where they can settle and raise a family.

Mr. Chair, 13 years ago I came to this beautiful province as an immigrant, a foreign-trained immigrant, one that had the dream of settling and thriving. Although I was not in the regulated professions, I still needed my foreign credentials recognized so that I could further my graduate studies, land the job that I wanted to, and build a life here in this province. I do relate to the many Albertans who are navigating through the system to have their international credentials recognized, study further, or work in their preferred industry, the industry they were trained on, and excel to their potentials. There's no doubt that both sides of the House agree that we need to address the existing barriers that immigrants with foreign credentials face. But we have disagreement in the how.

Mr. Chair, the UCP government passed the Fair Registration Practices Act in 2019. This is almost five years ago. Following that, in 2020 this government opened the fairness for newcomers office. The purpose of this office was to work with the regulatory bodies, again, to streamline, simplify, and accelerate their assessment of qualifications by eliminating barriers to registration, exactly the same mandate and purpose for why this committee is being created. So far this government has spent over \$4 million on this office.

The reality is that as I speak today, foreign-trained Albertans are continuously challenged by systemic barriers. The fact that a private member of this government has to introduce a bill to establish a foreign credential and advisory committee is a stark reflection of the government's failure to effectively address the barriers faced by foreign-trained newcomers in this province. The mere need for another bureaucratic body despite the existence of the fairness for newcomers office raises serious questions about the government's ability to address this problem, Mr. Chair. This is a government-appointed committee. The committee will be repealed after two years. I do not understand how this will improve the foreign credentialing problems.

I do engage many foreign-trained Albertans who are facing difficulties in having their qualifications recognized. Mr. Chair, on this side of the House, when we are engaging Albertans, we do it face to face; in person, to be precise. I understand that the Member for Grande Prairie, who is sponsoring the bill, Bill 203, was also engaging newcomers through an online survey. I guess it is the usual UCP government approach, whether it is CPP or Bill 203.

I've been listening to either stakeholders or individuals trying to navigate through the system, and they all agreed that the foreign credential recognition challenges and barriers did not change over the past five years. Last week, when I asked the Minister of Advanced Education about the worsening processing timelines for foreign credentials, her response was that "we have moved the needle" and that the timelines have improved significantly.

Mr. Chair, I've had a chance to read the government documents. According to the Ministry of Advanced Education business plan the key objective for the government is to strengthen and streamline the professional regulatory environment to reduce timelines and barriers to registration within professional occupations, but according to the same ministry's business plan application process time is taking longer than it was prior to the creation of the fairness for newcomers office. Foreign-trained newcomers do feel that the needle has not moved.

I've also looked into other available information to understand better. According to Stats Canada we have a record low of skilled worker retentions since 2016. What makes it even worse, Mr. Chair, is that we have a lower retention rate of skilled workers and skilled trades than British Columbia, which retains 67 per cent; than Ontario, which retains 81 per cent of their skilled workers; than

Quebec, which retains 91 per cent of their skilled workers that land there. Alberta is below all that. Also, we are lower than the Atlantic provinces of Canada for the most part.

Again, I want to reiterate that this government is not making a consequential improvement on foreign credentialing processes. The government prefers Band-Aid solutions to addressing the systemic challenges faced by newcomers. The government's initiatives have been insufficient, ineffective, and inefficient, leaving newcomers to bear the brunt of inadequate support systems. Mr. Chair, foreign-trained Albertans continue to struggle while the province also continues to struggle to find the much-needed workforce in many industries. According to the government's records labour contribution of new immigrants is dropping. In 2019 72 per cent of the newly added labour workforce was from landed immigrants. Despite increasing migration, this number has dropped to 56 per cent in 2022.

Mr. Chair, I have been engaging the settlement immigration services sector to understand what they think is the reason. One key issue that they all pointed out is the barriers to recognizing foreign credentials. This needs a bold decision that can address the problem in a timely manner.

3:20

Bill 203 does not offer any consequential improvement to relieve this bane. It doesn't provide solutions but provides another exercise of government bureaucratic exercise. This is a troubling pattern of incompetence and inefficiency within the current administration. This government has a lack of strategic vision, as can be seen, and it struggles to implement effective policies and programs to support foreign-trained Albertans. Recognizing foreign credentials requires a bold decision that can address the problem in a timely manner, Mr. Chair. The government must ensure that newcomers receive the support they need to contribute meaningfully to Alberta's workforce.

This government is failing to improve the recognition of foreign credentials, and here is what this government can do. The government should improve foreign credentials recognition by regulating the timelines. The government should increase access to low-interest financing and grants to credential upgrading. The government should improve the work of the fairness for newcomers office, which they created four years ago.

Mr. Chair, I will support Bill 203, but I also caution what the bill is not doing to streamline foreign credential recognition. It is not going to help in speeding up the processes, and it is not going to remove existing barriers. That being said, I want to give this government another chance.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has risen.

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Chair, I'm grateful to rise in support of my friend and colleague's Bill 203, the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act. This is a great initiative from the Member for Grande Prairie. We have all felt a strain that has been on the health care system, and it's not just in Alberta but across the whole country. We're seeing labour shortages in all industries and several key sectors such as health care, construction trades, home builders, and IT services, all expected to have labour shortages over 3,000 workers by 2030. We need a solution to this looming labour shortage, and the Member for Grande Prairie has brought forth a bill that will be essentially addressing it. By streamlining the credentialing recognition process, we can fortify vital sectors like

health care, technology while enhancing Alberta's appeal to skilled immigrants and strive to cut red tape and foster a welcoming environment.

This committee demonstrates our commitment to making Alberta a beacon of opportunity and prosperity. This bill is something that impacts all Albertans. My background is in trucking, and I know that many Albertans are involved in the trucking industry. They bring the food to our grocery stores, and when the shelves are empty, like they sometimes are, it's another sign of the impacts of a labour shortage.

Mr. Chair, we have faith that Bill 203, the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act, will be positive and affect the work environment in Alberta. Drawing parallels to Ontario's proposed Bill 6, which surfaced in 2022, we find a blueprint for what Alberta aims to achieve. Like that bill, Bill 203 seeks to establish a committee dedicated to improving the recognition of foreign credentials, fostering inclusivity, and driving prosperity. By learning from Ontario's initiatives, we can tailor our approach to suit Alberta's unique needs and aspirations. Although Ontario's legislation didn't come to fruition, it serves as a testament to the collective effort required to address this pressing issue. We can mirror Ontario's aspirations, but really Bill 203 charts its own course towards progress, Albertans poised to navigate this terrain with foresight and determination.

At the heart of Bill 203 lies the creation of the Alberta foreign credential advisory committee. This groundbreaking initiative aims to advocate for and recommend strategies to streamline our credentialing advisory system. By establishing such a committee, Alberta endeavours to gain a competitive edge in attracting and recognizing skilled workers' talents. Central to its mission is the review and enhancement of the rules governing foreign credentials recognition, particularly professions facing present and future labour shortages. Against the backdrop of a looming labour shortage, Bill 203 emerges as a beacon of hope. Occupations spanning health care, technology, education, and beyond face projected labour deficits by 2030. Recognizing this urgent need, Alberta is poised to harness the talents of foreign professionals to bridge these gaps and sustain our economy's vitality and momentum.

Diving deeper into this bill, we see the committee's mandate and membership structure tasked with facilitating credential recognition. The committee will evaluate existing legislation, study successful models from other provinces, and propose recommendations to the minister. This diverse membership, drawn from various ministries, professional bodies, ensures a holistic approach to tackling this multifaceted issue. The committee would be made up of 13 members from the following ministries: up to four seats, one of which would be the chair, from Immigration and Multiculturalism; up to four seats from Advanced Ed; up to three seats from Health; one seat from Jobs, Economy and Trade; and then one seat from Technology and Innovation. This committee would be the first of its kind in the nation and would give Alberta an advantage over other provinces when it comes to attracting and recognizing the talents of skilled workers.

The committee would review the rules that govern the recognition of foreign credentials and make recommendations on how to improve the credentials recognition process, especially for professions that are currently facing labour shortages and for those who are anticipating future labour shortages. As I touched on previously, several key economic sectors such as health care, construction, manufacturing, and Internet technology are expected to have a labour shortage of over 3,000 workers by 2030. Bill 203, if passed, would help Alberta proactively address the labour challenges the industry is facing.

Labour shortages have been hard on everyone, and in Grande Prairie it's been especially hard on the nursing industry. It's been tough to attract workers to move to rural northern Alberta, and I know similar sentiments are felt by my colleagues and by many fellow Albertans across the province. Our government has been bringing incentives and programs to help attract skilled workers to rural Albertans, and Bill 203, the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act, will be another way that we can do that. As a government it is our responsibility to try a diverse range of ways to help Albertans. We are going to have multiple lines in the water, and we won't keep all our eggs in the same basket.

Mr. Chair, our Conservative government was elected on a mandate to protect and strengthen the economy and the health care system. These were key promises, and I'm proud to say that we have been following through. Bill 203 will be yet another way for us to continue to live up to these commitments. Bill 203 will bridge the gap of the labour shortage by helping to give us better representation to all people of Alberta. I cannot see why any member would disagree with Bill 203. This bill will help newcomers to Canada as well as the rest of Alberta. Newcomers will also be able to more easily find ways to integrate and find good-paying jobs. This is an important step to take in addressing the labour shortages across this province.

3:30

Mr. Chair, today, as we debate Bill 203, the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act, let's reflect on what we know. It is clear that we are in the middle of a labour shortage. Many key sectors are expecting their need to keep growing. The purpose of this bill is to create an Alberta foreign credential advisory committee that will advocate for and make recommendations to create a more streamlined, efficient credentialing advisory system. This groundbreaking initiative not only underscores our commitment to diversity but also positions Alberta as a front-runner in attracting and recognizing the talents of skilled workers.

At the core of this committee's mandate lies the commitment to review and enhance the rules governing the recognition of foreign credentials. By meticulously evaluating our current processes, we aim to streamline and improve the credentialing recognition system, particularly for professions facing present or anticipated labour shortages. Through analysis and strategic recommendations we'll pave the way for a more efficient and equitable path forward for skilled workers to contribute to our society and economy. Bill 203, Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act, is a key step to securing the future of Alberta and making sure that Albertans get the resources and the help when they need it.

Mr. Chair, it's because of that that I encourage all members of this House to join me in supporting Bill 203. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Calgary-Beddington has risen to speak.

Ms Chapman: Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 203, Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act. Actually, one of the things I like best about this job is how many new things I get to learn about. The issue of foreign credentialing: it's not something we hear too much about directly in my constituency office. Of course, in general, you know, it's part of the public zeitgeist; that's for sure. But I got to do a lot of reading and research and looking back on the history of what we've done in Alberta on this file.

In looking at this bill in particular, Bill 203, I did a quick media scan to see what came up, and, gosh, my hopes were raised on this

bill, a groundbreaking initiative. Yeah. That's what I heard it was going to be. This was a news article from *My Grande Prairie Now*: Grande Prairie MLA Seeks Public Engagement regarding Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Bill. This was an article published March 6 by Ethan Montague, and I'm happy to table this article when we're in the Legislature tomorrow. Here are a couple of quotes from the article. Bill 203, which was tabled by the Member for Grande Prairie last winter, has "the goal of 'streamlining' the process new Alberta residents go through in order to find a job." In the article the Member for Grande Prairie went on to say that "his bill seeks to 'remove the red tape' involved in the credentialing process for foreign workers in Alberta." That does sound pretty good.

