



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 19, 2024

Day 27

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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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
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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)  
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(UC)  
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Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)  
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 28

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

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Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Scott Sinclair	Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Policing
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell

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Bouchard  
Brar  
Hunter  
Kasawski  
Kayande  
Wiebe

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

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Boparai  
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Elmeligi  
Hoyle  
Stephan  
Wright, J.  
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### **Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee**

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Ellingson  
Hunter  
Ip  
Lovely  
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Sabir  
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### **Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee**

Chair: Mr. Yao  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Dach  
Dyck  
Irwin  
Petrovic  
Pitt  
Sabir  
Stephan  
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### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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

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

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Bouchard  
Ceci  
Deol  
Dyck  
Hayter  
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### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Al-Guneid  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dyck  
Eggen  
Hunter  
McDougall  
Sinclair  
Sweet

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 19, 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.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's my great pleasure to introduce to the Assembly a number of dignitaries that are joining us in the Speaker's gallery today from Treaty 8. It's my honour to introduce Grand Chief of Treaty 8 Arthur Noskey, Chief Rupert Meneen, Chief Wilfred Hooka-Nooza, councillors Fred Didzena, Kendall Metchooyeah. They are joined by Mr. Robert Mills. I invite you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a school group today.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My pleasure to introduce to you and through you 54 students from l'école escuela Holy Child school along with their teacher, Hélène D'Astous. I wish them bienvenue, bienvenido, welcome to the Assembly. I ask you to all give them the warm welcome of this House.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 66 students from Kirkness elementary school. I'll ask them all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members 57 students from Meyokumin school: two grade 6 classes here with teachers and family volunteers, some of whom – thank you, Mr. Speaker – had the opportunity to step into the Chamber this morning. They had lots of great questions. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an absolute honour on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to introduce the students from Steinhauer school and Ms Danelle Hancock. Please rise and receive the traditional warm greeting of the House. Welcome.

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

**Mrs. Petrovic:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you the council of Crowsnest Pass: His Worship Blair Painter, councillors Doreen Glavin and Vicki Kubik, and their

CAO, Patrick Thomas. If you guys would please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you Randy and Candice Bullock. Randy is the reeve of Cardston county and the grandson of Alvin Bullock, a Social Credit MLA from '67 to '71. His wife, Candice, is the daughter of former MLA from Cardston Bryce Jacobs, who served eight years in this Chamber as a representative of the sunny south. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you the reeve and councillors from the MD of Bighorn, who continue to teach me every day about how the province can better support their important work. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce the guests in the Speaker's gallery: Chief Hooka-Nooza, Chief Rupert Meneen, Grand Chief Arthur Noskey, and his councillors and technicians. I want the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly, so please rise again to receive the traditional welcome.

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

**Mr. Sinclair:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to reintroduce some guests who aren't here today, actually, but while I'm risen, I would be happy to welcome the honoured guests from Treaty 8 once more.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for the inconvenience.

**The Speaker:** If you don't have a guest, you can always just pass. It's okay, but welcome again.

I see the hon. Glenn Koester from the county of Wheatland has also joined us in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations has an introduction.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Justin Bourque, founder and president of Âsokan Generational Developments. Âsokan means bridge in Cree, of course. Through his important work Justin is bridging the gap between industry and Indigenous communities across Alberta. Please rise and receive the warm welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has a statement to make.

### Indigenous Consultation

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indigenous consultation is required when a development may result in adverse impacts to treaty rights, but what does this mean? The TRC call to action 92(i) speaks to a commitment to meaningful consultation with Indigenous peoples before proceeding with development. In Alberta this process is guided by a provincial consultation policy, but are these policies effective? Not for the First Nations consultation staff who have told me that this is often treated as a box-ticking exercise.

So what is meaningful Indigenous consultation? Meaningful consultation recognizes the diversity of each of Alberta's 48 First Nations with their own culture, stories, ceremony, and identity. We should not expect the Dene to be like the Blackfoot. Consultation should be slow; an elder's rich wisdom cannot be rushed but, rather, needs to be savored.

Most consultations will involve a ceremony or a prayer to start off in a good way so that all participants can open their hearts and minds to listening and learning. A site visit is critical. Walking the land together, looking at medicinal plants, animal signs, and the patterns of nature or sitting in a teepee listening to stories that have been carried through generations increases understanding.

The Indigenous relationship with the land is intergenerational. Meaningful consultation involves trying to define how that relationship to the land and to their ancestors may change with the development. To do real, meaningful consultation costs money, which is why it is critical that it is properly funded, but this government doesn't do that.

For me, meaningful consultation was standing in a forest with a Tsuut'ina elder, her eyes sparkling as she asked me to change my plans because the Creator's presence is strong here and we should respect that. Or sitting in a tepee with elders from the Goodstoney, Bears paw, and Chiniki nations as they recounted stories of bison and recommended steps for good herd management.

The most important part of consultation is that we listen and act on what we've heard, and only then can we ask Indigenous people if they've been meaningfully consulted.

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

#### Continuing Care Funding

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As with many parts of Canada, Alberta's health care system has been facing various challenges and a tremendous strain. One of the highest priorities should be the focus on efficient management of the acute beds and finding ways to optimize hospital and patient flow. Last week our government announced a \$1.7 billion investment towards Alberta's continuing care sector, which aims to do just that.

ALC patients are those who have completed their acute-care phase of treatment yet remain in acute-care facilities while awaiting discharge. Although the majority of ALC patients are transferred to care settings outside of the hospital within 25 days and almost half can be transferred within seven days, there are many patients who are experiencing delays and staying in the hospital much longer than required.

I am thrilled that our government is prioritizing this concern in the 2024 budget, and I'm happy that we are allocating \$1.7 billion to this issue. If passed, this budget will also allow our government to transfer continuing care in Alberta with an investment of \$1 billion over three years. This would be additional to the allocated \$654 million in funding over three years for the continuing care capital program, which will improve access to continuing care spaces, reduce emergency department wait times, and deliver culturally appropriate care for Indigenous peoples.

We are making great strides towards a more patient-focused health care system that emphasizes the importance of bringing – I will tell you – more continuing care options to our homes and communities so that Albertans have a choice in aging.

