



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 29, 2024

Day 59

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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

Al-Guneid, Nagwan, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP)
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),
Official Opposition Whip
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC),
Deputy Premier
Elmeligi, Sarah, Banff-Kananaskis (NDP)
Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC),
Government Whip
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)
Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)
Hoyle, Rhiannon, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)
Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche
(UC)
Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (Ind)
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)
Kasawski, Kyle, Sherwood Park (NDP)
Kayande, Samir, Calgary-Elbow (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)

Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC)
McDougall, Myles, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)
Metz, Luanne, Calgary-Varsity (NDP)
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC)
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre
(UC)
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North West (UC)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),
Government House Leader
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. R.J., ECA, Highwood (UC)
Sinclair, Scott, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),
Premier
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),
Official Opposition Assistant Whip
Tejada, Lizette, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Turton, Hon. Searle, ECA, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Wiebe, Ron, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Williams, Hon. Dan D.A., ECA, Peace River (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 48

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and
Executive Director of Parliamentary
Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and
Committees
Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary
Programs
Amanda LeBlanc, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Lang Bawn, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Danielle Smith | Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations |
| Mike Ellis | Deputy Premier, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services |
| Mickey Amery | Minister of Justice |
| Devin Dreesen | Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors |
| Tanya Fir | Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women |
| Nate Glubish | Minister of Technology and Innovation |
| Pete Guthrie | Minister of Infrastructure |
| Nate Horner | President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance |
| Brian Jean | Minister of Energy and Minerals |
| Matt Jones | Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade |
| Adriana LaGrange | Minister of Health |
| Todd Loewen | Minister of Forestry and Parks |
| Ric McIver | Minister of Municipal Affairs |
| Dale Nally | Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction |
| Nathan Neudorf | Minister of Affordability and Utilities |
| Demetrios Nicolaides | Minister of Education |
| Jason Nixon | Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services |
| Rajan Sawhney | Minister of Advanced Education |
| Joseph Schow | Minister of Tourism and Sport |
| Rebecca Schulz | Minister of Environment and Protected Areas |
| R.J. Sigurdson | Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation |
| Searle Turton | Minister of Children and Family Services |
| Dan Williams | Minister of Mental Health and Addiction |
| Rick Wilson | Minister of Indigenous Relations |
| Muhammad Yaseen | Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism |

Parliamentary Secretaries

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk | Parliamentary Secretary for Settlement Services and Ukrainian Evacuees |
| Andrew Boitchenko | Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Relations |
| Chantelle de Jonge | Parliamentary Secretary for Affordability and Utilities |
| Shane Getson | Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridor Development |
| Grant Hunter | Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development |
| Martin Long | Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health |
| Chelsae Petrovic | Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement |
| Scott Sinclair | Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Policing |
| Tany Yao | Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development |

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Yao
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell

Boitchenko
Bouchard
Brar
Hunter
Kasawski
Kayande
Wiebe

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Getson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loyola

Boparai
Cyr
de Jonge
Elmeligi
Hoyle
Stephan
Wright, J.
Yao

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

Chair: Mr. Getson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Long

Arcand-Paul
Ellingson
Hunter
Ip
Lovely
Rowswell
Sabir
Wright, J.

Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

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

Dach
Hunter
Irwin
Petrovic
Rowswell
Sabir
Wiebe
Wright, P.

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Lovely
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Batten
Boitchenko
Long
Lunty
Metz
Petrovic
Singh
Tejada

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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

Chapman
Dyck
Eremenko
Hunter
Long
Renaud
Shepherd
Sinclair

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Eggen
Gray
Long
Phillips
Rowswell
Sabir
Singh
Yao

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Pitt
Deputy Chair: Mr. Stephan

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

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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

Arcand-Paul
Ceci
Cyr
Dach
Gray
Johnson
Stephan
Wiebe

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Sabir
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell

Armstrong-Homeniuk
de Jonge
Haji
Lovely
Lunty
McDougall
Renaud
Schmidt

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Rowswell
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schmidt

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

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 29, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Member for Edmonton-North West's 15th Anniversary of Election

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we get any further into the daily Routine, I wanted to take a moment to recognize that earlier this session marked the 15th anniversary of the first election of the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West. [applause] Order. I've got lots to say about him. We're going to be here all day if we continue.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is the first member of the 31st Legislature to reach this particular milestone. Some factoids that you might find interesting. By serving over 15 years, the hon. member is in the 89th percentile of all members of the Assembly. Of the 984 members that have ever been elected to the Assembly, only 105 of them have ever served over 15 years, an incredible accomplishment and certainly a testament to the support that he has of his constituents. As of today the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has served 5,617 days in the Assembly. To put that in perspective, if the hon. member was to have been walking around the world, he could have done that over 16 times. I'm sure on a couple of occasions over the last 15 years he would have liked to be a world away.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has served this Assembly for 15 years with dignity, grace, courage, and strength. I invite him to the dais to be recognized for his 15 years of service. [Standing ovation]

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's my pleasure to welcome a number of very special guests joining us in the Speaker's gallery, joining us today to celebrate the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West's anniversary of 15 years of loyal service to Albertans. If you're doing elected service properly, it certainly demands an incredible amount of sacrifice from those who decided to seek office, and often that sacrifice is unfairly placed on the demands of their family. While the member is the one being recognized today for his long decades of service – his grandchild is speaking out in full-hearted support – I wanted to take this opportunity on behalf of members of the Assembly to thank the hon. member's family who are joining us in the Speaker's gallery today. I wish to invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly: Somboon Eggen, daughter Genevieve Eggen, son Leon Somerville, and joining in the gallery are two very dear friends, Louise and Nishant. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, on occasion the Speaker does provide a slight amount of discretion for members to introduce individuals in the Speaker's gallery, and I've allotted that same discretion to the hon. Leader of the Opposition to introduce her family today.

We're just getting started.

Ms Notley: I know.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you my husband, Lou Arab; my son, Ethan; and my daughter, Sophie, who are here today to observe, perhaps with some great relief, my last day sitting in this particular chair. I see and I'd like to note that they really do clean up quite well. Could all three of them please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the most amazing, most effective political staff in the country. Some have actually been with me since 2008, some actually joined our team this month, and some are holding down the fort in our Calgary and our Lethbridge offices watching this now. Thank you to each and every one of you for your unwavering commitment and your invaluable contributions to our team, to our movement, and, most of all, for supporting and putting up with me all of these years. Please, all of you, rise and receive the warm welcome of all members of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a school group to introduce.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce the Edmonton Christian Northeast school, with 68 students who are visiting the Legislature this afternoon. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce four guests from Calgary: Saima Jamal, a well-known community organizer and social activist; Laila Abdalrahim, youth development worker with Trellis Society and a Palestinian from Gaza; Nazia Harris, real estate agent for 20 years in Calgary; and Sam Nammoura, a well-known Arabic media person and cofounder of Calgary Immigrant Support Society. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment and parks.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do rise today to introduce two dedicated Albertans from the Alberta Recycling Management Authority, Ed Gugenheimer, chief executive officer, and board chair, Brad Pickering. They have helped our province lead the way across Canada on effective recycling and are helping us implement extended producer responsibility. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to welcome to you and through you some representatives from a fabulous organization called the Candora Society in the heart of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. They're here to mark the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the society. We have Janice Theriault, Crystal Nahaiouski, Dawn Williston, Lindsey Kosterewa, Rebecca

Steinhubl. Unfortunately, Graham couldn't make it, but he's here in spirit. If they could please rise and have that wonderful warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so delighted to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Ahmed Shakeel from Calgary and his brother Razi Manzoor Ahmed, a visitor from Pakistan. Ahmed Shakeel is a media professional who covers ethnocultural community, is a community volunteer and a board member of the Pakistan Canada Association. Mr. Razi Manzoor Ahmed has been a lifelong activist for labour rights, and he is currently visiting Canada. Please rise and receive the welcome of the House.

Ms Hayter: I rise today to introduce to you and through you one of three of my most favourite individuals in the world. I am such a proud mama, and I love that I get to introduce you in the House today. Liam, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West. No?
The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly seven of my great friends, Samuel and Jackson Corry, brothers and master fiddlers; Anna Smilek, a member of their band; Daniel and Amberly Allers, creators and presenters of North America's number one voted online history curriculum, History Plus; and newlyweds Dave and Nicole Verhoef. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

Mr. Haji: It's a great honour and privilege, Mr. Speaker, to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Mohamed Hersi, Yusuf Ali, Ali Mohamud, who are members of the Somali elders council known as ergo. I ask Mr. Ali, Mr. Hersi, and Mr. Mohamud to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to introduce to the Assembly my good friend and Strathmore town councillor Brent Wiley; his wife, Melissa; and their two daughters, Penny and Josie. I wish Penny best of luck to tomorrow at the Alberta music festival provincials and invite them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce Lindsay Davis. Not only is she a great friend of mine, but she's also the president of the Calgary-Acadia constituency association. Please rise to receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment and parks has another introduction.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to rise today to introduce Shakeel Ahmed. I've had the pleasure of getting to know him and his wife, Naveed, since 2019. They are dedicated community builders with the *Canadian Times* and also active volunteers on our Calgary-Shaw constituency association board.

Please rise, Shakeel, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all I'm honoured to introduce Mr. Umang Taneja, a mechanical engineer also dedicated to educating others for the past three decades. He's accompanied by his students Amanpreet Singh and Satbir Reen as well as Mandeep Kaur. They're also with local community leaders and good friends Jarnail Basota and Jagdish Nischal. I ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this House my amazing legislative co-ordinator, Naseem Abouhassan. He's only been with me for a few months, but he's just a wonderful person, and I'm sure his parents, Sam and – I can't remember his mom's name. I'm so sorry. She's watching. But they're so proud of him.

And I'd like to wish my mom online a speedy recovery. I love you, Mom.

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

Member Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you Mr. Gurinder Mohan Singh, who is the president of Baba Farid Educational Religious Society. He is joined by his wife, Jasraymon Kaur. It is an honour to have them here. Thank you for coming from my hometown of Faridkot. It's an honour. Please rise and receive the warm welcome.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise to introduce my father, Brian Glubish, who is joining us today for question period. He's been a great inspiration to me, and I'm so proud to have him here with us today.