Another article, from *EverythingGP*. This article: GP MLA Launches Campaign on Foreign Credential Recognition System. This is another article published on March 6, by Nathaniel Leigh. In this article the Member for Grande Prairie "has launched Better for Newcomers to encourage discussion around Bill 203 . . . which would create an Alberta Foreign Credential Advisory Committee to streamline the recognition system for newcomers." The Member for Grande Prairie went on to say that Bill 203 "would help address labour challenges around health care, construction, manufacturing and more."

Even though, as I said, this isn't a major issue that's raised in my constituency office, it is something that is very much a part of the public consciousness. I'm very aware that folks who are dealing with this issue are exactly the folks who actually don't have time to come into my constituency office to chat with my staff. You know, they don't even have time to make a phone call or send an e-mail, and why is that? Well, it's because they're working multiple jobs. They have to work multiple jobs, and that's just to make ends meet. I know that there are many, many, many folks in the riding of Calgary-Beddington who have to do that. They're doing day shifts and night shifts, and that's just to pay for the basics, right? That's rent, groceries, insurance, phone bill, the outrageous utility bills they've been paying due to, of course, the UCP's mismanagement of the electricity file. They're working these multiple jobs just to scrape by, and there's nothing left for something simple like dinner out, family vacation.

I know for folks who have been working professionals in other countries, you know, who've gone through those years of education and training: for many of them it can come as a shock – and, honestly, it's a bit of a slap in the face to these folks – how complicated it is for them to work in the field that they've studied and worked in for years and sometimes decades. We do know this is a major issue facing newcomers to Canada, and we also know that we have a lack of skilled workers right here in Alberta, particularly in areas like child care and health care.

Again, reading those news clips about Bill 203, I was really excited about this, the groundbreaking developments here to see what kind of approach the government was planning to take on this file. I mean, unfortunately, it turned out that the Member for Grande Prairie was just wildly inflating what his proposed bill will actually do.

There's nothing in the bill to streamline the recognition system for newcomers. There is nothing in the bill that addresses labour challenges. What there is is just another bureaucratic body, and this is in addition to a bureaucratic body that was already created four years ago, the fairness for newcomers office. I mean, this raised some serious questions for me about the government's ability to address foreign credentialing. We want to create this committee, another bureaucratic body, and its mandate just doesn't get anywhere close to taking the real action that we need, I think, to address the issue of foreign credentialing.

What is the mandate of the committee? Well, they're going to review existing legislation, they're going to evaluate some processes, look for some best practice stuff in other jurisdictions in Canada, and they're going to make recommendations to the minister. To me, it kind of sounds like a plan to make a plan.

The committee is going to have members appointed by cabinet ministers, so 13 hand-picked committee members. I was talking about this this morning, actually, with the practicum student in my office, who raised some really great questions to me, which are: who, right? Who is the government, who are these ministers going to be recruiting to be on the committee? Will there be members on there from the professional regulatory bodies? Those are the bodies that we need to work with to have real action on this file, I think, to really make a difference in foreign credentialing here in Alberta.

Will there be any members on this committee who have lived experience? Will we have any newcomers, recent or otherwise? I mean, we know there are newcomers who aren't even newcomers to Canada, you know, some who've been here for decades who are still unable to work in their fields. Are we going to see members like that on this committee? What's the transparency around this, right? How will this government ensure transparency, and how will we avoid bias in the members assigned to this committee? We don't see any answers on that in this bill.

I did have a chance to reflect on the striking of committees. You know, the House may remember that I had the occasion to present a private member's bill in this House in the fall, and that was a bill where part of it was looking for a committee. It was requesting the government to return transparency – of course, that was the key feature – to class size and composition, but it also included and asked to strike a committee to provide regular feedback on issues in education such as classroom complexity, changing technologies.

At the time two of the members opposite shared some, you know, really clear thoughts on the idea of striking a committee. They were very opposed to the idea of a new committee. They felt that there was a ministry in place that was already able to do the work. It was the Member for Calgary-Bow who said, on this committee to research and analyze information, that

you know, we have some really fantastic individuals that work within the Ministry.

Right?

I know they [already] spend a lot of their time doing precisely that type of work, so I'm not sure why we need a committee to replicate a lot of the work that's already occurring within the ministry.

Oh, the Member for West Yellowhead also spoke against, saying, you know:

They don't need more reports. [We] don't need more commissions . . . They need money put in classrooms.

This one's not about classrooms, but let's just substitute programs in there, right? They need money put into programs.

And this bill does nothing to address [that] . . . It's creating another panel. It's creating another committee.

Interesting turn of events, and I do wonder how those members opposite feel about the creation of just another committee given how opposed they were to the creation of a committee that, like this committee, would have had a focus on best practices.

3:40

I also wanted to mention, too – you know, I hate to be cynical, but I did notice after I had done that media scan and looked at those pieces from Grande Prairie news that the main focus on them seemed to be to drive folks to a survey. Of course, this isn't a government bill; it's a private member's bill. So we weren't driving the public to be filling out a survey, giving feedback to the government. No; we were, I mean, looking like we were just doing

a little data mining for the UCP caucus here. So that's an approach that they can take, for sure.

As I mentioned, I was pleased to speak to this bill because it did give me this chance to do some learning about this government's approach to foreign credentialing. As it turns out, this government has already had a performative piece of work on this file.

Oh, my gosh, that went very quick. Thank you, Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Any others wishing to make comment? The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Today I am happy to stand and speak in support of Bill 203, the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act. I would like to commend the Member for Grande Prairie for bringing this timely, important piece of legislation before the House. It is my hope that passage of Bill 203 will mark a pivotal moment in Alberta's journey towards a more inclusive, prosperous, and globally competitive workforce.

It is no longer a matter for debate – and I'm sure that the members opposite would agree with me – that Alberta stands as a beacon of opportunity, prosperity, and an unparalleled destination for those seeking to live, work, and raise a family. Our province boasts stunning landscapes, vibrant, friendly communities, and a robust economy that continues to thrive amidst global challenges. As a result, we are witnessing an influx of immigrants and Canadians from other provinces, drawn by the promise of a better life and boundless opportunities.

Yet amid this influx we must acknowledge a critical reality. Many of these newcomers bring with them invaluable skills, talents, and experiences acquired abroad. They are nurses, engineers, teachers, and IT professionals armed with foreign credentials and a wealth of knowledge waiting to be harnessed. However, the journey to integration into our workforce often proves to be a daunting one marked by bureaucratic red tape and lengthy credential recognition processes. We live in a competitive world, and we need to optimize the skills and education of all our citizens.

In sectors such as health care, information technology, and education, where shortages are becoming increasingly pronounced, the need to expedite the integration of skilled professionals with foreign credentials has never been more urgent. We cannot afford to squander the talents of these individuals, nor can we ignore the immense value they bring to our society. Recent trends in remote work and technological advancements have made the labour market increasingly fluid and dynamic. We must adapt and respond swiftly to these changes to ensure that Alberta remains at the forefront of innovation and economic growth.

Some people in my constituency and within this House will be aware that I am married to a new Canadian from Latin America. As such, a great deal of my social and family life involves not just members of the broader Latin American community but among other new Canadians. These interactions have given me an intimate window into the challenges and frustrations faced by too many of our highly educated and skilled neighbours.

I've heard of the medical doctor from Colombia who used to supervise and mentor several other new doctors in his medical clinic in Bogotá and who, since coming to Alberta, has had to support his family as a lab technician or the woman from Romania with a five-year bachelor's degree and a master's degree in pharmacology, with decades of experience as a pharmacist and even an inspector over other pharmacists in her native country, who now stocks shelves as a pharmacist assistant because she cannot afford the two-year program required to write the Canadian pharmacists exam, or the woman with a five-year bachelor's teaching degree and a master's

degree in education from the acknowledged world's highest ranked education faculty in the Spanish world, 30 years' teaching experience, who is required by our very own Department of Education to either take a brand new four-year education bachelor's degree or a two-year master's degree in order to teach primary school in Calgary.

Recently I had the privilege of engaging in conversations with a taxi driver. To my surprise, this hard-working individual had foreign qualifications experience in fields where we are experiencing acute shortages. Imagine, if you will, a taxi driver with a medical degree from a prestigious university overseas or a delivery driver with a background in computer science. These individuals possess the skills, knowledge, and expertise that could significantly bolster our health care system or can contribute to the development of our technology sector, yet due to barriers in credential recognition find themselves relegated to jobs that do not fully recognize their potential.

As we discuss Bill 203, we must remember the faces and stories behind the statistics; these are real people. Let us commit ourselves to enacting meaningful change to ensuring that no more dreams are left unfulfilled or delayed unnecessarily. In passing this bill, we have the power to create a more equitable, inclusive, and compassionate society. We can pave the way for skilled professionals with foreign credentials to integrate seamlessly into our workforce, to contribute their talents to our communities, and to build a brighter future for all. Bill 203 is not about lowering standards or compromising the integrity of our credentialing processes; rather, it is about streamlining and enhancing these processes to ensure that skilled professionals with foreign credentials can integrate into our workforce swiftly and seamlessly.

At its core Bill 203 seeks to establish the Alberta foreign credential advisory committee, a pioneering initiative that will champion the cause of skilled professionals whose credentials earned abroad too often go unrecognized and underutilized in our province. This committee, comprising diverse voices from key sectors of our government, will spearhead efforts to streamline and enhance the recognition process for foreign credentials, especially in professions facing current or anticipated labour shortages. By establishing the Alberta foreign credential advisory committee, we are taking a proactive approach to address this pressing issue. This committee, composed of experts from various ministries, will undertake a vital task of reviewing legislation, evaluating best practices from other jurisdictions, and making recommendations aimed at making Alberta more prosperous by facilitating the recognition of foreign credentials in targeted professions.

The urgency of this bill cannot be overstated, especially considering the looming labour shortages forecasted in critical sectors such as health care, technology, and education. Registered nurses, information system analysts, computer programmers, and many other professionals are in high demand, yet their path to meaningful employment in Alberta is obstructed by bureaucratic hurdles. By reducing these hurdles and expediting the credential recognition process, we are sending a clear message to skilled professionals world-wide: Alberta is open for business, and we welcome your expertise with open arms. This in turn will not only attract top talent to our province but also contribute to the growth and diversification of our economy.

The benefits of this bill extend beyond the realm of skilled professionals. By creating pathways for integration with high-skilled sectors such as health care, IT, and education, we are alleviating pressures on our labour market and creating space for workers to thrive.

In conclusion, let us seize this opportunity to enact meaningful change, to break down barriers, and to unlock the full potential of

skilled professionals with foreign credentials such as a taxi driver. Let us ensure that Alberta remains a shining example of prosperity, innovation, and opportunity for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kasawski: You know, we here in the Alberta NDP: we know that newcomers aren't just looking to find a job; they're looking to build a life here. The Alberta NDP is committed to helping newcomer families build a better future here in Alberta, and I'm happy to support this bill because I think it's going to help with that.

You know, we've had a lot of Ukrainians arriving here in Alberta. It's been a rather haphazard experience, really held together by the efforts and good hearts of so many Albertans, especially in Sherwood Park. There's been over 250,000 Ukrainians in the past two years that have come to Canada. It's estimated that before this horrible war with Putin is over, another 700,000 may be arriving in Canada. In Alberta we've had as many as 31,000 that have arrived in probably over 190 communities.

In places like Sherwood Park we have organizations like Sleep in Heavenly Peace that have done their part to find beds and homes and clothing and connections for these newcomers, and it's what we'll continue to do. But there's so much more that needs to be done for our newcomers, and when we're looking at it, it's going to come down to one of the important steps we can take: to help them with the credentials, the experience that they have from their homeland.