#### 1:40 Arts and Culture Funding

**Member Ceci:** The Alberta NDP will always fight for Alberta artists. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for this government.

The UCP thinks the arts are immune to rising costs and that they easily recovered from the pandemic. They are not, and they have not. The UCP government would rather dump millions into faulty pension plan ad campaigns or tens of millions annually into the failed war room than support Alberta artists. And now, as a result, North America's largest and longest running festival of its kind, the Edmonton Fringe Festival, is in desperate need of assistance.

I contacted Megan Dart, the executive director for the Fringe, and the picture she painted was grim. The Fringe will happen this year, but alarmingly, without sustained help it could be two-thirds its normal size. Five hundred thousand people visited the Fringe last year, and it brought in over \$16 million to the local economy. All of the over \$1.2 million in ticket sales went to the artists. Artists come to the Fringe to launch their careers and make a name for themselves.

This government's funding has been static, as have other orders of government, but in today's unaffordable UCP Alberta "static" is just another word for "your grant is going to be cut." And it's not just the Fringe experiencing this difficulty. The Grand Theatre, the oldest performing arts theatre in western Canada, has been open in Calgary's historic Lougheed Block since 1912, but the dramatic rise in costs and rent under this government has strangled this 112-year-old institution.

In the last five years under this UCP government local artists have continuously been ignored, but they can always rely on the Alberta NDP to fight for them. The arts are an essential part of our community and are a significant part of our economy. Let's not risk losing amazing arts festivals and performance theatres like the Fringe and the Grand and properly fund the arts.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

#### Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in estimates for Treasury Board and Finance we heard from a representative at AIMCo about their management practices, and it reminded me of something that had happened in the past. When our government decided to move teachers' retirement to AIMCo to become the manager of the ATRF, the NDP along with their union leaders of the Alberta Teachers' Association proceeded to send out communication after communication to their members telling them that our government was putting their pensions at risk.

For months I had to field calls from friends who were teachers and constituents who were very, very angry and upset that we were putting their retirement supposedly at risk. In fact, my father, who was a retired teacher, had stern words for me based on the inflammatory language and false information he had received from the NDP media releases and the ATA leadership. I continued to tell them how this would benefit all parties. By transitioning the Alberta teachers' pension fund to have it managed by AIMCo, it would provide the teachers massive economies to scale, ergo lowering Alberta teachers' contribution rates.

Mr. Speaker, 50 per cent of the contribution for teachers' retirement comes from the Alberta taxpayer. At the time I was a member of the Treasury Board, and I knew that this would be a win-win situation, a win for those teachers contributing 50 per cent of the equation and a win for the taxpayers of Alberta, who are also contributing the other 50 per cent of the equation.

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker. NDP fearmongering caused major concerns amongst our current and retired teachers, yet today I am happy to report that the Alberta teachers' retirement fund contribution rates have already decreased from 12.68 per cent to

11.34 per cent and as of September of this year will decrease a second time to an astonishing rate of 9.29 per cent, a reduction of 30.86 per cent in rate contributions. They say that hindsight is 20/20 vision. We were able to take this into the right place.

### Budget 2024 and Cost of Living

**Mr. Eggen:** Albertans are facing the biggest affordability crisis in a century, and this UCP government is simply making things worse. Budget 2024 does not keep up with population growth and inflation, meaning every Albertan is worse off. People are choosing between paying their bills and buying groceries. This is utterly unacceptable and a shameful situation. A constituent shared this with me: “My neighbours are an older couple. The husband works construction. His wife is disabled and requires home support. I learned recently that their electricity has been limited due to a \$600 accumulated increase on their bill. They can’t use their clothes dryer or cook on their electric stove. They don’t have the extra \$600 to make up the difference.” Mr. Speaker, this sad story is being repeated all across this province with record increases in utility bills, rents, food, and fuel.

Another constituent wrote to me. “I’m a single mother with two children, one of whom deals with autism spectrum disorder. I have not been able to pay for my rent for January or February. We don’t want to move. My daughter’s school is close by and has helped her a lot with her special needs. Alberta Works has helped us in the past, but they said that there’s only so much that we can do.” Mr. Speaker, every Albertan deserves an affordable place to live.

This is the only province in Canada where inflation rates are going up dramatically while wage growth falls behind the rest of the country. These are not just statistics; they represent real-life people who are suffering right now in all corners of this province. This UCP government has the ways and the means to solve the affordability crisis and support Albertans, but instead they choose to do nothing while they work to get better gifts for themselves, higher salaries for their friends. Albertans deserve better, Mr. Speaker.

### Hospital Discharge Policies

**Member Batten:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve public health care when and where they need it, but far too often this government treats health care patients as though they’re a burden, and that tone starts at the top. Let’s not forget: the Premier has said that stage 3 cancer patients should be responsible for preventing their own cancer and those seeking cancer treatment are somehow misusing our public health care system, that is supposed to be there for all of us.

Let’s not forget: the Premier also has very strong feelings about people who are in hospital. In the 2022 UCP leadership race she mused that patients could be discharged from hospital into hotels, calling them, I quote, a more comfortable place for them to go. We’ve seen how putting that policy into action turns out. Mr. Speaker, patients shouldn’t be driven down the highway in a cab to a motel in a different city, and – I can’t believe I have to say this – stroke patients who use wheelchairs should not be abandoned in motel rooms without proper care, nutritious meals, and help with hygiene. No one wants that for their loved one, but that’s exactly what we’re getting with the UCP.

Mr. Speaker, you’d think they’d be proud of this because they’ve taken over AHS and replaced it with a hand-picked manager, so that manager makes all the decisions after the chaotic firing of the whole AHS Board. Yesterday the Health minister refused to apologize for hotel medicine and refused to take any responsibility for it. She put

the blame entirely on the agency that placed the patient in the motel in Leduc, which begs the question: if AHS is run by the government’s hand-picked appointee and the minister won’t take responsibility for their motel medicine, doesn’t the policy land squarely at the feet of the Premier, the one who called for motel medicine in the first place?

Albertans deserve so much better than this government’s haphazard, harmful approach to health care.