I also am excited to introduce a great family friend, Dr. Denis Lamoureux from the University of Alberta's St. Joseph's College, whose work on science and religion has really helped me to reconcile faith and science. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader has a request to make.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do indeed. I rise to request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(3.1)(a) to allow for a response of up to five minutes from the Official Opposition.

The Speaker: We might just ask, for the request. With all due respect to the Leader of the Opposition: does the five minutes include tears or no tears? No tears?

This is a request for unanimous consent to extend the response to the ministerial statement from three minutes to five minutes.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Ministerial Statements

Tribute to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, we have a lot of disagreements in this Chamber. It often seems as though we disagree on everything – the budget, legislation, motions, points of order – but I believe there are a couple of things that we do agree

on. First, that each person in this Assembly is here to work for Albertans and to enact policies that we believe are in the best interests of Albertans and the best interests of our province. Second, that being an elected official is hard work: the kilometres travelled, it keeps us away from our families, the late nights, the endless events and meetings, the public scrutiny, the loss of private life. Third, it can be very difficult being the leader of a political party and Premier of the best province in the country.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is all worth it, and it is such an honour and a privilege to hold the role of an elected official, leader, and Premier. With all that in mind I would like to acknowledge my colleague opposite, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the Leader of the Official Opposition. The member is the longest serving member in our Legislature today, a feat that cannot go unrecognized given the commitment it takes. She's been a Member of our Legislative Assembly since she was first elected in the spring of 2008. After serving as an MLA for six and a half years, she became the leader of her party and has been in that role for nine and a half years, including four as Premier of the great province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, through you, I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for her dedication to her roles over the past 16 years. In that time she has been an effective parliamentarian and has remained committed to her principles.

The Leader of the Opposition and I have also come together in times of devastation. We all remember the terrible wildfires that raged across our province, resulting in the evacuations of tens of thousands of Albertans. It can be hard enough to manage a wildfire response in regular times, but during an election campaign it's much more difficult. So I appreciate the leader of the NDP taking some time out of her campaign also to meet with me and visit the wildfire evacuation centre here in Edmonton with me. In times of tragedy it's important that we come together, but it's also important that we come together on days like today, which looks likely to be the final legislative day for the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in the role of Leader of the Official Opposition.

Once again, through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank her for her years of service to Edmontonians and Albertans and to wish her all the very best in whatever comes next for her. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the Premier for those kind words. Yesterday while I was cleaning out the office currently occupied by the Leader of the Official Opposition – it's a corner office – I came across the pictures for every Assembly I've been elected to. In the first one you have to squint to see me, sitting in the back corner, the backbencher in a caucus of two. In the next one I've actually moved to the front row, still way over there in the corner but at that point the leader of an amazing caucus of four.

That picture, of course, also includes the Member for Edmonton-North West, who I also want to congratulate for his 15 years of service and thank for walking this long and winding journey with me. Together the four of us worked hard to punch above our weight, speaking truth to a power that Albertans thought they would never successfully challenge.

But in the following picture, it turns out, I'm sitting over where the Premier sits now. That was fun, Mr. Speaker, and busy. Now, I admit that we didn't get it all right. It was a tough time. Members opposite love to revel in conflating the internationally driven oil price crash and the resulting loss of \$7 billion in one year alone with actions taken by our government, and they also like to argue that

somehow now they deserve credit for the more recent price spike. They know neither is true. The greatest impact a government can actually have on the price of oil and its contribution to Alberta's treasury is by creating market access. Our government did that for Alberta with the construction of a pipeline to tidewater.

We also worked hard to have the backs of Albertans during those tough times. We cut child poverty in half, we built the Calgary cancer centre, and we built and modernized 240 schools, and with the phase-out of coal we achieved the single biggest reduction in carbon emissions of any province in the history of this country. Now, there were other parts of fighting climate change that could have been done differently, but I was also very proud to lead a government that acknowledged the climate change crisis and understood the responsibility we have and we owe to future generations to do whatever we can to combat it.

Now, the final seat that I've occupied is this one, honoured to serve as the leader of the largest Official Opposition this province has ever had, proudly standing up on behalf of all Albertans, including the many who didn't vote for the Conservatives and the growing number who wish they didn't. Since January, though, my role has changed a touch, when I became what some folks refer to as a lame duck leader. Now, I understand members across the way have limited experience with that one given that Conservatives tend to take out their leaders more frequently than most of us do the recycling.

Regardless, and in that context as well as so many others, I wish to thank the members of my caucus. The discipline, the solidarity, the grace, and the work ethic that you've demonstrated have been inspiring. As members of Alberta's largest ever Official Opposition I know you will use all the experience you're gaining now to become members of Alberta's best ever NDP government.

1:50

I also want to thank the many staff who've worked with us and with me over the years. Many are here today. Their commitment to stand up for Albertans through long days and great stress is often unseen, but your work is utterly essential to all we have achieved, and none of it would have been achieved without you.

To the people of Edmonton-Strathcona, my constituents, friends, neighbours, and volunteers: thank you for your support over the last 16-plus years.

To my family: I thank you for supporting me in all the work I've been able to do in and out of this amazing building. It's a different, sometimes difficult life, but you've mostly put up with it, and no matter what seat I end up in next, back here somewhere or maybe over there in the backbenches of the next NDP government, I will definitely be spending more time with my family, whether you're ready for me or not. And I do have a list of chores either way.

Finally, on this the last day that I will occupy this particular seat, I'm reminded that this work, with all its warts and cantankerous exchanges, all the hazards of social media and the unending hours outside of this building, is an immense honour. A lot of people like to shake their fists at clouds. Very few of us get to do it professionally. There is no bad seat in this House. I've never tried yours, Mr. Speaker. I could maybe use a stool, though.

In all seriousness, to all of the members of this Legislature who've served beside me or across from me: wherever you sit, never forget the incredible privilege and awesome responsibility we have to channel the hopes, the expectations, the ambitions of all of the citizens of the best place in the world to live, our province of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [applause]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Oral Question Period

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

Health System Reform

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the most important thing a provincial government can do is deliver high-quality public health care, but that's exactly the thing that this government is most significantly failing to do. We have too few health care workers and even fewer beds. But instead of addressing these problems, the UCP is making them worse and planning to blow the whole thing up with Bill 20. To the Premier: when will she admit that the solution to fixing health care starts with hiring more front-line workers, not appointing more UCP cabinet ministers?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, yesterday, last year we have been hiring more front-line workers, more paramedics, more nurses. We've been attracting more doctors, and we're going to continue doing that. The process we're going through right now is a refocusing so that AHS can be focused on hospital acute-care services; Mental Health and Addiction can focus on mental health and addiction; and Seniors, Community and Social Services can focus on not only homelessness but also assisted living as well as making sure that we've got the best primary care system in the world. That's what we're doing.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, last night alone 20 operating rooms in Alberta were shut down due to a lack of staff. Today thousands of Albertans are waiting for continuing care. For three weeks an 81-year-old Albertan suffered in UCP hallway health care, and their motel medicine scheme denied Albertans access to care, food, or even an accessible washroom. To the Premier: knowing this record, how in heaven's name does she expect any Albertan to believe more UCP ministers will do anything but make all of this health care worse?

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

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that focusing acute care on acute care, AHS making sure they're focused on that, will absolutely improve performance. We're investing \$4.5 billion in capital funding over three years to address health capital needs and provide more acute-care spaces. Through the process of refocusing we're going to address the issue of having more than 1,500 people who need an alternative level of care in the appropriate facility. We have already refocused EMS, and the response times have massively improved. We've seen a drop in the EMS times over the past year.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, motel medicine could have been solved earlier if the two ministers responsible hadn't spent months screaming "not it" when it came to responsibility. To the Premier: Adding three more UCP ministers to the game of accountability hot potato isn't going to improve a thing. Why won't she also admit that she was wrong and instead listen to experts and, as a start, invest in retaining and recruiting the doctors, nurses, and other front-line health care workers we desperately need? They are not currently establishing the relationship that's necessary to get them here.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most important things we need to do is improve the working conditions for our hard-working front-line workers in all of our hospitals, and part of that is making sure that we've got patients in the appropriate facility getting cared for by the appropriate type of service provider. If you are a long-term care patient, you should be in a long-term care facility; if you require mental health support, you should be in a facility that specializes in mental health support; if you have addiction, you should be in one of our recovery communities on the path to recovery so that our hospitals can be hospitals. That will attract more workers.

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

Government Policies and Cost of Living

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier spent any time talking to anyone outside either her caucus or the TBA, she would learn that under her government more Albertans are living paycheque to paycheque, finding it harder to make ends meet, and even having to rely on food banks so they can afford to make their rent. To the Premier: there's so much she can do within her own scope of authority to make life more affordable, so why has she refused to do any of it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most important things that we did was to counteract the Liberal-NDP carbon tax by taking our own fuel tax off for a period of over two years. That saved \$2 billion for our Alberta ratepayers. As the members opposite know, when the international price of oil goes down, the fuel tax comes on but will also come off again if the price of fuel continues to go up. We're launching a major review of electricity to bring down electricity prices – those will come into effect January 1 – and we just launched a consultation on insurance. That's coming next.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, Albertans know the truth. The costs are not coming down. Two-thirds of Calgarians say their quality of life is down. But you know what is up under the UCP? Auto insurance, 30 per cent; power rates, 75 per cent; natural gas bills, 71 per cent. To the Premier: since she broke her promise to lower income tax and then reraised the gas tax, when will she do something to actually make life more affordable, not less?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, natural gas prices are up because the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa is now charging more than two times the carbon tax than it costs for the base price of fuel. On electricity the members opposite could have reined in Calgary prices by telling them that the way they were charging the local access fee was incorrect, but they chose not to. We're addressing that. We're also addressing the issue of the out-of-control regulated rate option. We're starting the insurance consultation, and we will have more to say on that. In addition to that, we've provided money to food banks, low-income transit passes. We've also provided affordability payments. We're addressing it.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, we capped auto insurance rates. We capped utility rates. Those guys took those caps off. Costs are higher, and they are not coming down, and they've done nothing to bring them down. Meanwhile the Premier brags about a growing population, but people who live here and those who come here know that it's harder to make ends meet. To the Premier: why

doesn't she understand that passing the blame for this growing affordability crisis on to someone else is not leadership? It's all they ever do, and it isn't putting a single solitary extra dime into the pockets of Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite might want to look at the current prices for the regulated rate option. They're 7 to 8 cents a kilowatt hour, so we have taken action that has brought those down. We've also approved and seen come online more natural gas baseload power plants. Unfortunately, if they would use their advocacy at the federal level to try to get the federal government to release us from obligations under the net-zero electricity grid, we might be able to build more of that to be able to bring those prices down. We've also indexed personal income tax. We've also indexed AISH and other income supports. We understand that this is a problem, one of their making.