3:50

In my own family it was my grandfather that came here from Poland, and I can only contemplate the incredible and daunting experience that must have been for so many people like him that come from another country and then arrive here. For the Ukrainian refugees that have been coming here and other newcomers to Canada like them, this daunting challenge, I'm sure, can feel very overwhelming due to the hurdles they face, including just trying to secure employment and build a life here. But we all know it doesn't have to be that way. With the right support for newcomers we can support their challenges and try and help them overcome the difficulties so that they can have that success that we want them to have in Canada, that our ancestors had, that our grandparents had, that our parents have, that some of us have been having in this country.

One of the main obstacles facing the Ukrainian refugees trying to secure employment in Canada has just been even the language barrier. The nice thing about that is that it's a barrier that can be overcome through language training, cultural orientation and other supportive measures, and just spending time in the country. Newcomers also find challenges just navigating the job market here and the norms that go along with how you get a job here, the applications. Cultures differ, and what works in one country may not be effective in our country. You know, we're known for being a welcoming place. There are unconscious biases and discrimination, I'm sure, that are happening in the job application process. The good news is that there are many resources available to help newcomers to learn the ropes and better understand the nuances.

Fortunately, there are government organizations, there are nongovernmental organizations to work to address this. Libraries become an amazing resource for this, that we use to connect with all of our various communities so that newcomers know they can go to the library and they can find resources and get connected with the resources they need to adjust to how you find employment. There are employment professionals. There are services that are run to help newcomers understand the Canadian labour market. How

do you get a job here? How do you tailor your resumé? What do you do for interview preparation? What is the process of getting that job? What are the insights into securing your employment so that you can build that life here in Canada?

Another major challenge is the lack of recognition for foreign credentials. We have many highly qualified professionals who have moved to Canada. Some good stories have been told by other members of the House on both sides about the challenges when you have these credentials and this experience and then you come to Canada and you come to Alberta, and they are not recognized. There are so many other obstacles that I've identified between language and culture, lack of connection, and then you have this experience that you want to apply and use to work here and then you're barred from it or there are difficulties in getting recognized for it. They're starting from scratch. They have to requalify for their professions. It must be such a daunting thing for an immigrant here: all these significant difficulties, the language, the culture, the loneliness of a new place.

You want to work. You're resourceful; you use the resources available to us. You find a position to apply for. You go, you find a way to actually get in with the interview. You know you've got the experience, the education and training from your homeland to do the work; you've done the work in another country. To get the job, you go through the interview process, maybe even have a connection, and the employer: they want to hire you. They just need to check your credentials to make sure that you can do the job. Everything has been followed up until that point. Then you bring your credentials – maybe it's your university degree; maybe it's your trade certificate; maybe it's past experience – from your homeland, HR checks them, and, unfortunately, they cannot hire you. What a debilitating experience. We want to try and find ways to avoid that for our newcomers so that the employer who wants to hire them can and that those who want to work get to do the work.

The purpose of this bill is to establish this Alberta foreign credentials advisory committee tasked with advocating for a more efficient system to assess and recognize foreign credentials. I'm very supportive of that. However, the bill will form another UCP committee, and I just have to say as the opposition that it's something that I'm a little suspicious of. It's a government-controlled platform, and I worry that it will be used to push an agenda without considering what's best for the people, for the employers.

This bill doesn't give any clear deadline for recognizing foreign credentials, and I'm worried we're only going to create confusion and delays of those things to get the qualifications recognized. As members here already have mentioned, there are some government bodies in place already that are working on this task. How will this addition of a new committee be what's going to just make it so much easier for the newcomers coming to Canada? We've seen that with UC boards and committees, they have often been places that are created for cronies to get roles and money from the government.

We saw in the fall with Bill 5 and Bill 8 from this government, really, an unleashing of the opportunity for bribing MLAs in the government and also of the ability for ministers to appoint who they want for whatever compensation they want onto government boards and committees. Creating another board and committee just creates that room for more UCP cronies to get a role within the government. What are the checks and balances that are going to make sure that we actually do the good work to get newcomers to come to Canada to have the opportunity for their credentials to be recognized so they can do the work and employers can employ them?

Perhaps there is concern for this private member's bill that has come forward because maybe the private member is concerned that there has been a stark contrast between the desire of the government to help newcomers and what actually gets done, so perhaps this

feeling that we put in a new board and committee, and that's what makes the difference for newcomers coming to Canada. The mere need for this additional bureaucratic body, you know, despite the existence of the fairness for newcomers office, raises serious questions about the government's ability to manage and govern this file on foreign credentials.

I'm curious about how many more committees and councils we can expect to come through private members' bills into this House. How many more of your cronies need to have roles on boards and committees? There's a lack of strategic vision and co-ordination amongst all the parts and moving parts of the government coming from the governance of this group, so you seem to struggle to implement effective policies and programs that will support newcomers. We want what you want; newcomers want it. We're all moving in the same direction. We at least want to move in the direction, and we hope that you can find an effective way to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

4:00

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased today to rise to speak in support of my colleague's Bill 203, the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act. This legislation, if passed, will impact the lives of many new Albertans that have come to partake in the Alberta advantage. Our province continues to welcome people with open arms, and we have done some tremendous work when it comes to recognizing foreign credentials and integrating skilled workers with a diverse array of expertise accredited internationally. However, with Bill 203 enacted, Alberta's recognition of foreign credentials will elevate from great to outstanding as an Alberta foreign credential advisory committee would advocate for and make recommendations to create a more streamlined and efficient credential advisory system.

The detailed mandate of the committee ensures the recognition of foreign credentials in Alberta by reviewing how legislation and other rules govern the recognition of foreign credentials in Alberta. The committee will also evaluate the process in other jurisdictions in Canada in order to determine areas of success in said jurisdictions. Finally, by making recommendations after deliberation within the committee to the allotted minister, which will make Alberta more prosperous by not only improving the process for recognizing foreign credentials in Alberta but also facilitating the recognition of foreign credentials within certain professions and those with current and anticipated labour shortages.

Through this we will be able to address labour shortages in specific fields that some business owners are facing to ensure the talents of skilled workers are recognized. As we know, moving into a new country can be a challenging decision. With uncertainty many newcomers also have to deal with the fear that their foreign credentials may not be recognized and accepted. Despite possessing expertise and qualifications that are often in demand within our workforce, these newcomers sometimes face barriers that can prevent them from fully utilizing their skills and being active contributors to our economy and society. Throughout Bill 203 people across the globe can look to Alberta to find opportunities and thrive in our incredible province.

The Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act aims to address issues by reviewing the rules that govern the recognition of foreign credentials and make recommendations on how to improve the process for recognizing foreign credentials, especially for professions with current and anticipated labour shortages. The crucial role that this committee will play is evident. In the third

quarter of 2023 international migration added almost 40,000 net new residents to our province. Many of these individuals are skilled workers looking for new opportunities. Streamlining the credential recognition process will help relieve many stressors that international skilled workers face when moving to Alberta, ensuring that they too have a fair opportunity to work in their fields and access employment opportunities that align with their skills.

As our province grows, there are also many integral long-term impacts that this committee will have. A successful streamlined process for recognizing foreign credentials could have an impact on our health care system. Faster credential recognition means more skilled workers within a system that is integral to all Albertans, our hospitals, and clinics. Having more hands on deck in our hospitals can mean more resources to have well-maintained health services. Several key sectors such as health care, construction, manufacturing, and Internet technology are expected to have a labour shortage of over 3,000 workers by 2030.

Bill 203, if passed, will mean that Alberta will have the tools to proactively address the labour challenges these industries are facing. The committee would be made up of 13 members recommended by the ministries of Health; Advanced Education; Jobs, Economy and Trade; Technology and Innovation; and Immigration and Multiculturalism, which would ensure we have a breadth of perspectives guiding the committee's decisions.

This legislation will not only be beneficial for our newcomers, but this will also impact our province as a whole. Furthermore, the establishment of the foreign credential advisory committee sends a clear message to newcomers that their talents and contributions are valued and welcomed in our province. It will attract more talent to contribute to and enhance Alberta's economic landscape, which will inevitably encourage a prosperous and thriving community. It demonstrates our commitment to supporting their successful integration into our communities and to ensuring that qualified and hard-working people, regardless of their background, can reach their full potential. While the previous NDP government caused people to leave the province for greener pastures, under our UCP government people from around the world are seeing the opportunity and momentum in Alberta, and this bill will help to ensure that they're able to take advantage of these opportunities and contribute meaningfully to our booming economy.

My colleague the Member for Grande Prairie is also committed to ensuring that Albertans and newcomers have a voice to contribute to the development of Bill 203 and has launched betterfornewcomers.ca to hear directly from Albertans. I encourage all those interested to fill out the survey from this website so that together we can make the system better for newcomers and all Albertans.

By working with Albertans, this bill can ensure that more needs are met and the lives of new Albertans are improved for generations to come. We have attracted international investors, international talent, and international skilled workers, and we want to keep that message alive and clear. Through bills such as this, we are letting the world know that Alberta is the place to call home. We continue to ensure our economy is diverse, vibrant, and open for all to partake in.

With that being said, I'd like to encourage all members of this Chamber to support Bill 203, the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act, and let us continue to take steps forward, breaking down barriers, encouraging skilled workers, and harnessing the talents of all individuals who choose to make our province home. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm proud to rise in the House – I'm not sure if this is my first time this term – to speak to this Bill 203, Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act, on behalf of my constituents and newcomers and immigrants I have been speaking to in the past. This issue has been very close to my heart in a number of ways, not because I just have represented this file in the past term but due to my experience and daily basis conversations with the newcomer community members and the stakeholders, looking for the solution to this very problem.

Before I actually comment on my point of view on this private member's bill, I really wanted to commend or appreciate the efforts of the Member for Grande Prairie for bringing forward the bill that somehow mentions that his aim is focused on addressing the foreign credentials in this province. I'm saying this because I have been hearing this for the past almost five years. This is not the very first time we are discussing the language or the words that they call foreign credentials problems, right?

I'm surprised to see this bill. When I was looking, I was going through the bill and seeing what this is proposing. I know the Member for Grande Prairie. It's his first term. He was not part of the previous government. That is the reason I appreciated his effort. But the government members and the majority of government ministers and the same minister who sits on this file was part of the last government. We had discussed this bill, foreign credentialing, and we as the Official Opposition gave our feedback on that. We gave feedback that it was not happening enough to address that very issue, the solutions that people are looking for. And here we are, after four years of that conversation and after four years of passing that bill and that act, that didn't go anywhere. I can see, like, what it is doing. I can go through, you know; I can easily spend time on this, 15 minutes, explaining what this bill is going to do.

4:10

But more than that, you know, I'm pretty sad to see this. Foreign credentials and newcomers are being used once again for politics. That's pretty bad. When we were discussing this bill last time, we were talking about red tape, all the regulatory processes and private and government organizations, and they didn't bring forward any timelines to do it.

By proposing this bill to form another advisory committee, that will be formed after receiving royal assent to this act, that committee will bring a recommendation report one year after being formed, after the royal assent. The report: the government will look into it, what those recommendations are, if they're going to move on that or not. Simply, you are deferring or pushing the issue back. You're not trusting to listen to the people, to their day-to-day challenges and problems, their contributions to our province and our economy and our society. You're not serious about that.

This is not a political statement. I would have the same argument if we had been discussing the same situation with any other government, but I know that the other government wouldn't do this. We had an NDP government for four years, and there was progress on this. We didn't come up with absolute solutions to that, but we moved forward. Looking at that progress in the last five years, when you see the contrast, this government is not interested at all.