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Ms Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills I request leave to present, in accordance with Standing Order 98(2), three petitions that have been received for private bills: the petition of Kyle Pudwell, chair of the board of directors, on behalf of the Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta for the Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta Amendment Act, 2024; the petition of Sister Gloria Keylor, SP, provincial leader on behalf of Providence Renewal Centre, for the Providence Renewal Centre Amendment Act, 2024; and the petition of Paul Muir, executive director, and Jordan Cutbill, board governor, on behalf of Rosebud School of the Arts for the Rosebud School of the Arts Amendment Act, 2024.

Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

### Continuing Care Standards

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, you know, there’s nothing new about the UCP lowering health care standards in Alberta, but now with continuing care they’re actually throwing them right out. Currently nursing homes across Alberta are required to deliver just under two hours of care to everyone in their care, obviously far too low, but this government thinks that even that is too much to guarantee. So in a closed-door cabinet meeting they scrapped the legal minimum requirement altogether. To the minister. An easy one. Will the government admit they’re wrong and at the very least reinstate and maybe even raise the minimum standard of care required by law?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are misinformed. In fact, our government is committed to supporting health care workers while ensuring Albertans receive the care they need when and where they need it. The previous 1.9 minimum average of direct care hours was outdated and has not been updated since 1985. In fact, we are providing funding for Alberta continuing care homes to provide an average of 3.62 worked care hours per resident per day. That’s almost double what it was in the past. We are making sure that we provide the coverage we need.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has it wrong. We’re talking about what’s guaranteed in law.

Now, demand for continuing care in Alberta is going to jump over 60 per cent in the next six years, but the UCP’s response is to break their promise of 10,000 new beds and defend the practice of sending people to motel rooms, where they are stranded without access to bathrooms or adequate personal care. It’s because of this record that Albertans need more legal protection, not less. To the minister: why won’t she reverse her plan to eliminate the legal protections in law?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, during extensive – and I do mean extensive – consultations with operators, service providers, workers, and residents we heard that changes were needed to provide better flexibility and to allow the operators to develop staffing plans that really meet the needs of not just their facilities but also their patients' unique needs. Our policies actually align with all the other provinces except for Quebec. In fact, our policies align with B.C., Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. It is, in fact, only Ontario that has minimum hours set in legislation.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, flexibility means more motel medicine.

We are talking about seniors and other Albertans with continuing care needs who need help toileting, eating, taking their medications, and getting treatment. After COVID we learned that continuing care is in crisis and private operators regularly cut corners to make a profit. This government wants to actually increase the opportunity for that to happen at the same time that they're introducing discretionary standards. That's what they're introducing. They're going from law to discretion. Why? Why would they undermine Albertans' health care so significantly?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, only the members opposite feel that going from 1.9 minimum average direct care hours to 3.62 minimum direct care hours – we're funding that. That's a minimum. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.  
The hon. the minister has the call.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the 3.62 is a minimum. In fact, we know that continuing care services are provided up and above that because we have excellent health care people, health care workers that care about seniors. Seniors in this province deserve the respect and care of . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is next.

### Hospital Discharge Policies

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yesterday we raised the serious issue of an individual recovering from a stroke who instead of getting a long-term care space was placed in a motel room which wasn't large enough to accommodate his wheelchair. Instead of the apology this Albertan deserved, the minister claimed that the proper procedures had all been followed. Can the minister explain, since motel medicine is clearly the new proper procedure, how many other patients are waiting at motels for a long-term care placement?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, any time that we have a patient who feels they're not getting the level of service that they require it is of great concern to all of us. We want to make sure that every Albertan gets the care that they need. That's why we have added \$1.7 billion, and we made that announcement last week. We need better crossministry co-ordination and services, and that's why I'm working with the minister of community and social services and the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction as well, because we have complex patients with complex needs.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Let me clarify one important point for the government, Mr. Speaker. The Leduc Travelodge is not a health care facility. It's not a long-term care facility. The Travelodge did, however, state that an organization had rented eight to 10 rooms for several days for guests, some of whom are in wheelchairs. Will the minister tell this House how much money this provider received from AHS to leave

patients in motel rooms, where they couldn't access the washroom and didn't have room for their wheelchairs?

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health has already said, we have some concerns with what we've read in those articles as well and have reached out to AHS to have a serious conversation with them about their discharge policies. This predates the announcement that took place with the Premier just last week with the Minister of Health and myself, where we have been clear that the ministry of social services is coming along to support the Ministry of Health to make sure that AHS has their discharge policies right so that circumstances like that will not take place again in the future and that we can make sure everybody has access to the social services that they need.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yesterday the minister defended the procedure that resulted in an Albertan who was paralyzed after a stroke being left at a Travelodge in Leduc, saying that, and I quote, AHS followed their proper procedure. End quote. The Premier made it clear that leaving long-term care patients in hotel rooms was her preferred solution, but Albertans are rightly appalled at the treatment this individual received and want answers. Can the minister tell this House right now exactly how many hotels and motels have been booked by the government to address the Premier's increased reliance on motel medicine?

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, just last week the Premier, I . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. I had no problem hearing the question. I'm already having a challenge hearing the answer.

**Mr. Nixon:** Just last week the Premier, I, and the Minister of Health announced that our departments will be working together to be able to make sure that all discharge was being handled well and that people were being kept care of as they left the hospital. Unfortunately, we see some challenges with how AHS has been developed, primarily underneath the former government, which is why the Minister of Health is going forward with the refocusing to make sure we can focus on things like continuing care, Mr. Speaker, and keep all Albertans safe. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.  
The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Energy Industry Property Tax Payments

**Mr. Kasawski:** In 2021 the minister promised a hammer to get municipalities the unpaid taxes they were owed, but less than a year later he admitted that his plan had failed, and he promised to, quote, try something else. The most recent survey shows there is an unpaid tax amount of \$250 million, with \$43 million from the 2023 tax year. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs please enlighten this House on this "something else" he's going to use to get this tax bill paid?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it did help when we passed Bill 7, as the hon. member failed to recognize, a couple of years ago. It did give municipalities a hammer that they didn't have before that in order that they could sue oil and gas companies. However, those that behaved badly continued to, and since then we've worked with the minister of energy and the AER, who passed directive 067, that means that companies that owe back taxes cannot transfer wells. Now those who behave badly are carrying on, and we are working with municipalities once again.