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

Transgender Youth Policy

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, so many elements of this government's fall plan to bully transgender youth and adults are offensive. Topping the list is this Premier's cavalier suggestion that it's okay if her policy to out trans kids breaks up families because child protective services can always take the kids. To the Premier: will she admit that she was wrong to say that and that no politician should ever support legislation or policy they know will result in more children and youth needing the care of children's services?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that that is not what our policy proposal is about. It is about allowing children to grow to an age where they understand the consequences of decisions that they're making rather than making decisions that might prevent them from being able to have children of their own one day. We absolutely support the right of every individual, including transgender individuals, to be who they're going to be, to become who they want to be, to have the medical care there for them when they do make that transition. We just want to make sure that it's being done at an age that is appropriate and that they can bear the consequences of those decisions.

2:00

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, 0.37 per cent of Alberta's population are transgender or nonbinary, but 30 per cent of Alberta's total unhoused population are transgender youth. These kids are not welcome at home. We may want all families to be loving and supportive, but it just doesn't always work that way. To the Premier: why won't she agree that transgender youth should have more than the choice between rejecting who they are or being rejected by their family?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When a child is 16 or 17 years old, most of the courts affirm that that is an age at which they have a maturity to be able to make decisions that they'll be able to live with, with the long-term consequences. All of our policies are geared towards supporting young people as they make that decision at age 16 and beyond. We want to also make sure that those who go through surgery have the appropriate aftercare as well as that those who go through the transition have the appropriate care of a doctor long term so that they can deal with that, whether it's psychological support or physical support. That's what our policy is.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the NDP caucus just hung our huge flag to celebrate Pride Month, but the UCP is going to spend the same month deciding which fundamental human rights of queer and trans Albertans they plan to attack this fall in order to make their base happy. Albertans need their Premier to protect their human rights, not exploit them for her own political posturing. To the Premier: why won't she abandon these horribly damaging plans and stand in support of Alberta trans youth and their families? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Smith: I do stand in support of Alberta trans youth and their families, but I also am aware of international evidence, and international evidence is indicating that there just simply is not good long-term data on the physical . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms Smith: There is not good long-term data and research on the long-term impact of puberty blockers. There are not good long-term studies of what happens to an individual after they have transitioned. We also need to make sure that a person is making that decision when they're old enough to manage the consequences of it, and that's age 16.

Support for LGBTQ2S-plus Albertans

Member Tejada: Pride organizations across Alberta have had enough from the UCP pandering to extremists and attacking their existence as some sort of carrot for their TBA friends and allies. The UCP has now been banned from 24 local pride celebrations, and there may be more to come. The minister pushed back, citing a few volunteer recognitions for community members. Gold stars for surviving this government won't cut it. Has the minister actually reached out to any of these organizations to address the harm that got them banned in the first place?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in the House previously, of course it's disappointing to receive the news from these organizations that have banned us from attending their events. These events are supposed to be about bringing people together and inclusivity, so to be excluded is disappointing. However, we will continue to support the 2SLGBTQI-plus community through our community grants programs. Calgary Pride is one example of an organization that we have supported. I continue to encourage these amazing organizations to apply to the community grants program.

Member Tejada: Exclusion is uncomfortable, especially if it's systemic discrimination. The pride organizations I've spoken with have not received any sort of response to their open letter which banned the UCP from their events. This government told stakeholders in a letter that they would consult with them about their antitrans policies only if they responded within 24 hours and signed nondisclosure agreements. Will the Premier and the minister admit that this latest request for consultation is just window dressing for a predetermined outcome that promises the most regressive antitrans laws in North America?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could be further from the truth. The nondisclosure clause is something that we put in often when we want individuals to be able to speak. We want

those members that are coming, those people that are coming, the individuals and organizations – and we have over 40 that we’re consulting with – so that we can make sure that we are getting it right. We want to encourage them to have those frank conversations, and that’s why there is a nondisclosure clause. We have clinicians and so many others that are going to take part.

Member Tejada: Well, we learned in budget estimates that 2SLGBTQIA-plus and missing and murdered Indigenous women were removed, as I mentioned, from this minister’s business plans and the supposed aim to fight gender-based violence, so clearly not much of a priority, and now asking for nondisclosure agreements to protect the government instead of taking real measures to protect the 2SLGBTQIA-plus community is insulting and cynical in light of rising hate. Will the Premier and her ministers apologize to the queer community and truly consult on how to make this province safer rather than finding ways to further marginalize them? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of arts and culture.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to work on our gender-based violence policy to support survivors. It’s a made-in-Alberta action plan on which we’re having consultation with hundreds of organizations, including Indigenous groups, including 2SLGBTQIA-plus organizations, to make it a comprehensive, made-in-Alberta plan that identifies gaps and continues to support survivors. I continue to have engagements and meetings with members of the 2SLGBTQIA-plus community and have an open-door policy and will continue those conversations.

Bill 20

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, with Bill 20 the UCP are stripping the right to vote in a municipal election from anyone who doesn’t have a photo ID, this despite their own members having rejected the idea. In 2021 the UCP’s committee on democratic accountability said that we must ensure that, quote, every Albertan has the right to vote, not just those who have the ability and means to obtain formal ID. Now, that included the ministers of Finance, Agriculture, and Arts, Culture and Status of Women. To any of those ministers: what’s changed? Why have you now decided that it’s okay to make it harder for Indigenous, racialized, older, or rural Albertans to vote?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, it’s unfortunate the hon. member seems to be intentionally ignoring what is in Bill 20. He’s a hundred per cent wrong in what he just said. In fact, our intention – and we’re already acting on that intention – is to make Alberta the easiest place to get identification and, particularly, make that identification easiest to get at homeless shelters, at places where they’re more likely to have the most vulnerable people in our society. It’s happening at the centre in Edmonton that we put in place after the NDP fought against protecting people from the street. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The Member for Edmonton-City Centre is the one with the call.

Mr. Shepherd: Given that Elections Alberta data shows that over 10 years and millions of votes cast there have only been seven cases of fraud and given that Paul McLauchlin, president of the rural municipalities association, says that the UCP’s claims are a U.S.-style conspiracy theory that creates democratic uncertainty, the assumption that something nefarious is occurring when it is not, and given that this amounts to American-style voter suppression that

will shut out as many as 50,000 Albertans, roughly the population of Spruce Grove, to the minister: why are you cynically stripping the rights of marginalized Albertans in the name of solving a problem you know doesn’t exist?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, there’s a word for somebody that says something that’s not true, and they know it, and that’s what just happened.

An Hon. Member: Get out of here.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Mr. McIver: It’s unparliamentary, however, that word.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. If the hon. member wants to call a point of order, as the Official Opposition House Leader has done, I encourage him to do so, but encouraging members to get out of here would be wildly unparliamentary.

Mr. McIver: The NDP knows what they just said isn’t true, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we’ve made it clear that we are already making it the easiest place. What we learned in the questions yesterday from the minister of social services: somebody can get ID instantly right now. We will expand the places where they can get ID instantly. Just to be clear, for anybody watching at home, what you just heard in that question is not true.

Mr. Shepherd: Given that voting is not a privilege, it’s a right, one that no government should strip from any citizen, and given that the research is clear that requiring photo ID shuts out citizens who have a harder time getting it and given that according to Dr. Jared Wesley that’s not a bug; it’s a feature – ID laws are intended to keep certain people from voting and limit their influence in the political system; “the marginalized become more marginalized . . . the government consolidates power” – to the minister: let’s call a spade a spade. This policy is racist, ageist, and it reeks of urban privilege. Will you do the right thing and scrap it?

2:10

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the NDP continue to say things they know are not true, and they’re doing it on purpose. There’s a word for that, and it’s happening again.

Mr. Speaker, what our government is doing is making it easier than ever to get ID, in fact instantly. Despite the fact that the NDP would rather have people unsafe on the street, in tents, we’re getting them a better place to go and getting them identification instantly. It will never be easier to vote than it will be in this next election . . .

Member Tejada: Voter suppression.

Mr. McIver: . . . including with ballots that they can mail in, with no reason . . . [interjection]

The Speaker: Order. If the Member for Calgary-Klein wants to ask a question, I encourage her to rise to her feet and do so.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod is next.

Supports for Seniors

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the growing population of seniors in Alberta, many of whom face housing challenges, it’s crucial to address their needs. Seniors are the pillars of our communities and deserve the chance to live in the homes they choose, near their families and friends. Can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services elaborate on some of the initiatives

our government is undertaking to ensure that adequate housing is being built for seniors across Alberta?

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're investing just over half a billion dollars in senior benefits right now in our province, including \$390 million directly to benefits to seniors, who built our province, and \$110 million that we've increased accommodation by in our province. We're also investing \$20 million in our property tax deferral program to help seniors be able to remain in the homes that they have lived in as they work through their retirement, and we continue to build more senior lodge facilities than at any time in our history. We announced more this month alone than the NDP built the entire time that they were in government.

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

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta has demonstrated significant progress in addressing the needs of seniors and given that our government is taking action and working with our community partners to ensure Alberta seniors have the opportunities to age in communities they built, to the same minister: can you provide examples of collaborative efforts between the government and community organizations aimed at improving the quality of life for seniors across the province?

Mr. Nixon: Well, first, Mr. Speaker, we increased senior lodge funding by a historic 55 per cent in budget '24-25. We also just announced the other day another \$25 million elder facility on Enoch Cree First Nation, making this Alberta government the first government to invest on-reserve of any province when it comes to seniors' housing. We're also investing money in creating more elder shelter spaces to be able to make sure that elders that are facing abuse are able to go to a safe shelter location, and we have just reduced all senior payments across the entire Alberta government.