I can ask questions, like: who did you consult, and what did people tell you? But looking at this bill, I can tell you clearly that you didn't consult anyone, so you actually really need help. I can organize a town hall tomorrow morning, and you will see what people are saying and what the actual issue is with immigration and foreign credentials.

Immigration policies had been changed long ago when Jason Kenney was the immigration minister in the federal government, when they changed their direction from the humanitarian,

compassionate grounds, the family cases. People would come, sponsor their fiancées, spouses, and that doesn't even happen anymore. That's about 20 years ago. The immigration policies were moved towards more temporary foreign workers' arrival in Canada. Get all the benefits from them that they have, the skills they would bring in, the money they would bring in, but not give them back anything in return.

Unfortunately, that hasn't changed federally, but it's worse to see the provincial governments, like this UCP government, not willing to help those very people. For the last 20 years the people are moving to this country through very different opportunity streams, express entries where they qualify with their educational skills. The majority of that, you know, immigration platform or file or the program has turned into, clearly, a money-making, profitable business. There is a CIMM report. There is Canada statistics. You can see that the heavy immigration is happening through the international students. The international students are being told that if you come into Canada to achieve higher education here, you will find the pathway to be part of this society, to live here and build your life here. To do this, the other beautiful thing they do: they do 4 to 5 times of the postsecondary increases that our kids pay. The government has doubled down on that too, the provincial governments. What did we see? Cuts in postsecondary budgets, about three-quarter billion dollars of cuts to postsecondaries, postsecondary institutions heavily relying on increasing seats of international students to pick up their expenses.

My time is over?

The Deputy Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Deol: I will speak next time. I have a lot to say on this. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Are there others wishing to speak? The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Rowswell: Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the greatest things that makes Alberta the best place in the world to live, work, and start a business is our ability to attract the best and the brightest from all over the world. This ensures that Alberta continues to lead the way and guarantees that our job creators have all the resources they need to grow. I'm proud of every day that I get to put in an honest day's work, and I am proud to support Albertans from all over the world who wish to do the same and fully utilize the credentials that they have trained, at times many years, to do. This is why I will be supporting my colleague from Grande Prairie's private member's Bill 203, the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act. The purpose of this bill, if it is to pass, will be to create an Alberta foreign credential advisory committee to advocate for and make recommendations to create a more streamlined and efficient foreign credential recognition system.

There are many sectors, Mr. Chair, that are facing tremendous pressures due to labour shortages. These include in the health care, construction, manufacturing, and Internet technology sectors, amongst others. Each of these sectors will be critical in ensuring that Alberta continues to lead in the growth of our economy and to be able to support the evolving health care needs of our loved ones. There is already forecasted to be a shortage of 3,000 workers by 2030 in the province in these key sectors, and we need to make sure that these vacancies are filled. This bill acts to proactively address these challenges.

If we have folks in our province that have the ability and the qualifications to do this work, I think it is a wasted opportunity for

our province not to fully utilize it as well as for the workers to do the work that they trained hard for, are fully qualified elsewhere to do, and, most importantly, do the work that they want to do. This is why I am here, Mr. Chair: to advocate on behalf of my constituents and to make sure that those that have the drive to work hard and to be successful in Alberta have the ability to do so. This is why I support private member's Bill 203, the Foreign Credentials Advisory Committee Act, and I encourage all those in this Chamber to do the same.

If passed, the Alberta foreign credential advisory committee that would be created would consist of 13 members from the ministries of Immigration and Multiculturalism; Advanced Education; Health; Jobs, Economy and Trade; as well as Technology and Innovation.

Furthermore, Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to see that the Member for Grande Prairie has begun broad outreach to all Albertans on this matter by launching the website betterfornewcomers.ca to allow anyone interested to fill out a short survey on Alberta's foreign credential recognition system and Bill 203. I'm proud of the work being done to make the system even better for newcomers, and I encourage all those interested in the subject to participate in the survey.

4:20

This committee would give Alberta an apparent advantage over other provinces in our ability to attract talented workers from all over the world and to fully recognize their talent. It would act to achieve its mandate by reviewing legislation and other rules, including those established by professional regulatory organizations that govern the recognition of foreign credentials in Alberta, evaluating the process in place in other jurisdictions in Canada to advance the recognition of foreign credentials and identify areas of success, and make recommendations to the minister, in accordance with section 7, that in the opinion of the committee would make Alberta more prosperous by improving the process for recognizing foreign credentials in Alberta and facilitating the recognition of foreign credentials in specific professions with current and anticipated labour shortages. The creation of this committee will ensure that diverse opinions from a wide variety of sectors are heard and allow for multiple viewpoints and approaches, achieving its intended purpose.

With Alberta proactively and decisively acting to ensure that we lead the way on this issue, it will also ensure that Alberta doesn't lose skilled workers to other provinces that may also eventually bring forward similar legislation. Mr. Chair, I don't believe that there's been a more important time to ensure that these critical sectors are fully staffed with qualified workers to ensure that these vital needs are met, and I'm also pleased to see Alberta once again leading the way in this innovative action as well. If this Chamber is to pass Bill 203, not only will we lead the way but this would also make Alberta a preferred destination for skilled workers who would like to fully apply their trades.

Mr. Chair, I'm proud to stand as an MLA in this Chamber, standing firm in my commitment to make absolute sure that Alberta is and remains the best jurisdiction in the world to live and work in, and I absolutely believe that Bill 203 would continue with this important work. It's because of all these reasons that I will be voting to support private member's Bill 203, the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act, and I encourage all Members of this Legislative Assembly to do so as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any others wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Pleasure to, for the first time in this session, rise in the Legislature to speak to private member's Bill 203. I will begin by saying that I will be voting in favour of this bill because it is better to do something than nothing, but it is disappointing how little this government has actually done in terms of addressing this issue for newcomers to Alberta.

There is no question that we must find better ways to ensure that people that come here to live in our province, to build a life here are able to use the skills and training that they have gained. Indeed, that was the view of the former Premier and leader of this party that is currently in government Mr. Jason Kenney when in March 2020 he announced that, if elected, his government would implement an ambitious plan to knock down unfair barriers to the full economic inclusion of immigrants to the province while maintaining Alberta's high professional standards. Indeed, he said: we will implement our fairness for newcomers action plan.

Fast-forward to June 2020: this government introduced the Fair Registration Practices Act. They said that it would establish a fair registration practices code, a fair registration practices office, that they would work with regulatory bodies to address this issue. They said that they were taking action, and they were saying that it wasn't the only thing they were going to do; it was only going to be the first step in taking real action to address this problem. They campaigned on it, and I'll say this, Mr. Chair: they were smart to campaign on it because newcomers to Alberta are a growing population. This is a real concern that we need to address because it directly impacts the economic opportunities we have here in the province. We are letting people who could be contributing to our economy, who could be doing great things in this province sit idle. Their skills are going unused.

This government said that they were going to fix that. The minister of labour at the time, Mr. Jason Copping, said that the office would reduce red tape that was associated with the assessment of foreign credentials. He said that it would be responsible for reviewing registration practices of regulated professions to make recommendations to regulated professions about how to improve their own compliance. They'd be responsible for advising regulated professions, government agencies, community organizations, postsecondary educational institutions, and third parties.

Mr. Chair, this office was intended to do what they are now forming another committee to do again four years later. While I cannot criticize the Member for Grande Prairie for bringing forward the bill to get it done, I can certainly criticize the fact that this government failed to do it for four years while they have a funded government office in place to do the job. A government that is apparently dedicated to cutting red tape has to create another advisory committee to do the job they said they were going to do four years ago.

Again, Mr. Chair, if that is what we have to do to actually get this government to do what they said they were going to do, well, I'll vote in support of this bill, but unfortunately the track record on this is not particularly good. No; the Premier at the time said: "Our goal is to put all Albertans back to work. We hear too often about doctors being taxi drivers. We are therefore taking steps to ensure that newcomers' credentials are assessed objectively and in a timely manner."

Mr. Chair, we, sadly, still have doctors driving taxis because this government has failed to make any notable progress. Now, of course, they did manage to perhaps convince some doctors to leave doctoring and go to drive taxis under their four years of attacks on doctors in this province, when they drove many out of the profession and out of the province, but they have a much less successful record going the other way.

Now, this is a government, Mr. Chair, that frequently, I think every year, holds a fairness for newcomers summit. They bring everyone together, and they talk about the action they're going to take. That action so far has amounted to putting a rule in place that lets folks know how long the first stage of their application might take. That is the sole accomplishment of the fairness for newcomers registration act. That is almost all they have accomplished with the establishment of the fairness for newcomers office, and four years later one of their own MLAs has to stand up in this House and create a new committee to do the job that they have failed to do.

Now, this is a disappointment. This is very disappointing, Mr. Chair. I mean, of course, we know this is a government that doesn't tend to keep the promises that it ran on. We've seen that recently when this government's first election promise was to cut taxes for Albertans, and of course now they've said: well, we can't actually accomplish that for at least two years, and it won't actually be in place until, hey, coincidentally it's time to campaign for the next election.

Now, Mr. Chair, there are real, concrete things that this government could be doing right now that don't require a committee, that don't require more consultation – and we know what this government's record is like on consultation. There are real, concrete things they could do, and indeed we proposed a number of things in the run-up to the last election. We put forward some policy platform commitments, things like revamping the Alberta advantage immigration program, creating faster access to target skilled workers, health care workers, international students educated in Alberta and Canada.

This government, Mr. Chair, has elected in their most recent budget to increase those costs. They raised educational assessment fees for the INP program, making it \$400 more expensive for people to immigrate to Alberta. No actual action to make it easier other than one of their members having to introduce a private member's bill to create an advisory committee to give them a little elbow in the ribs to do the work that they swore they were going to do four years ago.

We committed we'd create a streamlined dashboard to provide clear information for everyone. We have a fairness for newcomers office. So far, again, they have taken the step of ensuring that everyone gets clear information within six months of the first stage of their application; it's opaque after that. This government could be taking action to provide more clarity in every other step of the process. Instead, they're going to create an advisory committee and kick the ball down the road.

We committed to improve foreign credential recognition by regulating timelines, increasing access to low-interest financing and grants for credential upgrading. There is a concrete action this government could take today. They could work to actually enhance the fairness for newcomers office, ensure real transparency and fairness in the regulated professions. Not one new dollar, Mr. Chair, in this current budget for the fairness for newcomers office. Instead, we will have an advisory committee appointed by the government.

4:30

We committed to significantly increase support and eligibility for all settlement services, including language training, education, credentialing, employment, support resource hubs, community navigators to help match people with necessary services, and engage the federal government to help fund those services fully. Those are concrete steps this government could take today. We have folks in the community who are doing important work, helping people on these fronts. They are struggling, Mr. Chair. This government has a budget in front of it. They could have increased

funding for these settlement agencies to help people navigate these systems. Instead, they are striking an advisory committee.

Again, Mr. Chair, it is better to do something than nothing. This government has largely done nothing for four years. Now we see a small step being taken here, which, again, I will vote in favour of because it's better to do something. But I will say that this government's track record on advisory committees is not encouraging.

I think of the EMS advisory committee that went about the province for a number of months at a time when EMS was in crisis, delivered a full report, a number of recommendations, very few of which have yet to actually be implemented. Instead, what we got was some duct tape and baling wire to try to cover over the crisis to get us through the election, and now we're kind of right back where we started because this is a government that has repeatedly demonstrated that even when they strike the advisory committee, they aren't terribly interested in actually listening to what folks have to say or, in fact, actually taking much action on it.