**Mr. Kasawski:** Minister, the UCP have been in government for nearly five years, and in that time the unpaid tax bill has grown by 231.5 per cent. The only thing growing faster is municipalities' lack of faith in this government because the only thing the UCP has done is make vague promises while the amount grows year after year. Can the minister release his timeline to get this property tax bill paid this year, next year, 10 years from now? The rural communities: they're starting to feel like it's never.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, unlike the member opposite, I'll give my answer through the chair, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that if the hon. member was at the Rural Municipalities association this morning, he would have heard them actually thank our government for all the co-operation we've got, and we assured each other that we would continue to work together. The hon. member says that there's no faith, but that's not what we're hearing. This morning we discussed this in front of a whole room of rural municipalities, and I agreed with the president that we would work together. He agreed on that, too, and that's exactly what we will do. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

2:00

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Turn your attention to the Alberta Energy Regulator, Minister, for failing to take action on companies that aren't paying their taxes and ignoring their obligations. The president of the RMA wrote today, as you know: "Enough is enough. When will the AER regulate in the public interest?" That is a very good question, so my question to the minister is simple. Since he failed to address this problem that the AER – that has exploded under his watch with the AER, won't – what should the – oh, my goodness. Since he failed to address this problem that exploded under his watch and since the AER won't, what should municipalities do other than . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member was at the Rural Municipalities this morning instead of poorly writing a question, he would probably know that, again, the president of the Rural Municipalities and I agreed that we would put pressure on the AER to do this. The only thing he is right about is that that needs to be done, and we committed to work together to do that. That's what we'll do. That's how we deal with municipalities. We talk about the problems out loud, we try to agree on the solutions, and we work together on solutions, unlike what the other side ever did. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

#### AUC Inquiry Report Recommendations

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for his transparency and for releasing the AUC report despite the Premier not wanting to release it. The report says that from 2019 to 2021 the largest driver of agricultural land loss was expansion of other industrial sites, not renewables. Other drivers include urban residential development, mines, wells, and roads. Will the UCP now apply its agricultural-first rule on pipelines and urban sprawl? Why did the UCP go against the AUC's advice and single out renewables?

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

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:02.

The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are proceeding with an agricultural-first approach for energy development to make sure that we have coexistence between any development on agricultural land so that we don't by any means sterilize land that can be used for agriculture or livestock purposes for generations in the future. We want to continue to work with the industry, we want to continue to see responsible development, and we want to continue to see affordable prices brought to all consumers' electricity right across Alberta.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** In the 77-page AUC report there is no mention of the 35-kilometre rule from pristine viewscapes, whatever that means. In fact, the only mention of 35 is net-zero grid by 2035 and section 35 for rights and traditional practices in the Constitution Act, so how did your government come up with the arbitrary 35-kilometre rule? Does this now apply to vertical infrastructure like cell towers, high-rise buildings? Does it apply to pumpjacks and drilling rigs in the oil and gas sector?

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All around the world jurisdictions are facing challenges that have to do with viewscapes and pristine viewscapes. Every jurisdiction will define that for themselves: Australia and their beachfronts, the U.K. and their oceanfronts, California and their deserts have all chosen different meanings of pristine viewscapes. For Alberta what that means is our foothills and our majestic Rocky Mountains. From there, around the globe somewhere between 20 kilometres and 35 kilometres has been the accepted distance globally, and that's why we've applied it to our pristine viewscapes right here in Alberta.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** The *Globe and Mail* called the Premier's attack on renewables an attack on free enterprise. Two big power generators in Alberta immediately lost stock value following the UCP's announcements last week. The UCP government received expert AUC advice. The UCP government then decided to go against its own commission's advice and came up with random rules. Other than ideology and listening to David Parker, will the Premier tell us: why is she attacking renewables and damaging our province's reputation?

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're not attacking renewables, but we are making them responsible for their land use. That's why we've taken an agricultural-first lens, and renewables can continue to develop as long as it makes sense within the landscape. We've also given access for municipalities to be representatives of their jurisdiction before the AUC, a voice that they've never had before. We continue to see tremendous investment and tremendous interest in investment in our province in renewables and all the other types of electricity generation. We want to be leaders around the globe in responsible renewable energy development for the betterment of all Albertans.

#### Aboriginal Consultation Office

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Chiefs are growing increasingly distrustful and disillusioned with the Aboriginal consultation office and its inability to uphold treaty rights on sacred lands. For example, in Mackenzie county a lack of consultation with the county has led to frustration and acrimony. The lack of effectiveness has and will again lead to costly legal action for this government and Indigenous governments alike. The minister claims that they've conducted

10,000 consultations through the ACO, yet First Nations are telling me that they're going unheard. Will the Minister of Indigenous Relations rise today to explain why he's failing the duty to consult?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have a very vigorous consultation process in Alberta. There is a legal duty to consult on projects, and we take that very seriously: 10,000 to 15,000 consultations done in Alberta every year. That's what keeps this province moving. Alberta's management and development of provincial Crown lands and natural resources is subject to its legal and constitutional duty to consult First Nations and, where appropriate, accommodate their interests when Crown decisions may adversely affect their continued exercise of constitutionally protected treaty rights.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Given that the Ministry of Indigenous Relations has been camouflaging weak consultative processes as economic accelerants for years and given that Treaty 8 First Nations, including Tallcree First Nation and Dene Tha' First Nation, have seen their access to traditional sites to practise protected treaty rights to fish, hunt, harvest, and host ceremony eroded by one approved development project after another, contrary to established case law by the Supreme Court, can the minister stand before Treaty 8 chiefs here today and say that the ACO is genuinely concerned with protecting Cree, Dene, and Anishinabe treaty rights as much as it is in making money from their lands?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, many of the Treaty 8 First Nations are involved in some of our bigger projects across the province through the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, and we believe in making Indigenous communities partners in prosperity. On our duty to consult, there are three factors that are present: Alberta has a real constructive knowledge of a right, Alberta's decision relating to land and natural resource management is contemplated, and Alberta's decision has the potential to adversely affect and impact the exercise of a treaty right. We take that very seriously. We've gone through our department, and we've streamlined it so that the First Nations understand right away what's happening in their areas.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Given that the ACO has been driving down jurisdictional judgment on consultative decisions on project after project and given that the Treaty 8 chiefs along with every Indigenous nation in Alberta deserve a higher degree of consultative certainty from the ACO that Indigenous rights are intersectional and require a longer view of impact assessment than just the length of construction or recovery, will the Minister of Indigenous Relations commit to an external review of the ACO by an integrated panel of Indigenous leaders and environmental experts?