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

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that seniors have sacrificed so much for our province and that it's only fitting that we provide them with the support and resources they need to thrive in their golden years, can the minister share any upcoming plans or initiatives that the government is considering to further enhance the support and resources available for seniors across our communities?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, June 3 to 9 is Seniors' Week here in Alberta. I'll be launching Seniors' Week in Banff. Anybody that's around will be able to come and meet some of the stakeholders that work very hard with our senior community and to be able to care for the people that built our province. Throughout that week you're going to see highlighting of all the organizations that work north to south, east to west to be able to make sure that we are able to protect our seniors, to be able to make sure seniors can remain in the communities that they built, and ultimately to make sure grandma and grandpa can remain in the communities that they built is the number one objective of this government.

Municipal Voting Rights of Indigenous Persons

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, in Alberta and other provinces Indigenous residents on-reserve, despite being part of or near municipalities, are still ineligible to cast their votes in local elections. The

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation has proposed a straightforward amendment to Bill 20 that would rectify this injustice. Chief Adam stated: passing this amendment would conclude this legislative session on a high note and signal strong support to Indigenous Albertans; it's the ethical and legal course of action. Will the minister send Bill 20 back to committee to ensure this critical amendment can be debated and passed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It hasn't been long since this e-mail came out, but I've checked with my staff, and so far it seems that any Indigenous person that is living in any municipality in Alberta can vote in that municipality. Any non-Indigenous person living in any municipality in Alberta can vote in that municipality. As far as I know, there is no discrimination. If I learn of some, we will put a stop to it.

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

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs met with Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation on March 26 to address their concerns regarding local election laws and Bill 20 and given that yesterday the government claimed ignorance on this topic in the House, despite the reminder from the Member for Sherwood Park, has the minister reviewed the meeting minutes to address the proposal by ACFN regarding Bill 20, and if so, will he correct this oversight and apologize for not implementing the necessary information? We're talking about within kilometres of local municipalities.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat. What the hon. member described yesterday that was in the e-mail was inaccurate. The fact is that when I talked to the folks, as she said, what they're asking for is that they're living in property with reserve status and not actually living in the municipality, and they still want to be able to vote. We haven't decided that that's okay, but I can tell you that as of today any Indigenous person that lives within a municipality can vote there. Any non-Indigenous person that lives in a municipality can vote there. If that changes, I'll fix it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will clarify for the minister what ACFN is actually asking. ACFN is seeking simplicity and fairness of the amended suggestion for (a) voters be 18 years old, (b) a Canadian citizen, (c) residing in Alberta with their primary residence in the local jurisdiction on election day, and (d) living on an Indian reserve as defined in the federal Indian Act that adjoins or is within one kilometre of the jurisdiction holding an election. To the minister. I have now clarified it. This amendment is straightforward. Why did this government refuse to incorporate it into Bill 20 ...

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. McIver: Well, I'm happy that we're busy clarifying, Mr. Speaker. Any Indigenous person that lives in any municipality in Alberta can vote in that municipality. Any non-Indigenous person that lives in any municipality in Alberta can vote in that municipality. That's equality. If that changes, I promise to fix it.

Government Policies

Ms Hayter: As her first question as leader of the Alberta NDP she asked the Conservative government what they were doing to end

child poverty in Alberta. The answers she got from the Conservatives were not great, to put it charitably. They didn't have a plan. Rather than accept the decades of Conservative failure, the Leader of the Opposition went on to cut child poverty in half as Premier of Alberta. Now, five years after that achievement, child poverty is on the rise. Why is the minister sitting back and letting this happen? Is there a plan to wait for the next NDP government in 2027?

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

Mr. Turton: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Ensuring that families are looked after and supported and that children of this province continue to receive support is one of my highest priorities as Minister of Children and Family Services. That's why we invest in family resource networks. That's why we invest in many programs and services and have invested immensely into those programs in our last budget, to ensure that those children are looked after. Just yesterday I met with the youth shelters, for example, from right across the entire province. It was actually the biggest engagement with youth emergency shelters that we've had over the last 20 years. We are making tangible differences in the lives of children in our province.

Ms Hayter: Given that in her second question in the Assembly the Leader of the Official Opposition asked about the PC's shameful record when it came to building schools, with their priority being planting signs rather than building spaces for learning, and given that under her leadership we built and modernized 244 schools, reversed millions in cuts, and hired teachers but under the UCP Alberta students are funded at the lowest level per capita in Canada and given that thousands of students are underfunded under the UCP, why doesn't the UCP focus on funding education?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely focused on funding education, which is why we've invested and are planning to invest \$1.2 billion over the next three years, as provided in Budget '24, to support enrolment growth. It's why we've increased funding to our fastest growing school divisions, to help ensure that they have the funding that they need to provide essential services and a high-quality education to their students, and it's why we are also planning on spending over \$2 billion to build the critical infrastructure that our students need.

2:20

Ms Hayter: Given that the third question as the Leader of the Official Opposition was about government integrity, given that the UCP government has broken promise after promise, from their nonexistent tax cut to the empty field that should be the south Edmonton hospital, given that Albertans are rightly angry that they voted for one thing and got the opposite, given that I will now re-ask the question that the Leader of the Opposition asked the entitled PC government, since its message is as important today as it was then: "why should Albertans believe anything coming from this government when breaking promises is just business as usual?"

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've made a promise that we're going to build a stand-alone Stollery hospital, and we are going to build it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Member LaGrange: Thank you.

I know that recently the Member for Calgary-Acadia expressed the need for a stand-alone hospital, so I'm glad to hear that the members on the other side want exactly what we want. Children in this province deserve quality care and space. The current Stollery hospital is spread out over four different sites, 11 different areas. Mr. Speaker, we're going to keep that promise.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Bill 20
(continued)

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently we've spent a lot of time debating Bill 20, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. Bill 20 seeks to make local election processes more transparent and election officials more accountable to the people they represent. Albertans expect and deserve free and fair elections, and that's why we must strengthen the rules that govern municipal elections. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: if passed, how will Bill 20 improve election integrity?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the main ways that Bill 20 will improve elections is that it will be easier to vote than ever before. Anybody that wants a mail-in ballot can get one. The only reason they have to give is that they want one. To make that even easier, this government is making it easier than it's ever been in history to get ID, both for a previous ballot or one on election day. This will make it more fair, more equitable for all Albertans, including the most vulnerable and the lowest income.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the minister. Given that at the municipal level there are no rules around local political parties in Alberta and given that many candidates openly campaign as being tied to a specific party while others are working together while denying they are doing so and given that Bill 20 will offer the opportunity to make these connections official, can the same minister please share why these changes are important and how they will improve municipal elections and campaigns?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under NDP previous legislation, that's still on the books, elections have been less transparent than they've ever been, and Bill 20 will help to fix that. For example, in the last election in Calgary unions gave \$1.7 million to nine candidates. Very little evidence of where that came from. Very big donations from very few things. One mayoral candidate got \$400,000 from a third-party advertiser. In fairness, whether it's on the left side or the right side of the spectrum, there's no transparency; there's no accountability. Bill 20 will improve that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Bill 20 and the proposed amendments will help Albertans feel more trust in the election processes and will help Albertans who need special ballots and given that this bill will improve transparency so that all Albertans can have more trust in their elections, can the same minister please share how the government's proposed Bill 20 will benefit Albertans across this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are a hard-working bunch of people, and lots of them work away from home. Alberta is a big province, so there are remote parts. For example, with the mail-in ballots, it will make it easier for people of low income that might not be able to have the means to get there with transportation on election day to get their vote ahead of time, people that are doing business or on vacation. This bill will make it more transparent and more easy for every single Albertan to vote.

Automobile Insurance

Member Kayande: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance held a closed-door consultation on insurance this week. Who was there? Insurance companies, brokers, law firms, medical providers. Who wasn't? Consumers, people who have been injured in car accidents. Good news. It looks like the five-year-long UCP trek to address the mess they made of auto insurance has finally reached base camp. But why the secrecy? Why won't the minister share with us the agenda of the meeting and the conclusions that he has been briefed on?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, closed door is a little much. We can't fit all of Alberta on the second floor of the Federal Building. But I would say that we had a lot of important stakeholders present. We wanted them to be in a place where they could speak very candidly with one another about all of the concerns across the industry. We want to take that feedback. We have a survey online that's had over 12,000 responses from Albertans at large. I'm looking forward to being debriefed by my department as we move forward on long-term strategies to make insurance more affordable in the province.

Member Kayande: Given that stakeholders are telling me that the government has already made the decision to move to a no-fault system that is privately delivered, a system type that doesn't exist anywhere else in Canada, given this is the same government that blew \$100 million on DynaLife, \$100 million on Turkish Tylenol, \$1.2 billion on a pipeline to nowhere, can the minister tell this House and all the Albertans watching if a decision has been made, and if so, why it was done before Albertans had a real chance to weigh in?

Mr. Horner: I can assure this House and all Albertans that no decision has been made, because we're not there yet, Mr. Speaker. We need to look at the data that we've received through the Oliver Wyman report and the Nous report that, as I've told this House before, looks at different things, different potential systems for Alberta, and then the economic impact of implementing them here. We're not there yet. We're trying to find the best system for Alberta that can drive down costs and still have a system that takes care of Albertans, makes sure that they get prompt care, and distinguishes between someone that can recover and someone that can't.

Member Kayande: Given that the UCP on the Friday before a long weekend lifted the auto insurance rate cap with no warning to Albertans, causing premiums to skyrocket, and given that the UCP is once again ignoring the concerns of consumers – again, there's a huge missing stakeholder here – given that the liabilities claims ratio, the percentage of premiums actually paid out as claims, has only trended downward since the UCP uncapped insurance premiums, hitting just 56 per cent in 2022, why is the UCP choosing once again to put insurance company profits ahead of Albertans' pocketbooks?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely not what we're doing. We actually brought in changes to the rate board last fall to lower the profit provision for insurance companies. We also provided the rate board more teeth, so to speak, so they could actually demand insurance companies to decrease premiums and that they'd actually make them rebate, in those years when they're profitable above that level, back to consumers. We're looking after consumers. That's the lens that we're approaching this with, through the lens of affordability. Caps will not work long term. Yours didn't; ours won't. We need long-term . . .

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

Recycling Programs

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has a long and impressive history of leadership when it comes to recycling programs, from beverage containers and electronics to tires and used oil material. We are leaders across Canada in managing plastic waste and ensuring we keep plastics out of the landfills and in the economy. To the minister of environment: can you please tell this House how Alberta's recycling program compares to others, and why are we a leader?