But, again, Mr. Chair, I will vote in favour of this bill in hopes that this may be the first step towards seeing some real, actual action from this iteration of the UCP government because we still go out in the community every day, talk with folks who have degrees and all kinds of different skills who want to contribute here in the province of Alberta, who want to have that opportunity, who have so much to offer but are being held back. This is a government that had committed that they were going to do something about it. It's my sincere hope that maybe this advisory committee will finally get them to do that.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Chair. It's an honour and a privilege again to rise once more in this Chamber and even more so on private members' day. Some folks don't like Mondays. Us private members here: we love Mondays, hey? This is the day when private members get to do private member business, which is outside the government, obviously, on our side and definitely outside of the government from the opposition. We get to bring forward our ideas, items that we have to make things better, and get a chance to debate that. More often than not we get a chance to vote together on that, which is really encouraging to me through that democratic process.

Now, we're talking about Bill 203 here. This fine young gentleman behind me: first-time MLA, father of three, brand new father again – congratulations. Yup. A proven producer from up in that Grande Prairie country comes up here with his first bill. He gets drawn this bill, which is pretty tough to do as an MLA, to get that bill, whether it's a motion or a bill. And what he's most concerned about, being up from that area, is to make sure that foreign credentialing is taken care of, that folks not necessarily from his direct community or area or influence but newcomers to our province, to the beautiful province of Alberta, get a fair shake, and their credentialing is recognized. So for that I would encourage everyone to give this young man a round of applause. [some applause] Well done, young man, for bringing that forward, the MLA for Grande Prairie.

Now, all of us have different experiences when it comes down to . . . [interjection] You're a little slow on the take there, but that's okay. A lot of folks have different experiences with coming to Alberta or working in different industries, and I think a number of us here have seen some of the issues and challenges. You've got really good, hard-working folks that have done their education somewhere else, and for some reason we're not quickly recognizing their credentialing.

You know, heck, I even had one nurse tell me one time that they wouldn't recognize credentialing from a nurse – and I'm trying not to laugh, but this is how goofy it gets – who was lobbying in my office about how we shouldn't recognize credentialing from a thoracic nurse who's been practising in London for 20 years, that it's not quite the same because our forms don't quite line up. My question back, not being a medical person, is: do you mean to tell me that the British are built differently internally than we are? This is some of the goofiness.

I've got a veterinarian – rural veterinarians here are looking for people. I've got a vet up in my area that's talking about how he needs to bring in more people because he's going to lose his businesses. He can't keep up himself. There's literally an equine cardiologist out of Brazil, number two in that country, and he's just on the fence, barely being recognized for his credentialing. Like, this is . . .

Mr. Dyck: Horses are different.

Mr. Getson: Well, horses are different, but horses are special.

If this guy is working with high-performance horses and those types of things and recognized internationally but we're not recognizing him here – we've got a bunch of Alberta kids that I know of that have gone off to Australia to get their ticket to become docs, and we're not quickly recognizing them either, so now we've got Albertans heading elsewhere, to a Commonwealth nation, to try to do that.

Back in my day in the pipeline industry, I'll tell you what, I had a lot of schedulers that were working and running the scheduling programs for us for critical path management that were fully bona fide engineers like Louie Serra, Maximo Cabrera. Those were a couple of them. I had Diana Enescu – she was from Romania – a wonderful individual, a mechanical engineer; it took her forever to get recognized by APEGA. Now she's off teaching in a college. Oh, yeah. She used to work for, you know, a company that had nuclear reactors. Ruslan Hutsulyak was another gentleman, a civil engineer, brilliant; he and his wife both from Ukraine. Now they've gone through their credentialing. But these folks literally were the ones driving those taxicabs. Those are the ones that were doing all those other things until their credentials were recognized. We need to start fast-tracking this, not to do away with the associations, not to do away with a ton of the items that are required to make sure that they're solid and sound in their practice, but we do need to do this.

You know, the minister at the time for Advanced Education spooled up this skilled trades task force. The member opposite was talking about what we did last term and when we were in government, and thank God it's two for two. So now we've got the skilled trades task force. Our concerns at that time were – and I put it to the table, because I was part of that, and to our union members and otherwise, going: okay; the economy is down now; we picked up a depressed economy. Not saying there was any one group that was responsible for it, but we picked up a recessed economy in certain industries, and the challenge was that we didn't have the folks. We had seen an exodus of people, and we didn't want to go through that whole thing again of trying to get temporary foreign workers in place. And my concern was – we'll fix the economy. That's our challenge as the government and members of the government caucus. We'll fix the economy, but my challenge back to them was: what happens when I put the throttle to the mat here? I'm going to need people. We're going to have to look at innovative ways. We're going to need to do this.

So that was part of looking at the skilled trades task force and credentialing, all the recommendations. The minister put a bunch of them through. Also for the Minister of Education at the time, I was

very happy to be able to lead another group, which was careers in education. So we looked at the K to 12 side of it, predominantly focused in on grade 7 to grade 12. But with all of that effort, that takes time. Even our postsecondary universities, bringing them in, looking at industry and all that: that takes time.

So here's where we're at. The economy is rocking and rolling. Alberta is an outlier. We got 200,000 people coming in, and folks want to come here and invest. They want to build these major projects again. They want to have all of that stuff in place, and we're stuck. We're down a bunch of hands, a bunch of resources, including on the medical side.

Recently I've had the honour and privilege to be invited, through the consulate of Japan, actually, to his birthday party. And when I was there, I met a ton of folks from all around the world and got a chance to meet a bunch of these consul generals. One gentleman, in particular, from El Salvador stood out from some of these conversations, and what he was talking about is that El Salvador has a repository of 10,000 people sitting in this relational database. You can literally hammer into it, say how many people you're looking for and what credentials you need, and they're more than happy to try to work with us on that. Now, Quebec picked them up and took them up on their deal, so Quebec went down there, recognized the credentialing for the medical side, for the nursing. The only detriment they had was on the French language, so they're filling the gap on that. We did something similar with the government here with the Philippines, memorandums of understanding to do that.

So it's not just one area; it's making sure that folks can get into the system, and to do that, as the member correctly identified, you need an agile and nimble group where that's their sole focus, that isn't from one specific area, but they can bridge that through a bunch of different ministries in different areas and try to get that pipeline of talent rolling again.

What we have here is that we're stuck. We're kind of stuck in the glue, and we needed something novel and new, and nothing like a fresh set of eyes to come in and pick up where some of us had left off to make sure that we're going forward. Several key sectors such as health care, construction trades, elementary, secondary school teachers, assistants, information systems: we're short 3,000 workers by 2030. I'd propose that that number is actually conservative. I bet you it's going to be higher than that.

The proposed Bill 203 creates the foreign credential advisory committee, that would advocate and make recommendations to create a more streamlined, efficient credential advisory system. This is a critical issue not just for newcomers but for Albertans in our economy at large. Absolutely, like, it takes teamwork to make the dream work. We cannot do this without bringing folks in.

4:40

I think that too often a lot of the rules and systems we've had in place – just proposing this; this doesn't mean, you know, I'm doing empirical proving on it – a lot of times we are protectionist. Protectionist for public safety is one thing, but protectionist for some of these groups and organizations and recognizing credentialing because of their fear of losing their jobs: it's quite the contrary. We're in a different position right now, so we need to recognize how many more folks we need in our system to be able to create and sustain and to grow.

Ontario has kind of, you know, hedged around the outside edges. They haven't passed anything yet. But if we get this right, it will literally – I think someone had said a beacon of hope. It gives hope for folks that are coming here that their dreams can be fulfilled, and it gives folks like us that used to build projects – I keep referring to

myself in that line – hope that I can get the talent that I need when they need it. Moreover, folks, they stick. They're not just jumping on an airplane, flying over here as a Band-Aid solution, that we had to go through once before. These folks literally want to set up in Alberta. You give them that opportunity, it's then intergenerational, and we get a lot of things corrected that were issues before.

I'm getting old here, Mr. Chair. I turned 50 there a little while ago, and now my arms aren't long enough. You know how that works. I'm not saying you, sir, but I'm just saying others that are wearing spectacles in here, that I'm getting used to.

A lot of it, too, is recognizing it, right? It comes back to Bill 203: recognizing the challenge and issue and doing something to correctly address the item at hand. The committee would review the rules that govern recognition of foreign credentials and make recommendations on how to improve the process of recognizing foreign credentials, especially for professions with current and anticipated labour shortages. Again, not just a shotgun approach; we want to fix in and dial in to the industries that are really short-handed, that are literally going to cause a ton of issues. We need to jump in there and get tactical about this and correct those at hand.

The committee would be made up of 13 members from the following ministries: up to four seats, of which we'll chair, from Immigration and Multiculturalism; up to four seats from Advanced Ed; three seats from Health; one seat from Jobs, Economy and Trade; and one from Technology and Innovation. The mandate of the committee is to facilitate recognition of foreign credentials in Alberta by reviewing legislation and other rules, including those established by professional regulatory organizations and government recognition of foreign credentials in Alberta.

Again, looking at what's already out there, what the potential impediments are, and having that line of sight from a number of ministries, because each one of those ministries is going to bring something to the table, once you get them all around the room, like I've seen with most projects or task forces that I've managed to chair, that's when the cool stuff happens. Everyone has a different vantage point, and they can make those recommendations. Moreover, if you've got all the ministries involved with it, well, they have some skin in the game, so they'll make it happen.

The evaluation process in place in other jurisdictions in Canada that have advanced recognition of foreign credentials and identify areas of success. Here's a wonky thing.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Time runs out quick.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any others wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak in support of Bill 203, Foreign Credentials Advisory Committee Act. Some interesting debate this afternoon on how revolutionary this piece of legislation is. The mover also mentioned that it's the first of its kind in Canada. Well, let me start by saying that this bill relates to the struggles newcomers face each and every single day, relates to struggles many of us who moved later in their life to Canada face. I personally went through all of it, and, frankly, it's a very cumbersome process. Unless there are proper procedures and supports in place, many of those people just fall through the cracks.

The riding I represent has quite a bit of newcomer population from all over the globe. Many of them are well trained and skilled people. When they applied for immigration, their degrees counted for certain points that helped them get here. But as soon as they land here things change, and those degrees don't mean as much; they don't have as much weight as was given to them for their immigration application. It's not the first of its kind of bill in Canada.

In the past efforts have been made. When we were in government, we also tried to address these concerns. I do agree that it's a very complicated issue that was ignored by successive Conservative governments in Alberta, because they were there for 44 years, so they completely ignored this issue.

When I talk to people, and based on my own personal experience, too, what needs to happen is that we need a definitive path for individuals to be able to get into the profession they are trained in. There are some examples where governments have made improvements, starting with the Ontario government for foreign-trained lawyers. When they go through the NCA process, I guess, when their equivalency is met, they are asked to find an articling position for one year, which is quite challenging. If you don't have connections here, classmates here who you went to school with, it becomes quite difficult. So the government of Ontario came up with a condensed eight-month course that allows those foreign-trained lawyers who have met the equivalency through the NCA process to take that course in lieu of that one-year articling. It's an eight-month condensed program, and it's fairly expensive, but it's covered by, I believe, student aid in Ontario.

In that case those foreign-trained lawyers have a definitive path to take and get their credentials recognized in Canada and start practising. Sure, there is an expense, but at least they know that at the end of that, this is the path. I'm sure the Minister of Justice would know that process as well because he also went through the NCA process. That's my understanding, so that's why I'm saying that.