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, beyond the legal duty to consult and in the name of reconciliation, Indigenous Relations, as a matter of best practice, assists other departments in engaging – engaging is much different than consultation – with Indigenous peoples and communities in a wide range of regulatory, economic, and social programs and policy development initiatives. We're making sure that all of the communities are very well aware of what's happening in their area, and we're working closely with them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Camrose is next.

## Women's Shelters

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I was happy to hear that our government is following through on our election commitment to increase funding for women's shelters, including one in my own constituency, Camrose. Women's shelters are so important in providing help, support, and a safe place for women fleeing domestic violence to overcome some of the darkest challenges of their lives. To the Minister of Children and Family Services: how did you decide the best way to allocate funding to women's shelters?

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

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Camrose for just being such an incredible advocate for women that need help in her constituency. This morning, as she alluded to, I was so pleased to announce that we're increasing our support for women's shelters and strengthening this entire sector. Making sure that vulnerable women continue to receive the supports that they need so that we can ensure that children and families are protected remains one of my top priorities. That's why we're focusing our funding efforts on shelters and programs with a demonstrated need right around the entire province, which includes the women's shelter in Camrose.

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

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. Given that women's shelters have long expressed concern about the number of unfunded beds across the province and given that a lack of available beds may result in turning to shelters outside their own community for help, can the same minister explain how our investment in women's shelters is helping survivors better access the supports that they need when they need them?

2:10

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

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you so much. Thank you again to the member for that great question. You know, I'm pleased to say that with the announcement this morning we're funding 104 more beds in shelters right across the entire province, and this includes 81 previously unfunded beds at 12 separate shelters. This also includes 24 new beds at three shelters, which includes doubling the number of beds in Whitecourt from 11 to 22 and adding at both the Banff YWCA and Eileen's Place. These additional spaces mean that we are continuing our investments to make sure that women and families are protected.

Thanks again to the Member for Camrose.

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

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that the new fiscal year is just around the corner and given that many shelters are eagerly awaiting the dollars from this morning's announcement so that they can better serve survivors, can the minister explain how the additional \$10 million is being rolled out to shelters across Alberta and will better serve vulnerable Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. We just recently had a round-table with women's shelters right around the entire province, just over a month ago, and we heard loud and clear about their desire to help support women's shelters around the province. That's what the announcement this morning was all about, an additional \$5 million of immediate stimulus to help support these incredible women, these incredible shelters that are looking after families right around the entire province. I was also happy to see that Jan Reimer was there as well and her endorsement of our plan and her acknowledgement that this was one of the largest new investments into women's shelters over the last 10 years. A great announcement.

### South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project

**Mr. Ip:** Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the Premier spoke to the rapid growth of Red Deer and suggested to my constituents that instead of building the much-needed south Edmonton hospital, they could make a one and a half hour drive for emergency care. The Premier said that the Red Deer hospital can, quote, perhaps support some of the south Edmonton residents in getting emergency care. To the Minister of Health: was this your advice to the Premier, to tell Edmontonians to take a quick 90-minute drive to get emergent care?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, when I became the Minister of Health, I was informed that the south Edmonton hospital, which the members opposite actually put on the list for political reasons – it was put on for political reasons with no business plan, no feasibility study – when in fact all the indications, all the reports that I've read thus far indicate that a hospital is actually required in the north of Edmonton. We are looking to make sure that we provide spaces right across Edmonton to make sure that Edmontonians are well served.

**Mr. Ip:** Mr. Speaker, given that the last hospital built in Edmonton was the Grey Nuns hospital, which was built in 1988, 36 years ago, and given that the population of Edmonton has increased by 10.7 per cent in less than five years, seeing overcrowded hallway beds in hospitals, and given that Edmonton is short over 500 beds today and will be short over 1,500 beds by 2027, will the minister explain why they cancelled the south Edmonton hospital despite significant population growth and bed shortages in Edmonton?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, we are in fact making sure that we provide spaces within Edmonton. We have got allocations for the Stollery children's hospital as well as the redevelopment of the Royal Alexandra hospital, the WestView health centre, and Strathcona community centre. We've also set aside \$88 million in funding for integrated health and social infrastructure planning throughout Alberta Infrastructure. In the Minister of Infrastructure's budget there are these funds to make sure that we're planning spaces where they're required. We're looking at building a smaller purpose-built facility for surgical centres, outlying continuing care . . .

**Mr. Ip:** Given that my constituents have been asked to make a drive for their emergency care all the way to Red Deer instead of having essential infrastructure in south Edmonton and given that the drive is, well, an hour and a half away from Edmonton, passing motel medicine in Leduc and hallway medicine in our overcrowded hospitals and now highway hospitals, will the minister admit they have no plan to address our failing health care system under their disastrous government?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the members opposite would agree that a \$4.9 billion hospital to add 400 spaces, when we can look at other options that would work in a more timely fashion to address the needs of Edmontonians, is perhaps not the most logical thing to do. We are in fact going to put a very comprehensive capital infrastructure plan for this province forward in the coming months, and I look forward to sharing that. Right now we need to do that strategic planning, which the members opposite didn't do when they were in office.