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

Ms Schulz: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that question. The Alberta Recycling Management Authority's leadership has already helped divert 11 million electronic devices, 104 million tires, and more than 2 billion litres of used oil from our landfills, and we also collect more paint than any other province. We are truly Canadian leaders in this area, and we're continuing to move forward on effective waste management that benefits local governments, taxpayers, Albertans, and, of course, our environment.

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

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the answer. Given that Ottawa has stood firm on its position of a nonsensical plastics ban and production caps and further given that Alberta has also presented a better path forward when it comes to responsibly managing plastics in our province with our extended producer responsibility system that will save taxpayers money, to the same minister: can you explain to this House what extended producer responsibility is and how it will help reduce waste and save money?

2:30

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can tell this House we are not the only province encouraging Ottawa to stay in their own lane on this file. Extended producer responsibility is a province-wide system to save municipalities dollars and reduce plastics, of course, in our landfills. It's a better solution for waste management in Alberta, and it's getting us closer to our goal of becoming a centre of excellence for plastics diversion and recycling. This complements Alberta's already successful recycling programs, creating jobs, stimulating the economy, and keeping plastics in the economy instead of creating environmental waste.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and once again to the minister. Given that Alberta communities are eager to explore the province's exciting move towards implementation of an extended producer responsibility system, to the same minister: can you please inform this House how EPR is moving forward and when it will be fully implemented?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that communities right across Alberta are working hard to help move our system forward along with the representatives from ARMA, who are here with us in the House today. In fact, more than 70 per cent of Alberta communities, representing 90 per cent of Alberta's population, have registered to receive recycling services under the first phase of this extended producer responsibility as the system rolls out. We're grateful for their support. This producer-led EPR system for single-use products, of course, will be launched on April 1, 2025.

School Construction in Calgary-North East

Member Brar: Mr. Speaker, under the UCP, Alberta students are funded at the lowest level per capita in Canada, and nowhere is this more clear than in Calgary. This government is doing nothing to support the students and families of northeast Calgary in building the schools our communities need. Under this government northeast Calgary has been ignored and seen just one school open. Will the minister explain why the families in my riding are being left behind and left out by the UCP?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely not the case and not happening. In fact, Alberta's government is working hard to ensure that constituents in the member's riding are receiving the schools and the supports that they need. That's precisely why Budget '24 provides funding for not one, not two but three school projects in the member's riding. Specifically, we're working on a new high school in Cornerstone and two new elementary schools in Redstone. We're absolutely committed to providing the residents of northeast Calgary the amazing schools that they need.

Member Brar: Guess what. Kids can't attend a school in a drawing. Given that the students spend two hours in transit each day rather than focusing on school, spending time with their families, or playing with friends, given that the northeast is one of Calgary's fastest growing regions but that there is no action from the UCP though they have known this problem for years, how much worse does it need to get for parents who want to raise their families in a thriving part of the city? When will the new schools be built? What day? What month?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, as I just mentioned, Mr. Speaker, providing high-quality and world-class facilities and educational opportunities to the residents of northeast Calgary is a top priority. Apart from those three projects that I mentioned, there are other projects under way that do affect northeast Calgary. In particular, we're also moving forward on a new junior high school in Saddle Ridge. That received planning funding in the last budget cycle. In addition, design funding was also provided for the modernization of the Annie Gale school, also in northeast Calgary.

Member Brar: A plan for a school is not a school.

Given that this minister apparently does not know the difference between funding for a blueprint and a bricks-and-mortar school and given that the UCP go on and on about their plans but that plans

mean nothing if there is no follow-through and given that – breaking news – building a school you can actually touch, not just a picture, takes time and that we needed shovels in the ground yesterday, will the minister please justify to the House and to the parents in my community his lack of concrete action? When will they be pouring actual concrete?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, we follow a gated approval process for all new construction projects. This new process responds to recommendations from the office of the Auditor General, and that process includes three phases. It includes planning, design, and construction. That's to help alleviate backlogs, and that's to help ensure that projects move forward in a timely manner and that construction is expedited when a project does receive full construction funding. The NDP announced funding for a new school in 2018, and it opened its doors just last year. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Alberta Advantage Immigration Program

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, immigration has been one of the keys to Alberta's prosperity, but newcomers to Alberta depend on a system that improperly supports them as they choose Alberta as a place to live and work. Alberta has four specialized entrepreneur streams, yet these streams are so poorly designed and unattractive to qualified candidates that only four applications were approved in all of 2023. This clearly isn't working for anyone. What is the minister doing to fix these streams and encourage the best and brightest entrepreneurs to make Alberta their home?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The federal government's denial of 20,000 nominations for newcomers undermined Alberta's ability to address the labour shortage and support economic growth. Is the NDP going to take a stand with us, or are they going to stand with their federal partners to address the issue of shortage of labour? Now, let me tell you what we have done. We have done credential recognition. We have mentorship awards. We have settlement issues resolved, and we are working very hard to address all the issues that . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Member Boparai: Given that on January 30, 2024, the inventory was 4,690 applications and a six-month processing time and that on May 1, 2024, the inventory had 4,146 applications and a seven-month processing time and that with 32 program officers the net change is 544 applications in seven months, what is the minister doing to fix these streams and encourage the best and the brightest entrepreneurs to make Alberta their home?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, there is unprecedented interest by people who want to come to our province, because we have so much to offer to our newcomers. We continue to do that. Let me share with the member opposite that we are only five months into the year and we have processed over 74 per cent of nominations for this year, and we continue to do whatever we can. You know what? They can help us if they work with the federal partners to help the nomination process in Alberta.

Member Boparai: Given that other provinces are getting ahead of the ball and already working with the IRCC to deal with the large number of individuals who are on expiring work permits and given that there are hundreds of workers in areas like construction and agriculture who are facing expiring work permits and given that the UCP likes to talk a lot about how workers are flocking to Alberta under the Alberta Is Calling campaign, what is the government doing to make sure everyone that comes to Alberta actually has a job?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I think the member needs to be a little bit more informed about what we have been doing in our province for our newcomers. We have done our best in the last four years and we continue to do our best for our newcomers. We have done a number of things for our newcomers, including their settlement issues through our ASIP program as well as newcomer recognition programs as well as mentorship programs as well as credential recognition. We continue to help our newcomers, and we will continue to work with the federal government to make sure that they work and that they understand the needs of . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has a question to ask.

Supports for Deaf and Hearing-impaired Persons

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, newcomers to Alberta can face many challenges. Many of these newcomers are fleeing war, oppression, or poverty to come to Alberta for safety and the prospect of a better life. One of the main challenges they face in Alberta is the challenge of learning a new language. For deaf and hearing-impaired newcomers this is even more daunting as they face a double language barrier. To be able to communicate effectively, they must learn two languages, firstly English and then American sign language. To the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services: how is our government working to support newcomers trying to overcome this double language barrier?

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

2:40

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We support those who are facing these issues through our PDD programs, through our children with disabilities programs, and through our employment programs. Through all three of those programs we provide things like respite care, interpreter training, interpreters for families, equipment training. We continue to fund all three of those programs to record rates. Unfortunately, the NDP did not do that. They went out of their way to be able to make sure that those programs would fail. This is one of the reasons why we brought in things like indexation and the most money ever invested in those programs, to fix NDP mistakes.

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

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of the people moving to Alberta are doing so with their families and that we've seen lately that there are so many people coming here with their families and given that deaf and hearing-impaired children as well as children with deaf and hearing-impaired parents can face unique challenges integrating into life

here in beautiful Alberta and further given that a child's future success can depend on developing effective communication – and we all know that's very important – can the Minister of Health explain how this government is working hard to support families facing these unique language challenges?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite – to the member for the question. I'm so used to answering the other questions.

We know how important it is for children to have those assessments. We also know the impacts on children who have hearing loss or hearing impairment: what that does for them when they're going to school, how it impacts their speech, et cetera. So we are doing everything we can to make sure that there's early screening, early intervention. We've extended health care programs for evacuees beyond the current year into this upcoming year, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do everything we can to make sure those little ones get the best start possible. We're going to continue work on improving programs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that hearing impairment along with being deaf can be a major barrier for children and teenagers in K to 12 schools and given that Alberta continues to experience growth as people move to our province, including families with deaf and hearing-impaired children, can the Minister of Education please highlight how this government is ensuring that all students, including those who are deaf and hearing impaired, have the supports they need to thrive in the classroom?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, providing support to these students is of particular importance and concern. It's one of the reasons why one of the first things that I did as minister in September '23 was to provide an additional \$5 million to help support funding for low-incidence disabilities. Low-incidence disabilities funding that is provided helps our school divisions hire and train specialized professionals and provide equipment and other educational resources to students who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. This is in addition to \$1.5 billion in learning supports that's provided to Alberta schools.

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

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has a statement to make.

Provincial Election Anniversary

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Exactly one year ago today Albertans rejected the job-killing policies of the NDP and gave our United Conservative government a second consecutive majority mandate. Since then, on the foundation of our new fiscal framework, Alberta's economy has been growing and diversifying, and every day families and businesses are feeling the benefits. Over the past year we helped create nearly 100,000 new jobs, and Alberta workers are earning more, on average, than anyone else in the country. We balanced the budget for the third consecutive year, paid down the debt, and increased the heritage fund to an all-time high of \$22.1 billion.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, we funded new law enforcement positions, invested in 98 school infrastructure projects, and began the process of refocusing the health care system around patients and front-line workers. We also managed two successful court challenges against federal overreach and invoked the sovereignty act against Ottawa's reckless net-zero regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on, but the point is this: our government is getting the job done for Albertans, and people are noticing, with a record number of them coming to share in Alberta's freedom and prosperity. Compare this to what we saw under the NDP, when we faced a jobs crisis, credit downgrades, and people leaving the province for an unprecedented 13 consecutive quarters. Right now the NDP is selling out their party for cents on the dollar to a big "L" Liberal because they think this is the path forward, but it won't work.

Albertans know exactly what the NDP are and what they believe in, and they're not buying what they're selling. Alberta is safer, stronger, and freer thanks to the work of our United Conservative government, and we're going to keep working with Albertans to write the next great chapter in the Alberta story.

Thank you.