Let me finish about that definitive path in resources. Most of the efforts that this government did in the last five years were just lip service. There was nothing more than that. Come election, they will go to immigrant communities, make all kinds of promises which they know that they won't keep, and then, when they become government, they will come up with a program and plans that are meaningless. For instance, Jason Kenney's government in 2019. There was a Fair Registration Practices Act at that time that was described as the most revolutionary thing that happened to Alberta, but that did not change anything. Then they came up with the fairness for newcomers office in 2022. Again, that was close to an election. People were told that this will change the game.

4:50

Government supporting a private member's bill just to strike a committee is an admission in and of itself that all their previous efforts failed; none of them worked. That's the reason the government is just supporting the establishment of a committee and wants all of us to believe that's a game changer and that's a first in Canada and that no one has ever established a committee in Canada. What this committee will do is facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials. Government failed at that in the last five years.

Review the legislation: government either failed or neglected to do that. Evaluate the process in other jurisdictions. I think hearing the claims like, "It's the first of its kind in Canada": this also doesn't give me much confidence that they know anything about what's going on in other jurisdictions.

Well, in any event, we are still three years plus some months out of election, so we support the establishment of this committee. We will see come 2027 what else they will come up with, how they will streamline all these credentials, and what kind of promises they will make.

But I do know from the progress that has been made by this government in the last five years on the fair practices act, fair practices office, this government is not serious about doing any work. Otherwise, they would not need a private member and a private member's bill to establish that committee to get the work

done. That's just simply typical UCP delay tactics. Nonetheless, let's have this committee and see where it takes us.

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

The Deputy Chair: Are there any others wishing to speak at this time? The Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. You know, I keep thinking as we've been debating this just of the challenge of people who have come to our communities. So seeing the opportunity – I just remember one story of a man who joined us from Ukraine who's a highly skilled crane operator and has been on buildings of multiple stories, and he was working building swamp mats. To me, that's – he has a high level of skill, and unfortunately he wasn't able to utilize that skill.

This is what this bill is looking at. How do we take the skill sets, the learning that somebody has from another country that may be a different process but still be able to execute on that skill? As well, we have a local man who's an electrical engineer, you know, and currently, as he was sharing his story, he's working as a janitor. Well, I just see that as unacceptable, Mr. Chair, to see someone who is an electrical engineer, has been able to practise in various countries around the world over several decades, come to Alberta and now work as a janitor to feed his family. To me, this is what this bill is all about. It's about recognizing those credentials, getting this man to work in a field that he loves, that he has practised in and he is qualified for. This is very important, and this is what this government is doing now.

Now, there have been a couple of comments just on how this is going to come about. I believe a member opposite mentioned "UCP cronies." I think what he meant to say is that the UCP can execute on skill sets. We constantly have seen this government be able to execute, be able to put people to work, and be able to go and see our workforce expand. With that, we've also seen . . . [interjection]

Mr. Getson: Just keep going.

Mr. Dyck: Keep going?

Mr. Getson: They're heckling. They know it's a good bill and you did a good job.

Mr. Dyck: A hundred per cent.

As well, I just want to talk about getting red tape reduction. As we've heard, it takes focus. When you put focus on something, something changes. This is what this bill is also about. It's about concerted effort, focusing in, and as this government has constantly proven, when we put focus on something, we have results. This government removed 30 per cent of red tape; 30 per cent.

As well, just to wrap up, they mentioned consultation. Mr. Chair, we're doing that right now: betterfornewcomers.ca.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Any others wishing to speak?

You're ready for the question on Bill 203, Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act?

[The clauses of Bill 203 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Amery: I move that the committee rise and report Bill 203.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

Ms Pitt: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 203.

The Speaker: Hon. members, all those in favour of the report, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion the ayes have it. That is carried and so ordered.

Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 8(3) we will now proceed to Motions Other than Government Motions.

Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Labour Unions

506. Ms Sweet moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) recognize the value, importance, and history of collective bargaining and unionization in Alberta, including the role of unions in helping workers exercise and increase their collective power to
 - (i) negotiate advances in workplace conditions, good wages and pensions, and better health and safety standards, and
 - (ii) resolve workplace issues, including grievances and arbitration, with respect to individual workers; and
- (b) affirm that
 - (i) the defining feature of a union is a robust system of internal democracy that enables members to engage in setting policy direction and making operational decisions, and
 - (ii) organizations that lack this system are detrimental to workers.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to my motion as proposed on the Order Paper. Before I start and get into the rationale of the importance of this motion, I would like to recognize that we do have guests in the gallery today. We have members from BTA Teamsters local 362, millwrights local 1460, LIUNA local 92, also UA local 488, UNA as well as IBEW local 424. And BT ironworkers, I believe, are here. [interjection] Well, I've got one more member who's going to support in favour of my motion. Good to see that.

I also just want to recognize that we have a special guest in the gallery as well. Danielle Larivee is also here. She was our past Minister of Municipal Affairs and children's services under the government and is now a representative of UNA.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, why are we here debating this motion? Well, I think it's pretty clear that on this side of the House we represent the working people of this province. We stand up for the working people of this province, and we have clearly seen a demonstration by this government that they do not.

Now, we can go down the history lesson a little bit all the way back to – well, I'll start with 2014, which is when I was a labour activist. I was a member of AUPE. I represented local 006, which was the social workers as well as our human services workers within the government. In 2014 we saw a government that introduced Bill 45, introduced Bill 46, Bill 9, and Bill 10. Now, Bill 45 and Bill 46 were basically a way to bust unions, to stop them from being able to organize, and if they had any type of work action, strike action, they were going to be penalized into the six-digit figures. It was a direct way of trying to stop unions from being able to do their fundamental democratic right in being able to do work demonstration.

We then saw Bill 9 and Bill 10, which is a little bit of a history lesson of what we're seeing again more recently, which was a direct attack on private and public pension plans. The government was trying to influence and be able to make arbitrary changes to pension plans that belong to almost every single worker in this province. Now, back in that time we spent many, many cold days standing outside in front of the Legislature, at city hall, and many other places demonstrating why these pieces of legislation were fundamentally flawed.

In fact, it was a success story for many of us and all of the unions across the province because Bill 9 and Bill 10 died on the committee floor. The government backed down, recognized it was a bad, bad, bad decision, yet here we are again with the government wanting to talk about the CPP and removing Alberta out of the Canadian pension plan.

On top of that, we have seen other changes being made. We have seen this government going after occupational health and safety standards and trying to water down the very protections that workers have in this province to ensure that they go home safely at the end of each day. We've seen them roll back rules in regard to presumptive coverage under WCB. We've seen attacks on bargaining units within the health sector when the government continuously starts to talk about reorganizing the health departments and moving people out of their bargaining units and moving people into other bargaining units.

We've also seen Bill 1 in 2020, when the government wanted to ensure that there could be no job action around essential services, which would limit any type of job action or strike in regard to a hospital, a public transit system, or any of those what would be deemed by the government an essential service, another way to block unions from a democratic right. We see today, announced this week, the government talking about creating its own police force by using our sheriffs, who belong to a collective bargaining unit and no longer know what that means for their future within their pension plans, within the collective bargaining unit, whether they'll be members of AUPE or create into another place: again, the government's complete disregard and disrespect for the structures of how unions function and the rights that working people in this province have.

Now, we could also talk about the fact that when we were in government, we introduced Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans. The UCP repealed that piece of legislation, so workers no longer have the right to refuse unsafe work and are no longer protected against discriminatory acts of employers who receive safety complaints. We established fair practices and the Fair Practices office, which no longer exists because that piece of legislation was repealed. On top of that, we introduced Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, which was to ensure that people were able to take unpaid leave to care for themselves or loved ones. The UCP repealed that piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we also have the lowest minimum wage in this whole country. We have higher wages for people that are able to attain higher wages, and we pay the least amount for the rest of the working people of this province. Many of the people in this province don't even have access to health care or benefits, and this government is refusing to sign on to the pharmacare program. They do not care about the working people of this province.

It is shameful that this government continues to stand up, and just did, talking about the importance of labour mobility, the importance of ensuring that we have working people in this province to keep our economy moving forward yet removes the rights of workers to negotiate for salaries, to negotiate occupational health and safety, and to ensure that they have the right to the benefits that all Albertans and Canadians have. You cannot say that we have a labour shortage in Alberta and then say: but those people don't deserve to get paid for it.

So the government needs to step up. They need to start taking care of the working people of this province. They need to ensure that our collective bargaining process is fair and that people are compensated for the work that they do. They also need to get rid of the abilities for non-unionized workplaces to undermine the collective bargaining processes in the private sector. We have seen an erosion of salaries for the very working people that one of the members was just clapping for, due to the fact of double breasting. We can get into it if you want, but let's talk labour.

Honestly, it is shameful that this government chooses to try to deflect any responsibility about the working rights of the people in this province. For a member opposite to start saying "carbon taxes" speaks to how little respect they have for the working people of the province. It's embarrassing, really. It's shameful. It is a lot of things.

So let's be clear: Alberta is falling behind when it comes to ensuring that the working people of this province have the rights, have the salaries, have the ability to unionize for that matter. In every piece of legislation that we see, there is an underlying way for this government to try to erode the ability for collective bargaining, the ability for arbitration, the ability for non-unionized workers to become unionized workers, and then when they are unionized workers, for this government to find a way to ensure that they underwrite the salaries and erode the salaries of the very unionized people of this province.

We have weak occupational health and safety in this province. We have poor WCB supports in this province. We do not pay our people of this province the salaries that they deserve, and the government should be ashamed that we pay the least amount of a minimum wage than anywhere else in the country. You cannot say that we have a strong economy when the people of the province don't benefit from it. If you want to talk about good business and you want to talk about the fact that the economy manages and supports everybody, then the working people that are driving the economy, that are working in those businesses, that are actually driving the profit that the government talks about all of the time: you should ensure that they're compensated for the work that they do. Yet this government does everything to make sure that that doesn't happen.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all members of this House: if you're going to sit there and clap hands at members of unions, then you better stand up and support my motion. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be able to rise today and speak about this motion by the hon. Member for

Edmonton-Manning. I just wanted to do a little bit of fact-checking. There were some statements that were made there that were factually incorrect. She said that we are the lowest in Canada in terms of minimum wage. Let's be clear: there are only three other provinces – remember, there are 10 provinces in this country – that are actually higher than us. That doesn't sound like the lowest minimum wage in Canada. Let's just be clear. You know what? It's pretty easy to do the fact-checking.

I wanted to talk about the motion and talk about – the purpose of the motion, I think, was good. However, it just had to be right at the end that this member put in: "(b)(ii) organizations that lack this system are detrimental to workers."

Ms Sweet: It's true.

Mr. Hunter: And the heckling continues to show that that's true according to the members opposite. In this province we actually have a system that has got multiple ways of providing labour for Albertans, and we have a mixed bag when it comes to providing those labour options. I think that there's a value to that.

5:10

But let's just be clear. I had the opportunity in the last election to do some door-knocking in Lethbridge. Just for members' information, I want them to know that I actually started out as a teacher. I started out as a teacher and taught for two years. At that time way back when I was teaching – it was many, many years ago – teachers didn't make very much. In fact, I think I took home \$1,960 a month. It was difficult. I was starting a family. It was difficult to be able to make it. I remember thinking after going to university that I made more before university than after university. Today, though, I will say that teachers make more money. They do. They actually do quite well in this province.