### Water Management

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans take care of one another, especially in hard times. As we move into the fourth year of drought, I have every belief that the spirit of the community will continue. However, I am concerned that this government is not upholding its side of the bargain. All Albertans need to understand how the drought will impact them and how to abide by rules to ensure best outcomes during this difficult time. To the minister: what is the government's plan for monitoring and enforcing drought-related regulations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I do really appreciate this question about drought. It is an issue that is top of mind for Albertans, especially in southern Alberta but right across our province. You know, I would say that we have been taking unprecedented and swift action on drought, and the member opposite is correct that previously when we have been in situations like this, Albertans and all of our major water users were able to come together to get us through those challenging times. That's exactly what we're seeing right now as we undertake the largest water-sharing agreement discussions in our province's history. I hope I will have more to say on that in the coming weeks about specifics.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that smaller water licence holders have a different oversight than the major licence holders and given that this possesses a real risk if smaller water licence holders begin to store water in dugouts that can cause downstream contaminations, a risk that we can't afford to take, and given that near Shamrock, Saskatchewan, 200 cattle were killed as a result of contaminated water, a tragedy that I would agree that all of us in this House would like to avoid in our rural communities, will the minister explain what measures the government is taking to protect livestock from drought-related risks? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. While I'm sure the member appreciates the encouragement, perhaps we'll just let the hon. the minister answer the question.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are working very closely with my colleague the Minister of Ag and Irrigation as well as agricultural producers as we make decisions moving forward. We do need flexibility when it comes to our regulations to weather through a situation like this, but of course we have said repeatedly that human and animal safety and well-being is, of course, our top priority. That's why we have high-quality standards in place, and that's one of the considerations that we need to take into account before we make any changes to our legislation, regulations, or policies around water.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that every corner of this province will be impacted by drought, including Indigenous communities in remote areas, and given that mitigation risks and limiting the negative impacts of this drought should be a priority for the government and given that Indigenous communities deserve to feel supported as well as that all water is going to be impacted by the drought, what specific plans are in place to support Indigenous communities as they navigate drought this summer, and when will these plans be implemented?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we know that drought is going to impact not just our whole province but over 72 per cent of the land in our country because of the El Niño situation that we're seeing this year. I really do appreciate the member's questions. Specifically in the south is where these conversations about the water-sharing agreements are happening given the acute situation in that corner of the province, and Indigenous communities are, of course, at the table. Like I said, we'll have more to say on details of what those water-sharing agreements look like in a few short weeks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Edmonton . . . [interjections] My apologies to the hon. member. The hon. Member – first day, first day, first day – for West Yellowhead.

#### Road Construction in West Yellowhead

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in 2020 our government made a \$50 million project announcement for upgrades to highway 40 in the West Yellowhead constituency between Hinton and Grand Cache. Many of my constituents were pleased that this long-awaited news was finally happening as upgrades are needed to improve the safety and usability both for recreational and industrial purposes. Highway 40 has been a key corridor not just to the breathtaking views of Grande Cache but also for those visitors en route to Alaska. Can the minister provide an update on the status of the promised road upgrades on highway 40?

2:20

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question. Actually, highway 40 is in the construction program this year for grade widening from highway 16 to south of Grande Cache. There will be two grade-widening projects, with a total of 36 kilometres, plus 10 bridge structures. One project is from the Wildhay River to Pinto Creek, and then, obviously, the Berland River is another 16 kilometres, adding up to that total of a 36-kilometre project. This is all just good news for rural Alberta and residents in West Yellowhead. Obviously, we want to be invested in rural Alberta, and this will continue to do that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that highway 40 supports many important industries, including oil and gas, forestry, mining, and tourism, including Indigenous tourism operators, and given that highway 40 is a critical and strategic corridor for unleashing the potential for

Alberta's conventional industries and for expanding the potential for the tourism sector, to the same minister: can you tell the House how you are co-ordinating with other ministries such as Energy and Minerals, Tourism and Sport, and Forestry and Parks to ensure that infrastructure upgrades are being made in strategic and valuable locations?

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While the NDP couldn't find rural Alberta on the map, we're actually developing a resource revenue map that will actually detail the \$18 billion of resource revenue that the Alberta government takes in from rural Alberta and from West Yellowhead. We'll be working with municipalities through RMA and municipalities directly to know that we can actually detail where the revenue comes from so that when there are road or bridge construction projects, we know where the billions of dollars of revenue to the province come from, and we can make sure that we have adequate infrastructure to make sure that that oil and gas infrastructure is built.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that highway 16 through Edson is getting ruts and holes that make driving through town feel like you're driving through an obstacle course and given that this road is also essential not only for my constituents but also for the heavy industrial traffic that uses it as the main corridor from northwest Alberta into B.C. and given that highway 16 was built through a region known for its muskeg, making it especially difficult to maintain infrastructure, could the same minister outline what consideration is being given to improving and upgrading highway 16?

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I went through that obstacle course with the member just recently, and we're actually hiring an engineering firm to work with the town of Edson to develop improvements to that road.

Mr. Speaker, I just did budget estimates this morning, and you'll find this interesting. The \$80 billion NDP legacy debt, when they were in four years of government: the debt-servicing payments are \$3.3 billion annually. The entire Transportation and Economic Corridors budget is \$3.3 billion annually, so if the NDP had never existed, we would be able to double our budget. Let's make sure that never happens . . . [interjections]

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

#### Health Care System

**Member Loyola:** This government keeps letting Albertans down by failing to deliver on key health care promises. The Premier told Albertans that she would fix the health care crisis over a year ago; we're all still waiting. The UCP enticed voters with their plans for a hospital in south Edmonton. They campaigned on it, and after getting elected, they cancelled those plans. How many more promises will the UCP break before they admit they've broken the health care system, too?

**Member LaGrange:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I've gone around the province on the refocusing engagements. We've had roughly about 60 engagements. We've had close to 2,000 health care workers and Albertans attend in person. We've had over 18,000 engagements.

You know what every single one of them says? What's currently happening is not working, so we need to do something differently. Doing the same things over and over again and expecting different results is not fixing the problem, so we are endeavouring on the refocusing. We're already starting to see improvements in EMS wait times, et cetera, et cetera. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Member Loyola:** Well, what's happening isn't working.

Given that Albertans have seen this show before when Conservatives announced the Calgary cancer centre, then they cancelled the Calgary cancer centre, reannounced the Calgary cancer centre, moved the Calgary cancer centre, and then they cancelled it again, given that my constituents in Edmonton-Ellerslie are facing long wait times... [interjections]

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

**Member Loyola:** ... no access to family doctors, and a health care crisis that is only made worse by cancelling the south Edmonton hospital, what will it take for this minister to realize that game playing is impacting the health of south Edmonton, and when will the south Edmonton hospital be built?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I feel like I've already answered this today, but I'm happy to reiterate the fact that the proposed \$4.9 billion dollar south Edmonton hospital, which would only increase bed capacity by 400, which is going to take at least a decade to build, is not the solution that would actually support south Edmonton in a timely fashion. We're looking at all of our options, including increasing spaces in current facilities. Of course, it is easier to modernize than it is to actually build new facilities. We are making sure that Edmontonians are well served.