Tribute to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the next time this Assembly meets, we know at least one of the caucuses will have a new leader. I take nothing away from the members opposite, who are practiced in the way of the Roman Senate like no other, but the Alberta NDP know for certain we will have a new leader by then, and so I rise today to speak about the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

First elected on March 3, 2008, she hit the ground running and has been a shining star ever since. Her time in this place has been that of a force multiplier as every Alberta NDP received more votes in every subsequent election that she has been a part of. Our team's continued growth and success at the ballot box has been a direct result of her tenacious and tireless work. In our history the Alberta NDP have won 167 seats in general elections; 116 of those wins have been since the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona became our leader.

She is the embodiment and inspiration of our movement, and she has achieved great things. Now, even more important than the things she's done for our party are the things she's done for Alberta families. Her time as Premier of this province saw a list of accomplishments far too long for my single statement, so I will name my two personal favourites. She cut child poverty in half, and she was the first leader of any province or any state in North America to raise minimum wage to \$15 an hour. As such, she was the very first to win the fight for 15, and she changed the lives of 300,000 hard-working Albertans who worked for far too long for far too little.

The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona is a friend, a mentor, and our leader, and while I know she will go on to do many other incredible things, I will always remember the time she and her family gave to our caucus and our province. We wish her the absolute best. On behalf of my caucus it's my immense privilege to thank Rachel Notley for her years as an amazing leader.

The Speaker: Despite the importance of the occasion it would still be wildly inappropriate to use such a proper name. The Opposition House Leader knows full well the magnitude of such a breach of privilege.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore has a statement to make.

Provincial Election Anniversary

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the opportunity to rise today on the one-year anniversary of the UCP election victory, but this was not merely a victory of a political party but a declaration by regular, common-sense Albertans that they do not want to see our province descend into the dual swamps of wokeness and socialism. It was a firm sign that the message of fear and division trumpeted by the NDP is not what the people of our province desire, and it was a great reminder that hope and confidence in the people of Alberta is always the right policy.

We do not need more government to grow this province or solve its problems. What we need is to provide more room for common-sense Albertans to live freely, build boldly, and care for their families and their communities as they've always done when government gets out of their way. Since this victory the UCP government has shown that we will not cave to wokeness and allow our great province to be sacrificed to a small group of destructive activists. These activists wish to tear down the foundation of our province as a place where people can be truly free, free to speak, free to act, free to live, free to worship, and free to succeed.

2:50

We love this Alberta, where anyone from any corner of the world can come and participate in a free, hopeful, confident, and prosperous life. We love this Alberta, where the family is valued and protected and where children can be safe from those who would divide them from the ones who love and care for them most. We love this Alberta, where this government does not see itself as a ruler of the people but as a servant, recognizing that the ones who know best for Albertans are not politicians but Albertans themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I love this Alberta, and I will continue to work on behalf of my constituents and along with our UCP government to ensure that Alberta remains prosperous, safe, fair, and free not only for this generation but for many generations to come.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has a statement to make.

Tribute to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I remember sitting around with our mighty caucus of four in early 2015 looking at a promising poll. I thought we could win at least a dozen seats. Our new leader, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, suggested that maybe we should just aim a little bit higher. Well, we did, of course, a whole lot more. We won 54 and formed the province's first Alberta New Democratic government. I can say with confidence just how lucky we all are to have the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona as our leader. She is unequivocally one of the finest politicians in the history of Alberta and also in all of Canada.

The most important measure, I say, of success for public service is that your efforts have made your community a better place to live. I know that our leader measures each position we take based on whether or not it will help to make a more just and equal society for everyone. Strengthening our economy while making sure no one gets left behind, building up a public health care and education, making life more affordable: so many successes. And we are in a position to do so much more with the work of this leader.

One of the most valuable contributions, I think, is that by winning the election in 2015, after 44 years of Conservative governments, we gave Albertans new hope for the future, a realization that we can change the government, that we did change the government, and we will do so again. With her leadership we have built a strong and

modern and effective party in all corners of the province, with thousands of volunteers, and now more than 85,000 members. Most remarkably, sitting all around here today with me: the largest Official Opposition in the history of Alberta. A caucus that came within a hair's breadth of winning the election that just took place one year ago today, and, with hard work, a caucus that will grow and form the next government of Alberta.

Tourism Promotion

Mr. McDougall: Alberta stands as a beacon of opportunity and a testament to our boundless potential, with unparalleled beautiful landscapes. In March this year our province's remarkable allure and enchanting story captured global attention at the Japan World's Tourism Film Festival, where Alberta emerged victorious, clinching four prestigious awards. This recognition affirms Alberta's status as a world-renowned destination, celebrated for its captivating attractions and unparalleled natural wonders. Films like *Sky Painter* and *To Be Albertan* allow Alberta to share its world-renowned experiences like exploring Indigenous heritage and downhill skiing in the majestic Rocky Mountains with viewers around the world. These cinematic marvels serve as powerful ambassadors, forging emotional connections with audiences worldwide and inviting them to visit and explore Alberta.

Amidst a backdrop of rugged mountains and rolling plains Alberta's warm and welcoming culture shines brightly, welcoming newcomers and tourists with open arms. People from around the world are drawn to Alberta's vibrant communities, diverse opportunities, and inclusive environment. Alberta's low cost of living and friendly tax regime also enhance its appeal, making it an ideal destination for those seeking a fulfilling lifestyle and affordability. From bustling urban centres to appealing rural towns Alberta offers an abundance of options for individuals and families to thrive and prosper.

I commend Travel Alberta for their unwavering dedication and showcasing our province's splendour and congratulate them on their well-deserved accolades. This achievement is a testament to our UCP governance policies and commitment to fostering our province's prosperity.

As we celebrate our triumph on the global stage, let us take pride in our shared journey towards building a brighter future for generations to come. Let us continue to cherish and celebrate the extraordinary beauty and boundless opportunities that Alberta has to offer. Together we will build Alberta's legacy as the best place in the world to live, work, visit, and raise a family.

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

Candora Society of Edmonton

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to talk about an incredible organization, the Candora Society, as it marks its 35th year. Candora is a cornerstone of community support in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Founded in 1989 by Bev Sochatsky and Cathy Vereyken, Candora grew as a grassroots response arising from community conversations between women. Today it is very much a testament to the work of all those women as they worked and talked together over the years, developing programs and resources, including one of its premier programs, their employment preparation program, and along the way creating better lives for themselves, their families, and their community.

In fact, the name of the society, Candora, comes from that sense of community and the recognition of a certain can-do spirit, which is alive today. The emphasis is on the "can do" because Candora

stands for: can-do Rundle and Abbotsfield. That long-standing collaborative approach has fostered lasting multigenerational relationships, and that's absolutely delightful to see.

One of Candora's newest initiatives, Auntie Bev's kitchen, exemplifies that innovative approach. This program assists folks entering the workforce by providing practical culinary skills and employment opportunities, which furthers Candora's mission of empowerment and community building. If you're interested in learning more about Auntie Bev's foods, head over to their website. Their food is fabulous.

Candora's impact is evident through the personal testimonies of those who have received help and found empowerment through the years. Today they offer peer-to-peer support, adult learning programs, community and family programs, and host many a community event. The society has also established an important partnership with the government of Alberta, and this partnership has helped fund programming as well as to provide much-needed advocacy and support for the positive changes that community members benefit from.

I am so proud today to be able to stand before all of Alberta and to recognize their 35th anniversary, dedicated service, and perseverance. Congratulations, Candora.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) I wish to advise the Assembly that the daily Routine may continue past 3 p.m.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities I'm pleased to rise today to table the committee's final report of the review of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. In addition to thanking my committee colleagues and the staff of the Legislative Assembly Office, I'd like to specifically express our gratitude to the representatives from the Ministry of Justice and from the Public Service Commission, who provided technical expertise and support throughout the review process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a petition. The petitioner is petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the government to improve passenger rail services and "protect the rights of rail passengers" in the province of Alberta. It's signed by 186 Albertans.

The Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre have a petition today?

Mr. Shepherd: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition calling on the current government to end its policies:

imposing age restrictions on receiving gender affirming surgery or hormone therapies to transgender youth; requiring parental notification or permission before allowing a student to be referred to by their preferred name or pronouns at school; and prohibiting teachers and school boards from referring to the concepts of gender identity, sexual orientation or sexuality in any lesson provided to students without the prior written approval of a student's parent.

Over 320 signatures.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Bill 214 Eastern Slopes Protection Act

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise and request leave to introduce Bill 214, the Eastern Slopes Protection Act.

This bill, which has been previously introduced in the House, if passed, would protect sensitive lands and watersheds that in turn support communities, businesses, biodiversity, and the drinking water of so many Albertans, including in our biggest cities. Additionally, it would uphold Indigenous treaty rights and other Aboriginal rights and traditional activities.

3:00

Given the renewed focus and understanding about the importance of water to our communities all across this province as the province faces ongoing and expected ongoing growth in drought, particularly in southern Alberta, I believe this bill is worthy of reconsideration by the members of this Assembly, and I hope that all members in the Assembly will support it and allow for a full debate in the House as a priority for Albertans.

[Motion carried; Bill 214 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Sherwood Park has a tabling.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to the restriction on debate on Bill 20 I have two tablings. They are amendments that we had proposed, one to take big money out of municipal government elections and one to prohibit partisans from being appointed as election returning officers. I'd like to table them for the record.

Mr. Ip: I rise to table the requisite copies of a letter from Mrs. Winter's 4B class at Joan Carr school in the wonderful riding of Edmonton-South West. Students wrote to me urging all members of this House and our government to take action on climate change. They've outlined helpful and insightful ideas that I encourage all of my colleagues to consider. I want to thank 4B at Joan Carr school for their passion for our planet and for their advocacy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by Calgary-Currie.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of the letter from May 13, 2021, from then Justice minister Kaycee Madu outlining the terms of reference for a public inquiry with the Lethbridge Police Service. It is a public inquiry, that was charged under the Police Act, to be run by the Law Enforcement Review Board.

Thank you.

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

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of pages 25 to 32 of the supplemental information to the 2022-23 annual report for AHS. I'll draw the minister's attention to page 31, wherein the total of acute-care psychiatric beds for adults is 588, equal to 13.45 beds per 100,000.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Tejada: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of the open letter from 24 pride organizations to this Premier. I strongly urge the members opposite to read and to support their local pride organization.