Anyways, to go back to my story, I was door-knocking in Lethbridge, and when I was door-knocking, I came across a teacher. He had lots to say to me. He knew I was representing the Conservative side, and he had lots to say to me. Now, one of the things he said to me is that, you know, we don't care about unions. I said, "Well, I used to be a member of a union, and I disagree with you." So I started asking him a few questions. I said: "At this time now, obviously, teachers are making more money. How much do you make?" He told me how much he made. I said, "How much is that compared to other provinces?" He said, "That's actually pretty good." I said, "How did you get there?" He said, "Through collective bargaining." I said: "Well, every other province has collective bargaining units. How did you really get there?" He said: "Well, you tell me. You think you've got the answer." I said, "Listen; it's just my opinion, but it's my opinion that you got there because you're living in a province that's done it right."

We did it right. A rising tide floats all ships. Because we have a strong economy – and we've actually been able to say that we've had a strong economy for a long time – teachers have been able to actually show: hey, if you're paying this person that much, you should also pay us this much as well. That is the reason why they were able to get more money in the teaching profession. You know what? For the first time he said, "You know, I think you got me there."

Now, I don't know if I got his vote – he didn't say – but I wanted him to see that in Alberta this thing we used to call the Alberta advantage is something that has actually benefited not just those in the private sector but those who are also in the public sector as well. Those people who are in unions have also benefited from it. We can see that the stats are very clear.

The Member for Edmonton-Manning talked about all the negative stuff, and I've only heard that from the NDP. It almost seems like they just don't get that we have this Alberta advantage that everybody in Alberta benefits from. My family has benefited greatly from it, and that's the reason why I got involved in politics in the first place back in 2015. I wanted to actually give back to this great province that I love and that I grew up in. I wanted to be able to make sure that our children and our grandchildren could have a good place to be able to raise their families.

When I hear that we're doing everything wrong, that we're treating this group wrong or that group wrong, I have to say: well, you know, we do make mistakes, but in reality we've done a whole lot really well in this province. You know what? The numbers actually prove it, Mr. Speaker. The numbers actually prove it. Every year we seem to have more people moving in. There was only one glitch in that time, only one glitch: four years where Albertans admitted that they made a mistake and they voted for an NDP government. That's the reality. The boots did the talking. They move here from other jurisdictions, not just other places in the world, but they actually move back from other parts of the country as well, from other places. [interjections]

Now, if the hon. members would stop heckling and actually listen to the arguments, maybe we'd actually have a very good dialogue in this situation, but they're not interested in hearing about the facts. I actually started out my speech here today talking about fact-checking, and then I think about it. If it was really just about minimum wage and we were the lowest in Canada, why would anybody want to move to Alberta? Yet we had 200,000 people move into this province last year alone, the largest migration into this province we've ever seen. Now, why did that happen, Mr. Speaker? What happened? The reason why is because we had the ability to be able to bring back the Alberta advantage. Because we have so many people moving in here – even though we have so many people moving in, we also have the increase in wages as well.

I've been an employer in this province. I have signed the front of cheques, not just the back of cheques, and I know how hard it has been to be able to actually find good employees. You have so many jobs that we're building here; you just don't have enough employees. I think that anybody who's actually signed on the front of the cheque would know this. They would recognize that scarcity of supply of employees is what has driven up the value of people's wages. This is one of the reasons why I'm not in favour of this motion, because I think we actually have done it right.

Ms Wright: Shocking.

Mr. Hunter: You betcha.

Collective bargaining does play a part in the grand scheme of things – it does – but every province in the country has collective bargaining units. If they couldn't raise the wages in those areas, what were they doing wrong? We had the Alberta advantage that actually helped drive up the price. So I've given that as a possible reason for why those wages are going up and why our mixed system is working so well.

I also want to – there was kind of the argument from Edmonton-Manning, that she made, which is: put the NDP's track record up against the Conservative track record. Well, first of all, they only have four years of track record. We have 44 years or more of track record, but I would take that track record up against the NDP's any time.

There was a very contentious move that we made in the last go-around. We had said that we believe that if you took the teachers' pensions, you put that into AIMCo where they were actually doing a whole lot of investments, and you had those economies of

scale . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, still to this day you've got the NDP heckling me about this issue. Let's get to the heart of the matter. Since we've done that, the pension cost to teachers has decreased three times. Let me just state that again so that everybody knows. That's very different than some of the things that we've heard from the NDP, I would imagine, which is: don't do it with AIMCo; don't send it to AIMCo because it won't be better for the teachers. If they decrease the contribution cost to the teachers, is that not a good thing? I would say that's a great thing. In fact, they didn't just decrease it once; they decreased it twice, three times.

Mr. Speaker, I would say: let's not vote for this because we don't need it.

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

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I rise in support of private member Motion 506, unions. Like the title. Standing and speaking in support of my colleague's motion won't come as a surprise to anyone, particularly not to those who know me even a little bit well. Quite frankly, it is important given that many public-sector unions right now are in the midst of or preparing to go into bargaining with this government. These workers and the workers of Alberta deserve to know that their government not only values them but engages with them in a way which respects their rights.

I have some personal experience with the need for unions and the work that they do on behalf of workers. That personal experience began when my mom was a young teacher and pregnant with me, her first child. This was because the prevailing view of the day was that mothers and children would be taken care of by husbands and fathers. And she was fired. That meant she was fired while she was pregnant with me. There was no thought given to the financial needs of a young family, particularly when one, the wife, was working and the other, the husband, was a student. My mom was fired, and with that, both my parents became ardent union supporters.

When custodians and support workers in Regina went on strike when I was a teenager and later when my own mom went on strike for better wages and better working conditions, I was right there walking alongside them. I've walked and sung along many unions during the course of my life. I've sung about the importance of unions, about the power of unions, about what solidarity actually means, and about the work unions do and the opportunities they provide not just for their members but for all workers.

5:20

Now, one of the things that this motion does is to simply recognize the value, importance, and history of collective bargaining and unionization in Alberta, all those things that unions have done for us collectively. So let's take a moment to look at why unions are important and what they've meant not only to the people of Alberta but to every working person here in this lovely province. Workers have been fighting for fair wages, fair pensions, and better working conditions for centuries. In Canada somewhat recently, as opposed to 400 years ago, there were a couple of bell-weather events that I just want to let everyone know about.

In 1872 – this is the teacher in me coming out – workers rallied together to strike and fight against long workdays. In those days the average workday was 11 or 12 hours, so workers fought that. The movement was called the Nine Hour Movement because, literally, it was a movement to have people only work nine hours a day rather than that regular 11 or 12. Out of this movement came the Trade Unions Act of 1872.

But the action that has affected me most for a very long time was the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. It was large, it was significant,

and it lasted weeks. There was violent opposition and intimidation all because these workers dared to fight for better wages, improved and safer working conditions, and the right to be heard collectively. They just wanted their voices heard and to be treated fairly.

Despite not being able to achieve all that they'd hoped, the strike itself had a long-lasting legacy. The impact that it had led to an increased awareness of workers' rights, collective action, and the recognition of unions as legitimate representatives of workers. Not only that, but the fact it happened continued to influence labour laws and policies years into the future, which included the establishment of the minimum wage, which the member opposite was just talking about a few minutes ago. This speaks to the value of unions and the very important work that they do, which is really at the heart of this Motion 506.

Unions harness the power of the collective, folks working together toward a common end for the common good, but that positive impact of unions, as I said earlier, isn't just about union members. It's also about all workers. When members of a union fight and win fair wages, safe working conditions, those successes also extend to other non-union members. In other words, all workers benefit. We know, for instance, that unions in Alberta and Canada have long played an important role in advocating for universal health care, gender equality, pay equity, workplace safety standards, safer workplaces, compensation for injury, and equitable labour relations. Unions today continue that advocacy work.

That push for safer workplaces across decades, centuries came about because of horrific tragedies, tragedies like the Hogg's Hollow Disaster of 1960, an incident where five workers lost their lives. They were working that day to simply install a water main. No one should have to lose their life just because they go to work. No one should be injured on the job, and that push to make sure that people's working conditions are safe remains at the heart of what all unions do not only on behalf of all members but on behalf of us all. This is what unions do; this is the value of a union.

Now, when a person joins a union, they join an organization that is all about democracy. From union locals like mine, Edmonton public teachers local 37, to councils and federations, like the friends that are upstairs from Building Trades of Alberta, the Alberta Federation of Labour, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, and all union locals all around this lovely province, union members have their say a lot, and I've yet to meet a true union that doesn't uphold those standards.

Members vote for their local executive or board. They vote for representatives to go to the national meetings. They vote on how to spend money. They vote at annual and biannual conventions. They hold discussions and vote on who gets to go to what training opportunity, what school. They vote on which advocacy programs the union will proceed with that year. They vote to make sure surveys get to all their members, and they vote at annual general meetings. Mr. Speaker, unions are democracy in action, and that's the second part of my colleague's motion. Unions are organized because their job is to organize. Their job is to represent their members and workers. Their job is to listen to the workers they represent, and they do this every single day of the week. That is what unions do.

On behalf of my mother and father, the ardent union members that they were, on behalf of my union brothers, sisters, siblings, the building trades, private and public-sector union members, nurses, teachers, health care workers, ironworkers, plumbers and pipefitters, boilermakers, construction labourers, and more, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this Motion 506, unions. I urge all members to do the same. Union members should know that they're valued by this government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise today to speak to both the value of unions and this private member's motion. The Member for Edmonton-Manning had dropped the gauntlet, in the famous words of a girl with pigtails in her hair from Sweden: how dare you? How dare you say whether I support or are in favour of unions? It's such common phraseology at these points, and I want to throw that back.

Folks have been speaking as if we are just painted with one single brush over here: because we're conservative, all of a sudden we're against the unions. Well, let me tell you about this part. My previous history, as some folks may not know, was on projects, and I happened to work all across North America. That means pretty much every single province and a ton of the States. Even so much as when I was consulting to Enbridge, they actually put me on a project in Eddystone, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia. I got to deal directly with the unions, the east coast union down there. Pat Gillespie: one heck of a negotiator.

I'm going to walk you through a little bit of a scenario here because, quite frankly, when you're building big projects, you need union, non-union. It's a combination of both, whether it's traditional or otherwise. There isn't one group out there that can supply all the people you need, nor is there one jurisdiction that has it exactly right. There is no template down there. My mentors were boilermakers – there is no question on that one – and the ironworkers. My first big major industrial project was up in the middle of the Territories. The ironworkers are who I was assigned to as a young field engineer being out on site. You want to talk about mentors and people who've done it: they're the ones that are putting the buildings up, they're the ones working in the cold, and everything else. Believe it or not, in Alberta you do have union and non-union sites on the same site. So this being thrown out here as a wedge issue, as an absolute wedge issue for – I don't know. What is it; a job interview for Big Daddy Gil? This is ridiculous.

Back in Eddystone, Pennsylvania, when I had to explain in the Four Seasons hotel to Mr. Pat Gillespie about Enbridge's bidding process, the unions down there were pretty frustrated. They would think that you could have an actual bidding this thing to open market. What I guaranteed this gentleman was that this is our process right across North America. The best projects that we have in place have this, the most successful ones, every jurisdiction we go into. It is agnostic when it comes down to our labour force. We bid union, non-union. We put it out there, and, guaranteed, the bidding process, the right people get the job, guaranteed.

After some conversations this is the first time that's managed to happen, because apparently down there you have to have a fixer that sits in between the project team and the unions – I broke that mould – literally sitting there talking to the folks, telling what they did. They took it on a leap of faith for this guy from Alberta coming down into their area, which was a different model, to allow it to bid, and lo and behold, the bidding process got the right folks. We got the union hands on that site. I also helped them negotiate in amongst their unions where they were fighting with each other because, you know, strong-willed people, type-A personalities, all that.