**Member Loyola:** Given that this government's privatization experiments have been a complete failure, with reports last week stating that the DynaLife debacle did cost taxpayers another \$97 million, and given that a former dean of medicine at the University of Calgary has called this situation a nightmare, will the minister admit that this government's push for privatization has done nothing but cost Albertans valuable dollars? How many nurses could have been paid with that \$97 million? How many doctors? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, DynaLife was actually functioning quite well in Edmonton and the north for, you know, two decades is my understanding. When I became the Minister of Health in June of last ... [interjections]

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

**Member LaGrange:** When I became the minister, Mr. Speaker, it was apparent that DynaLife was not able to live up to its contractual obligations. In conjunction with Alberta Precision Labs, Alberta Health Services, we negotiated a contract to take over DynaLife. In fact, during that contract we negotiated a revenue stream, so we actually have a revenue stream of \$11 million to support lab services in Alberta.

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

## Red Deer Regional Hospital Expansion

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday was a good day for Red Deer. We had a public meeting on the Red Deer hospital expansion. It was packed, it was happy, but we see NDP frowny faces, who had been fearmongering on the hospital. They did not treat our hospital fairly. They were no good for Red Deer. To the minister: share the great news on our hospital expansion.

**Member LaGrange:** I am so happy to share the great news, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we are providing the service that the members opposite cancelled when they were in service. We are adding \$810 million over three years for the hospital expansion program. We're undertaking the largest hospital expansion in Alberta's history at the Red Deer regional hospital, a \$1.8 billion expansion. Unlike the NDP, who had actually taken it off the capital infrastructure list, I'm proud to be the Minister of Health and the MLA for Red Deer-North who gets it done. [interjections]

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Mr. Speaker, we're living the dream. Given that we hear of contract nurses ...

**The Speaker:** All questions after question 4 will be done without a preamble.

**Mr. Stephan:** ... getting paid much more than local nurses, reducing morale at the hospital, given that we also hear of overtime for part-time nurses while full-time nurses do not get overtime, reducing morale, given that fairness and pay is good for morale, to the minister: what will be done to address unfairness in pay to improve nurse morale at the hospital?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Contract nurses typically earn more than noncontract employees due to the nature ... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall will come to order.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Contract nurses typically earn more than noncontract employees due to the nature of their employment such as not having union support, unpredictable work schedules, and travel requirements. Our government cares about the health and wellness of our nurses, and we want to continue creating healthy work environments. In fact, AHS and Covenant Health are working to increase benefit coverage for psychological and mental health care for nurses. We've added 7,586 regulated nurses ...

2:30

**Mr. Stephan:** Given that if you have a heart attack outside of Calgary or Edmonton, there are no cardiac cath services; given heart attacks are common health emergencies, especially with the NDP, with health outcomes not as good as travelling longer distances to Edmonton or Calgary; given that the Red Deer hospital serves about 400,000 throughout central Alberta, as much as any hospital in Edmonton or Calgary, to the minister: when will the hospital get cardiac cath services? [interjections]

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

The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Red Deer regional hospital redevelopment: a historic project in Alberta with a \$1.8 billion investment. I am happy to say that in that investment we will have two cath labs that will be included in this Red Deer project scheduled to open in 2030, but we are exploring all opportunities to accelerate that timeline and get those cath labs up and running quicker for Albertans, because the member who asked the question, in fact, has stated accurately that we suffer severe loss within Red Deer. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order

The hon. Member for Calgary-Edgemont.

### Breast Cancer Screening

**Ms Hayter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. B.C., Nova Scotia, Yukon, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, and now Saskatchewan have all lowered or committed to lowering mammogram screening to age 40. I imagine that most of us in the Legislature have loved someone diagnosed with breast cancer. We all know mammograms and early detection save lives. Will the minister work with us to ensure that the self-referral age is lowered in Alberta so that women between the ages of 40 to 44 can access mammograms when they need them?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. In fact, I have come to understand that we have been underserved in terms of women's health in the province. That's why I've committed not just \$10 million to – oh, I lost the name of it – one of the health foundations here in Edmonton but we've also committed to another \$10 million for women's health down in Calgary as well because we need to expand services across this province. So, yes, I'm actually going to look at that as a real possibility.

**Ms Hayter:** I would have liked to hear "yes."

Given that 89 per cent of Canadians support lowering the mammogram screening age to 40 and given that this move would ensure better health outcomes as 17 per cent of breast cancers that are diagnosed in women in their 40s are more likely to be aggressive and given that this move is critical as it is about health and racial equity as racialized people are more likely to be diagnosed younger with more aggressive types of cancers – Alberta women deserve to have control over their breast health. Will the minister explain the timeline when this change will be made?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm always committed to looking at women's health improvements right across the province, and there are many opportunities. As I've said, we're working with both the Calgary and the Edmonton health foundations to ensure that we can get the data and the support that will underpin these different services that we're going to provide. As a woman myself I know the importance of having ongoing screening and making sure that women have access to these much-needed supports. It is very, very important. I'm happy to look into this further.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Edgemont, with the absence of a preamble.

**Ms Hayter:** Given that I'm not standing here today to publicize cancer screening but that I'm here to ensure Albertans have the same access to mammograms as all Canadians and given that other provinces are either in the process or have already made these

changes and given that mammograms truly are essential for breast cancer diagnosis but that Albertans have to wait until they're 45 for self-referral, can the minister promise Albertans that they will not be left behind and will always have access to the most current recommended cancer screening practices?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member opposite for this very thoughtful question. In fact, women do need to have ongoing screening. We will always look at: what are the best practices? We will determine how we can meet those best practices. Yes, of course, we want this to happen across Alberta, so we will absolutely look at what are best practices, and then we will make sure that we're funding it appropriately. We are committed to ensuring women's health is improved across this province. We are leaders in the country and we'll continue to be so. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### UCP Election Promises

**Mr. Dach:** How many promises can the government break, alter, or evade and still get away with it? That's the question that *Calgary Herald* columnist Don Braid is asking about this government's shameless broken promises government. First up was the south Edmonton hospital, which the Premier told Albertans she was fighting for before the election, but after the election she tells patients to drive to Red Deer instead. Can the Premier explain how she went from fighting for the south Edmonton hospital to telling patients to hit the highway?