Member Irwin: As the assault on Gaza continues and atrocities occur in Rafah, many are demanding that the government of Canada impose a full and immediate arms embargo on Israel. As it's my last chance to speak on this in the Chamber, I would like to share this statement. I call on politicians to act, push for an arms embargo, and to end the genocide in Palestine now.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of an article from this morning's *Edmonton Journal* entitled Why the Industrial Relations Board is Reviewing Railway Labour Dispute. It talks about the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference putting out a statement criticizing CN Rail for making its most recent offer public, adding to the delay.

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. Turton, Minister of Children and Family Services, pursuant to the Protection Against Family Violence Act the Family Violence Death Review Committee 2022-23 annual report.

On behalf of hon. Minister Nixon, Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services, pursuant to the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities 2022-23 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. At 2:09 the Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order, which perhaps graciously she has subsequently withdrawn. I'll consider the matter dealt with and concluded. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean a gold star, and it doesn't mean one day of no points of order.

But that does bring us to Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 20 Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

[Adjourned debate May 28: Mr. Kasawski]

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 46, agreed to on May 28, 2024, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of Bill 20, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, in third reading. There are 45 minutes remaining of the one-hour allotment. The hon. Member for Sherwood Park has five minutes remaining should he choose to use them.

Are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has the call.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I just want to express my concern about limiting debate on Bill 20. The government brought forward a number of amendments to try to stem the tide of the growing opposition to this bill. It really only

served to exacerbate the anger and the frustration that Albertans feel towards this bill to limit democracy in the province of Alberta, to undermine the municipal level of government here in the province of Alberta, really to cast a shade over, intimidate municipal leaders if they were choosing to pass something that this provincial government doesn't like, or to have their bylaws revoked and to have their positions revoked as well.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

However you choose to do that, it's the intent, reaching into this level of government in a very, I would say, ham-fisted and authoritarian sort of way. The opposition to this bill is just growing. It's like a snowball rolling down a hill, Madam Speaker, and it's not pausing by any means at all. The government, I know, thought that they could suppress opposition to this bill by saying: well, you know, as part of the bill, really, it's written in there; we can take your job away if you are causing a problem. Well, the people seem to be standing up to that because you see almost a universal outcry against this bill. So with that spirit and with the spirit of the vast majority of Albertans that stand in opposition to this bill, I would like to submit an amendment to Bill 20 at this time.

When you get those to the table, I'll read that.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, this will be known as amendment HA1.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Essentially, Madam Speaker, this amendment in my name is saying that the "Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act . . . be not now read a third time but . . . be read a third time this day six months hence." We see, you know, this type of amendment in third reading with varying degrees of weight and authority, but never before have I seen this, not being read a third time, more directly applicable and relevant to a bill as Bill 20, where clearly there is not popular support for this bill in any way, shape, or form here in the province of Alberta.

The government was trying to get away – I don't know what they were thinking. Maybe they were just reading, you know, and thinking: oh, yeah; we're not going to have a problem with this; we'll just slide it through, and away we go. Maybe many of the members opposite didn't even read this bill and understand what the gravity of it is but instead just drank the Kool-Aid of the propaganda they're trying to spin off it. But, Madam Speaker, we know that limiting the ability to produce bylaws on a municipal level for boards of trustees or school boards and so forth and then threatening the very jobs and existence of those same elected officials is going to run against the grain of Albertans' sense of fair play.

You know, when I first saw it, I thought: okay; are Albertans going to react against this or to what degree? I've never seen anything like it, Madam Speaker. I have people coming to me in social gatherings all the time and saying, "Is this true? I can't believe it. I really can't believe," and I say, "Yeah, it's true all right." I mean, I can't believe it either that a government, especially on a very political level, that just barely won this last election one year ago, would have the audacity to bring forward something like this that simply tips the balance for so many Albertans saying: "Yeah, you were right. I remember you came to my door and said, 'You can't trust these people.'"

And, by golly, within 360 days they bring forth such a draconian and antidemocratic piece of legislation that I would urge everyone here at the 11th hour, all members of the House, both sides of the House to not read this bill for the third time. Let it cool off a little bit. Maybe more reasonable heads will prevail, and we can move

on to other urgent business that does need to be dealt with: affordability, health care, education, and the like.

Thank you.

3:10

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment. Plain and simple – and I certainly said this before, as have my colleagues – this bill is a power grab. It's a blatant attempt to undermine local democracy, to concentrate control inside the Premier's office, from giving themselves the power to unilaterally veto or amend bylaws to firing mayors, reeves, and councillors without any due process, no litmus test, just what the government decides to do.

This government is also allowing the return of corporate donations and big money into our local elections. Madam Speaker, the government seems to be doing everything they can to create instability on our municipal councils and thereby undermining business certainty when many Albertans are struggling to pay their bills, many Albertans aren't able to access a family doctor, as many of my members of this House know, or many are struggling to put food on the table. Talk about wrong priorities.

There are two points I want to speak about today that I think are deeply concerning because it will impact our tradition of democracy as we know it in this province. First, let's talk about corporate donations and big money. Under Bill 20 corporations and union donations will once again be allowed to municipal election candidates. Ironically, when the Premier was leader of the Wildrose, she demanded at the time that the Conservative government of the day get rid of corporate and union donations. I suppose that this is just another example of the latest flip-flop and about-face from this Premier and government for the sake of political expediency and convenience.

Alberta was already among the last provinces in Canada to ban corporate donations at the local level. Madam Speaker, this is a step backwards and will not improve the levelling of the playing field or ensure that folks from all walks of life are represented in our local councils. It will in fact return us to a time where potentially those with the deepest pockets or connections to corporations will be elected, and that's certainly not what we want. But it's clear that this is not what the government is concerned about, and it's clear that this specific provision about corporate donations within Bill 20 is a self-interested move on the government's part that will effectively weaken some existing election laws.

If that isn't bad enough, we are seeing this government pander to conspiracy theories from south of the border. Bill 20 will ban the use of electronic vote tabulators. All votes must be hand counted. It's sort of oddly familiar, Madam Speaker, with conspiracy theories from south of the border, particularly those from the 2020 U.S. presidential elections. Many conspiracy theories revolved around voting machines. It was part of the big lie, a gross distortion of the truth that that election was stolen.

The minister across the aisle has said that it's important to maintain voter confidence in the voting process, but the truth is that this flies in the face of the government's own consultations in 2022 on the Local Authorities Election Act, the Municipal Government Act. According to the government's own fact sheet from April 2024, that I quote: electronic voting equipment has been part of the elections process and is considered to be a more trusted and accurate means of ballot counting. End quote. That affirms that there is no need to complicate the voting process when the government can just clarify how the vote tabulators work, both in

the counting and recounting process, and this is affirmed by the government's own report.

But, Madam Speaker, what is happening is part of a larger pattern of undermining local democracy, of actively marginalizing voters that likely won't vote for this government. I believe that Albertans are watching, and this government, members across the aisle, should heed the warning that many Albertans have been sending to members of this House that they will not let any government undermine their democratic rights.

I want to point out what's happening south of the border as a bit of a cautionary tale, because south of the border their playbook has been to prohibit the use of tabulators, to eliminate vouching, to increase voter identification requirements. They've introduced a permanent electors list. They've gerrymandered districts. They have effectively disenfranchised voters, the most vulnerable voters, often unhoused or folks without a permanent address, folks who already face huge barriers to voting. This is what's happening south of the border. Does this sound oddly familiar to us in Bill 20?

In fact, americanprogress.org wrote an investigative article on the 2018 mid-term elections and provided this analysis that I wish to share with this House.

Widespread voter suppression – particularly against historically marginalized groups – is a reoccurring problem in the United States. Each election cycle, untold numbers of eligible Americans are prevented from voting due to barriers in the voter registration process, restrictions on casting ballots, and discriminatory and partisan-rigged district maps. Voter suppression measures can differ by state and even by individual county. And while some voter suppression measures actively seek to discriminate against certain groups, others result from innocent administrative errors and glitches. Regardless of its form or intent, however, voter suppression is relentlessly effective in preventing voting-eligible Americans from contributing to the electoral process.

Madam Speaker, what's happening in this House with Bill 20 has the potential to be systematically racist even if it isn't the intention to be so. It can potentially place more barriers to those who already have barriers to voting and can further disenfranchise the most vulnerable Albertans.

I implore my colleagues to do the right thing. Let's safeguard our democratic process and our democracy at all costs. This bill is sending chills to every Albertan who cares about democracy, and this government still has the opportunity to make it right. Madam Speaker, this bill cannot be salvaged. There is only one option. Do the right thing. Protect our democracy. I ask members across the aisle to scrap this bill.

Thank you.

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

Ms Chapman: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I'm going to keep this tight because I know that I have a lot of colleagues who want to speak on this. I'm very happy to speak in support of this amendment. I've heard a lot of content from the bill sponsor, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, focusing on this idea of free and fair elections. Obviously, that's an idea that all Albertans can get behind.

You know, unfortunately, I'm not seeing that being adequately addressed in this bill. We need to see increased transparency around things like campaign finance, and it is a real shame that this bill does such an inadequate job of addressing that need for transparency.

I want to give credit because I try to give credit when there's something in there I like, and that expansion of special ballots: credit due, credit given. I didn't realize, you know, I had to do this

kind of emotional labour for the government, but pat on the head. That's a good piece of legislation that you've got in there.

Unfortunately, it's surrounded by a whole bunch of things that are not great, and the thing that really gets to me about this is that this is going to be the only piece of legislation likely – right? – that we're going to discuss, that we're going to pass, that is going to address the Local Authorities Election Act. We have this one opportunity in front of us to address campaign finance, to address risk of policy capture, and instead of making changes that would result in those more free and fair elections, we're really just letting that opportunity pass us on by.

3:20

I read a really interesting report when I was doing some background on this bill. It was an OECD governance review called *Financing Democracy: Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns and the Risk of Policy Capture*. I'm just going to read you a short quote from the introduction.

Understanding and addressing the role of money and its influence in politics can no longer be a taboo subject. When public policy making is captured by private interests, the "rules of the game" for markets and opportunities may be bent to favour the few and violate the interest of the many. The consequences include the erosion of democratic governance, social cohesion, and equal opportunities for all, as well as the decline of trust in democracy itself.

This report – I know it was a long one; it was a chonky one; it was over a hundred pages – is really the kind of detailed analysis that I wish the members opposite would have referred to, would have consulted when cooking up amendments to local election finance laws.