It was one of those things that we kept behind closed doors because we wanted the project to succeed. We also had non-union folks on there providing some of the services. This model has been replicated successfully in Alberta, across the provinces, in the States as well. Again, please do not paint us all with the same brush and say that just because we wear team blue rather than team orange, we're anti-union.

When we first got elected last term, which was pretty wild, we had a bunch of the union hands, and hopefully some of the ironworkers were there or some of the building trades folks that were in the room at the time. Terry Parker was one of them, so he can attest to this. When they were going around the room talking to us – and, by the way, that was in the shadow of 180,000 jobs leaving the province when our industries were down, when a bunch of policies no one could, you know, understand, the ripple effects were taking place. When we were talking about the impacts of that, one of the questions came back as: “How do we support you? How do we do this going forward?” and I said, “Quite simply, let’s work together.” Stop the wedge issues. Understand and know what we’re up to here. We’re trying to fix the actual economy so we can get more hands back to work. That olive branch was reciprocated.

I was invited out to the Building Trades conference out in Jasper, so I went there. We spooled up a Skilled Trades Caucus. I was invited to go and speak to the boilermakers, both up in Fort McMurray through their satellite connections that they had, Calgary and Edmonton. Again, there shouldn’t be a wedge issue when it comes to unions, non-unions, so this rhetoric: please drop it. It’s not productive for anyone in here. It definitely is not productive for us to build projects. It’s definitely not productive for the training that we need nor the parity of esteem. Nor the parity of esteem.

5:30

All unions are not created equal. I can tell you that the leadership of those unions had better start to recognize that. You’ve got a nomination contestant that’s going for your leadership race that I would say is an outlier from any other union I’ve dealt with in North America. Heaven forbid that your membership vote that guy in because you’ll have nothing but wedge issues in this House. I encourage members to stop some of the rhetoric, to make sure we’re talking about things that are real – things that are real – not wedge issues. When your next arguments come forward, I would ask humbly – humbly – that you not presuppose where we’re from, what we’ve done in our histories, and say that we’re all anti-union or to inflame those types of conversations.

What we should be talking about is the parity of esteem. What we should be talking about is reaching out across the aisle. What we should be talking about is how we build a brighter future. We should be talking about how folks brought us here in the first place. We should be talking about building bridges, and it’s not without some mental clarity and thought that I’m using that. Who do you think builds the bridges? All good hands, all different backgrounds. It’s the working people that do that coupled with the folks that do the design calculations, coupled with the investors. It’s a project team. The only way we make this thing work is if you stop dividing people, let them work together as a team, let them support them when they need them. On this side people are going to vote with their clear conscience. I personally believe that if the member had been a little more, I don’t know, constructive, she wouldn’t have had some clauses in there that were so narrow-minded nor so fixated on causing wedge issues.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I submit my remarks. I leave it to our side to vote with their conscience. If they believe that this motion is wholeheartedly with that spirit of intent that I’ve just articulated, if that’s what you believe – I’m not seeing it on paper. And I’d open up to the folks upstairs. The Skilled Trades Caucus is back. I’ll definitely give you my card . . .

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. I will just remind the chief government whip that including members in the gallery in debate is certainly unhelpful and not allowed. I appreciate it was done out of

a fine and well-meaning intention, but we have rules in this place for a reason, and including members of the gallery in the debate is unparliamentary. I’ll ask you to apologize and withdraw.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, folks. I got pretty excited. Again, knowing the folks in the gallery are behind my back, trying to reach out to that. I appreciate the courtesy and the correction there.

Again, with the individuals that happen to be here or might be hearing this conversation, whether it’s live or online, definitely make sure you contact my office, and we can have that conversation. We are going to be having the Skilled Trades Caucus again, and hopefully we can dispel any of these wedge issues that have been brought up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to stand and speak in favour of this motion and the incredible benefit that comes from unions in our province. I would just note that I’d probably leave it up to the folks in the gallery who are here from labour to determine if they feel that this is a government that has truly been interested in building bridges with them or where division in this province might have been coming from.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that I have had the privilege of working with a couple of different unions in my time. It indeed is because of the opportunities that I had in a unionized environment where I got paid a good wage, because of the work of those unions and had those protections, that that funded my postsecondary, both my music degree when I was filling potholes for the city of Edmonton or when I was working as a taxpayer services agent for the Canada Revenue Agency while I was working on my bachelor of professional communications. Across the board, in all kinds of occupations, unions are there standing up for and looking after workers. We know that they provide benefit for everyone: good wages, pensions, safe work.

That is the history of unions in this province and – one more, Mr. Speaker – unions stand up for marginalized communities. They are a mechanism by which marginalized communities are able to stand up for themselves. A little bit of history. Here in the province of Alberta the first union for African, Caribbean, Black Albertans: the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. It was a union that came up from the United States, founded in 1925 in the U.S.; first labour organization in the U.S. as well led by African Americans that received a charter under the American Federation of Labor because Black men at that time had very few choices in occupation. Sleeping car porter was about the only one they had. Those men worked 21-hour days; they worked most days of the week. They earned about \$100 a month. They endured sleep deprivation, long periods away from their families. They were mostly dependent, in fact, on charity, on tips from the passengers to be able to earn enough to be able to look after their families. It was a tough life, but it was through unionization, through labour organization that those men were able to get better for themselves.

Like I said, in 1937 in the U.S. the American chapter won their first collective agreement, and shortly after that in 1939 an American civil rights activist, Mr. A. Philip Randolph, came up to Canada and helped to launch an international section of the brotherhood here. In 1946 the brotherhood organized the porters of the Canadian Pacific and Northern Alberta railways. They became the first trade union in Canada organized by and for African

Canadians. Through that organization, through that support, through labour organizations they won job security; they got reduced work hours; they got increased wages. They got dignity, Mr. Speaker.

Up until they organized and they pushed back, every single man who worked as a sleeping car porter was called George because no one could be bothered to actually learn a man's name. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters fought for the dignity of those men. They were given the dignity of having a metal name tag on their chest that identified their actual name so they could be treated as human beings. One of their members said, "In 1945, our standard of living was raised because we were getting more money; our children were able to at least finish high school and the odd one had a chance to attend one of the leading universities."

But, you know, they did more than just wage bargaining. In the 1940s Mr. A Philip Randolph came back to Alberta. He helped to encourage the development of the Canadian society for the advancement of coloured people, and they fought for civil rights. I should also note that the brotherhood didn't just fight for their own rights; they worked with the Calgary labour council to get better labour rights for everybody in this province because, again, unions work together across boundaries, across borders for the benefit of everyone in our province.

So the brotherhood also fought for improving human and civil rights, and so do our unions today, Mr. Speaker. They have been there in the fight for rights for the LGBTQ2S-plus community. They have been there to fight for women's rights. They continue to be there today to fight for every marginalized community that faces challenges in our communities because they are about making our society better and opportunities for all.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the Member for Taber-Warner sharing some of his thoughts about unions. He talked about: we're living in a province that got it right. He said that the numbers prove it. I would encourage him to go back and talk to that teacher in Lethbridge again; ask him how he feels about those classroom numbers these days, those classes of 35 and 40 kids. Do you think that teacher feels that this is a government in a province that got it right?

How many health care workers right now feel this is a government that got it right? The nurses that are facing record numbers of patients that they're looking after at a time because they are consistently short-staffed: they're watching others across Canada get raises in their wages, Mr. Speaker, other jurisdictions that are getting it right because they are paying their workers what they are worth because they recognize the incredible benefit.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic it was our health care unions, these front-line workers, these labour leaders that were fighting for better for every single Albertan. They were in there facing the risk, and yeah, they were fighting for better for their workers, that they would be protected against a deadly disease, that they would be supported in the work they needed to do, but they were fighting for better conditions for the people they care for, and they continue to do that work today. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there are probably not many health care workers right now who feel this is a government who got it right or feel that this was a government that was looking to build bridges over the last four to five years.

But, you know, that's not what we're here to talk about today, Mr. Speaker. We're here to talk about why unions are important, and that is a big part of it, because we know that we will have governments, we will have businesses, we will have individuals who want to participate in that race to the bottom. That is not to impugn all employers, not by a long shot. There are many good

employers, but we know. We see it consistently. It keeps coming back. It keeps happening.

5:40

That is why we have labour legislation, that is why we have councils and tribunals and others to judge these things in the province, and that is why we have unions, Mr. Speaker, because we need to have accountability. That is one of the reasons why I think, as much as some members may stand and profess their individual support for unions, we have seen this as a government that has been antagonistic towards unions, who has sought to undermine unions, who has sought to curb the power, the ability to organize in this province, because this is a government that does not want to be held accountable, that is allergic to transparency, and they know that an effective union is a powerful force.

I'm thankful that we have strong health care unions that are advocating not only for their members but for the quality of care for all in this province at a time when it is degrading, when quality is dropping, when we are shipping people from hospital to the Travelodge in Leduc. I'm glad that we have a strong teachers' union at a time when we have overflowing classrooms and the lowest per capita funding for students in Canada. I'm glad we have strong postsecondary unions who are fighting to defend the institutions that this government has undermined with multiple years of cuts, affecting the quality of postsecondary education for students.

I want to thank the labour leaders, the members that are here today for the work they continue to do and let them know that they have allies here across the aisle. We have a common goal: to make this a better province for every Albertan, to make this a place where workers can earn a fair wage, where they are treated with dignity, where they can work in safety, and where they have real legislation and regulation there to back that up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning to close debate.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be pretty quick on this. Clarifying the member opposite's comments around that we don't have the lowest minimum wage, we are the only province in the country that pays people under the age of 18 a different salary than anywhere else in Canada, and that is \$13 an hour. It is the lowest wage in the country. Yes. It is true.

Now, the other thing that I would like to say as part of my motion is that one of the things that I have been always so grateful for, coming from the labour union, as a social worker coming from a workplace that primarily was women, when I had to deal with diverse and very toxic engagements when having to work in child protection, when I was working with parents in apprehension and abuse and language could be very hostile and could be threatening among other things, my brothers and sisters in my labour union always stood up for me and always believed that I had a right to work in a safe work environment, free of harassment.

The member opposite says he believes in labour unions and the values of labour unions yet during his speech chose to make comments about whether or not I should wear pigtails and whether or not the leader of the Alberta Federation of Labour is my big daddy. Let's be clear: that demonstration speaks to the lack of understanding and value of what labour stands for, how we take care of each other in the labour movement, and how we respect each other in the labour movement. The member opposite can deny that that's what the intention of his words were, but let's be clear: that is exactly how it came across, and I will not have a member speak

to me like that in this Chamber, nor should any member of this Chamber have to deal with language like that.

In closing, all members should stand up and support this motion.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 506 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:45 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Boparai	Haji	Schmidt
Chapman	Irwin	Shepherd
Eggen	Kasawski	Sweet
Elmeligi	Metz	Wright, P.
Goehring	Sabir	

Against the motion:

Amery	Loewen	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Long	Schulz
Boitchenko	Lovely	Sigurdson, R.J.
Bouchard	Lunty	Sinclair
Cyr	McDougall	Singh
de Jonge	McIver	Stephan
Dreeshen	Nally	Turton
Ellis	Neudorf	van Dijken

Fir	Nicolaides	Wiebe
Getson	Nixon	Williams
Glubish	Petrovic	Wilson
Guthrie	Pitt	Wright, J.
Hunter	Rowswell	Yao
LaGrange	Sawhney	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 14	Against – 42

[Motion Other than Government Motion 506 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House will momentarily stand adjourned.

Legislative policy committees will convene this evening and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This evening the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Justice in the Rocky Mountain Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors in the Grassland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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