**Member LaGrange:** I feel like I've answered this once, maybe even twice today, but I'm happy to answer it a third time, Mr. Speaker. The south Edmonton hospital that the members opposite put on for purely political reasons at the time that they put it on, knowing that where a hospital is actually required in Edmonton . . . [interjections]

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

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite knew that a hospital was actually required in the north. There's a lot of background information. There's a lot of strategic advice that was given at that time. We will in fact make sure that Edmontonians are served.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier may feel she's got nothing left to lose in Edmonton and given that the Premier on day one of the campaign promised a permanent billion-dollar tax cut that would start in January but given that the promise lasted about as long as her promise that there would be no floor crossers from the Wildrose and given that under this budget costs are going up but the only supports the UCP is interested in providing are those ensuring that the Premier gets more expensive gifts and her friends can get higher salaries, will the Premier please clarify for the sake of Albertans that every promise she made to get their vote is null and void?

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said, we're still very committed to the personal income tax cut as laid out in Budget 2024. We will legislate in 2025. We'll go to a 9 per cent,

\$60,000 threshold in '26 and an 8 per cent in '27. The value of this tax cut is \$1.4 billion. I'd remind Albertans and the opposition that by reindexing the basic personal exemption, that saved Albertans \$980 million over the course of the past year. We will follow through on our commitments and keep our promises.

**Mr. Dach:** Now, given that the Premier promised there would be no Alberta pension plan, no Alberta police force or municipal political parties during the election but given that this budget makes it clear that those promises were never intended to be kept and given that Albertans are getting a look at the real Premier in this budget, one who hikes their costs, doesn't build the schools or hospitals they need, and puts UCP insiders ahead of Albertans who are struggling to get ahead, how can anyone be expected to trust the Premier whose promises don't last a year? What promises will she break next?

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

**Mr. Schow:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the ministers answering this question prior to me have done a very good job outlining how we are keeping our promises, but on this side of the House we will not be taking any lessons from the NDP on how to run the province. Since taking government, we have had many successes, including opening up 10,000 new recovery spaces for addicts. That's a win. We've also removed the user fees. That's a win. We put \$20 million to move to support contract policing. That's a win. I'll tell you what. So many wins, some people might call that a streak.

#### Affordable Housing in Grande Prairie

**Mr. Dyck:** Mr. Speaker, in my constituency of Grande Prairie business is booming and many Albertans are taking notice. However, growing interest in my constituency means we require additional housing to welcome newcomers. Just recently the city of Grande Prairie was denied its bid for the federal housing accelerator fund, which brings challenges to our rapidly growing city. Could the minister of seniors and social services shed some light on why the federal government may have denied this funding to our growing Alberta municipality and how the federal government is failing my constituents in Grande Prairie?

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the coalition led by that side of the House, the NDP with Justin Trudeau in Ottawa, continue to make sure they only invest in places where they think they can get votes. Shockingly, the Liberals think they can still get votes in the city of Edmonton. I suspect they're wrong. We see some investments coming from the federal government in housing and that area but nowhere else in the province. They continue to invest billions of your dollars in areas where there are targeted votes. We will continue to call upon them for fair per capita funding in Confederation.

2:40

**Mr. Dyck:** Given that Justin Trudeau and the Liberal-NDP minions are reluctant to support Grande Prairie due to its importance to the Alberta energy sector now and in the future and given that Grande Prairie plans to continue its promised expansion with or without the help of Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government, could the same minister please expand upon the measures in the 2024 budget to

support housing initiatives in the Grande Prairie region and surrounding communities? [interjections]

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. The NDP, the entire time they were in government and as the opposition, have shown their disdain to rural Alberta and have done nothing to be able to invest inside communities like the hon. member's. I love going to Grande Prairie and seeing the great work that is taking place there.

Earlier last week I announced \$840 million more going into affordable housing because – he's right – we're going to continue to invest, with or without the federal government, to make sure our province continues to move forward. Unfortunately, the NDP are going to continue to shore up Justin Trudeau and keep punishing the great people of Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Dyck:** Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP's urban-focused policies completely left growing and rural municipalities in the dust and further given that this government intends to bring all Albertans to the table from every corner of this province, could the same minister please outline the plan to support the growing communities of northern Alberta, like my constituency of Grande Prairie, and level the playing field so every Albertan community across our great province has equal opportunities for growth? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Doug Schweitzer used to say in this House: we're happy to get a bus and be able to bring the NDP up to northern Alberta and show them where it is or to show them where rural Alberta is at any time. I know that they're confused. The hon. member is right that the NDP will continue to attack rural Alberta, unfortunately, because that's what they continue to do, but this government is going to continue to invest in the north. Underneath the leadership of the hon. member, again, you will see significant investments coming from every department, including from my department, when it comes to things like housing or working on some of the serious social services issues in their community.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. [interjection]

Order. Order. Order.

In light of the immediate delivery of the estimates meetings, that are quickly to follow, there will be no 30-second break. If you need to leave to get to those places, do so expediently and quietly. We will proceed with the remainder of the daily Routine.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Lac St. Anne-Parkland has a tabling.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 20 of the Auditor General Act it is my pleasure as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to table the Report of the Auditor General, March 2024. A copy of the full report will also be provided to members.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? This may be slightly tricky. The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Wright:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a *Vancouver Sun* article: Federal Government Eyes RCMP's Future as a National Police Force, May Drop Contract Policing for Small Communities.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table more copies of e-mails from constituents who are urging their MLAs as well as the minister who is apparently responsible for housing to support Bill 205. These are constituents from Calgary and Edmonton, and they're urging support for Bill 205 rent caps.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? [interjection]

Order. Order. Order.

Hon. members, that brings us to points of order, and at 2:02 the hon. the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

**Mr. Schow:** Withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I consider this matter dealt with and concluded as it has been withdrawn.

That brings us to a statement that is important, and as such I will deliver it. The legislative policy committees will convene this

afternoon and tomorrow morning for the consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will continue consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation in the Grassland Room.

This evening the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Forestry and Parks in the Rocky Mountain Room.

Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism in the Grassland Room.

Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) and the main estimates schedule of '24-25 the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:46 p.m.]







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