The report talks about measures employed by OECD countries in political finance regulations. It has a really great section that speaks to the balance that's needed between public and private financing. This one was really interesting to me. I didn't know this about Quebec, and it's interesting to me that this government didn't decide to go full Quebec on this, the way they've done with other pieces of legislation. In Quebec donations are capped at \$100. You want to get big money out of politics? That seems like a really smart way to get big money out of politics. And they balance that out with public funding.

Public funding is really interesting, too, because in different OECD countries they have different ways that they can direct the portion of public funding that can be used. In Ireland, just as an example, a portion of that public funding that's provided is set aside – some amount for party activities, yes – for the promotion of women and youth electoral participation. In Greece a portion of public funding is set aside for research and study centres. Madam Speaker, imagine how we could strengthen democracy if we did the same thing here, if we used funds to research, study, put forth strong, evidence-based policies, if we used public funding to encourage voter participation in populations where we traditionally have low voter turnout. There are so many things that we could have done that would have made Bill 20 a better piece of legislation.

Honestly, imagine if we had actually tackled the issue of big money in politics. What if we, like 35 per cent of OECD countries, just banned corporate and union donations? We could just disallow those. Let's go ahead. Let's take the big money out of politics. What if we disallowed third-party advertisers or PACs? These are all things that we could have done. Certainly, I've heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs speak many times about how funds going into third parties and PACs decrease transparency, how going directly to candidates will increase transparency. Let's just follow it through to its logical conclusion. Let's just actually take the big money out of politics, ban corporate, union donations, ban your third parties

and PACs. Why not have some real vision for how we could change campaign finance laws to truly strengthen democracy?

I will take my seat so that my other colleagues can speak on this.

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

Member Irwin: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a rapt audience, a captured audience. Everyone is paying keen attention, so this is exciting. You know, it is an honour to rise and speak to Bill 20, this fairly large piece of legislation. There is so much to unpack in this bill, but of course we have limited time due to time allocation, and all of us members on our side are keeping our remarks brief. A bill that is fundamentally about democracy is having debate limited on it. I mean, I just can't tell you all watching at home – and I know there are many folks watching at home right now, many of whom were watching late into the evening as well, you know, seeing democracy being attacked in front of their very own eyes.

There's so much in Bill 20 that I could talk about. I could talk about political parties in municipal politics. I could talk about the ability that the UCP will be giving themselves to overturn any bylaws that they don't like. I could list the dozens and dozens of communities, primarily rural, that have spoken out. Why don't I name just a couple of communities: Okotoks, Foothills county, High River, Grande Prairie, Diamond Valley, Red Deer, Calgary, Red Deer county, Didsbury, Edmonton, Cold Lake, St. Paul, Bonnyville, Barrhead, my hometown of Barrhead, where I will be on Sunday morning as they paint their pride crosswalk. The Barrhead United church is organizing that. I'm so excited to be back in Barrhead. But even the town of Barrhead is speaking out against Bill 20. And that was not an exhaustive list of communities that have spoken out. Of course, the Rural Municipalities have spoken out as well.

So much to unpack, and my colleagues have done a really good job of assessing the most egregious parts of Bill 20, but I would like to focus on one piece that really, you know, has an impact on me and my constituents, and that's the changes to voting and that's the removal of vouching. It's quite timely because today, many folks know, it's been one year since the provincial election. A memory came up on my social media today of again being at the Bissell Centre. My tradition has been for the three elections that I've run in, that I've had the honour of running in, to spend a little part of election day outside the Bissell Centre, which we know is an incredible resource – it makes me emotional even talking about it – for unhoused folks in our city. I go there every election because those folks who may not have roofs over their heads deserve an opportunity to vote. They deserve a voice. It's been actually really cool over the last couple of elections to see mobile polling stations and to see Bissell Centre and other organizations in Edmonton really encouraging and really trying to help facilitate so that unhoused folks can vote. So it's incredibly troubling to hear that Bill 20 essentially amounts to voter suppression.

I want to quote David Climenhaga in *rabble*, who asks:

Does the Municipal Affairs Minister . . . have any idea how many Albertans could be denied the right to vote in the next general election because of the United Conservative Party's . . . planned changes to voting rules in Bill 20 . . . If [the minister] does – and you'd think he would – nobody's bothered to ask him about it yet.

We have asked him about it, and we've heard some of his own trying to justify and explain these changes to voting in particular. He's telling us that what we're saying isn't true, but, I mean, I've got the bill in front of me, and we've all read through the relevant clauses.

According to another one of my constituents, University of Alberta political scientist Jared Wesley, the number of voters who could be impacted is anywhere from 10,000 to 50,000, all to solve a problem that doesn't exist by making it impossible for neighbours and coworkers with ID to vouch for people they know at a polling station.

As I said, as I've seen, as I've talked to a lot of folks who work on the front lines – I talked to a lot of folks who are unhoused – vouching has been absolutely critical for our houseless neighbours. Anybody who knows, anybody who's been in the neighbourhoods I represent, part of the neighbourhoods the Member for Edmonton-City Centre represents as well – there are some services for folks to get ID. But I can tell you that those services have actually been further restricted. Part of those services have been lost due to funding cuts. Bissell Centre had to close a lot of their day services. At a time when it's becoming harder and harder for unhoused folks to access, to even be able to get ID, now this UCP government wants to make it even more difficult.

If you don't know just what a journey it is – and Dr. Wesley talks about this – to try to get an ID, I mean, think about someone like me, someone who's incredibly privileged. I've lost my ID before. It's tricky enough for me to try to figure out: okay, I've got to go find an ID. I jump in my car, because I have the privilege of having a vehicle. I can go to the registry. How many unhoused folks can do that? If you don't have ID, if you don't have any other sort of documentation, well, what would you need? You would need things like a permanent address – unhoused folks don't have a permanent address – a credit card, a utility bill. Not many folks who are living rough have access to a credit card. Birth certificate: I mean, again, you may not have any of your personal documentation like a birth certificate, any sort of, you know, passport, anything like that, right? It might be easy for some of us, Dr. Wesley talks about, to replace our ID, but you better believe that for somebody who's unhoused or somebody who's precariously housed, it's next to impossible.

3:30

Of course, I'm focusing right now, in my very limited time – I'll point out again my very limited time due to time allocation, because this UCP government doesn't think it's important to talk about access to voting. Unbelievable. I'm talking about one population, unhoused folks, but of course these concerns apply to many other populations as well. These impacts will be felt by racialized Albertans, by seniors, by rural Albertans, and many more.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: First Nations.

Member Irwin: First Nations. Thank you to my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford, who's an awesome advocate right there.

Member Tejada: Queer folks.

Member Irwin: Queer and trans folks as well. Thank you to my colleague from Calgary-Klein.

All that to say, as my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre said so well earlier in the House: "Let's call a spade a spade. This . . . is racist, [it's] ageist, and it reeks of urban privilege." We're urging the UCP and this minister to scrap Bill 20. Do the right thing for unhoused folks and countless Albertans. Kill the bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this. Our friends across the way . . .

The Deputy Speaker: My apologies – no. We're on amendment. Go ahead.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. Our friends across the way are determined to continue to misrepresent what's in the bill. What we just heard is, unfortunately, just exactly the opposite of what Bill 20 is about. As we heard from our social services minister yesterday, basically – and we started this in Edmonton – our plan, between now and the next election, is to roll out across Alberta to make it easier to get identification than it's ever been in the past, where someone, an unhoused person – I think that's the phrase that my colleague across the way used – at a shelter will be able to basically instantly get ID, official government of Alberta ID. They'll be able to use the address of the shelter for it. They'll be able to get the ID right away. It won't cost them anything. And that's the one thing that they need to vote.

Our government already is and will continue to bend over backwards, particularly to help those vote, those that might be the hardest to provide that for, those of the lowest income, those that may have restricted mobility because of their income or for other reasons. We will go out of our way to make it easier than ever before for those persons to get identification and to be able to vote.

Indeed, with the ballots, the mail-in ballots. Again, somebody that can't get to the polling station easily on election day: we will help them to get a ballot, help them to get it filled out so they can get it mailed in ahead of time, so that if it's a long trip or one that's difficult for them to make on election day due to whatever their circumstances are – we intend to make it easier in the next municipal election, easier than it's ever been ever before in Alberta to vote and more available than it's ever been ever before.

The folks across should actually be challenging us to make that happen. We're going to make it happen. It won't necessarily be automatic, and it won't necessarily be easy, but our government's intention is to make sure every Albertan gets to vote. In fact, the biggest effort will be to those most . . .

Member Tejada: Marginalized?

Mr. McIver: Marginalized is the word, yeah. Thank you. Here I am thanking the folks across.

. . . marginalized persons to be able to vote by making it easier than it's ever been before to get ID and easier than it's ever been before to do a mail-in ballot.

I get it. The folks aside, it's the opposition. They want to accuse us of not doing this. In fact, what they're saying that we're doing is actually the opposite of what is the truth. Our intention is to make it easier to get ID, easier to vote, and it's offensive to hear folks use the word "racism" and talk about this, because it's exactly the opposite. Marginalized people: we want to make it easier than it's ever been before in the history of Alberta for them to vote. That's what Bill 20 is intended to do. That's what I intend to do. That's what our government intends to do, Madam Speaker.

I just thought that after the stream of misinformation that has come today from across the aisle, for anybody watching at home, somebody needs to stand up and set the record straight because, unfortunately, what we heard today from the other side both now, during debate, and during . . .

Mr. Sabir: We are on time allocation.

Mr. McIver: Sorry; Team Angry just can't stop yelling.

. . . question period was inaccurate. It wasn't truthful.

They're complaining about time allocation, but the fact is that if they would stop saying things about the bill that aren't true, then it would be easier to sit down and listen to it. My time here has been

made necessary by the untrue things that the folks on the other side have intentionally said. Somebody needs to set the record straight. That's what I'm doing, and I thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to do exactly that.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Indeed, Minister, let's set the record straight, through you to the minister, Madam Speaker. The minister talked about saying that he wants to talk about what's in the bill. Let's talk about what's in the bill. What's in the bill is that this government is stripping the right to vote in a municipal election from anyone who does not have photo ID. That is precisely the text of the bill. To be clear, everything the minister just said about his intentions, his wishes, his grand hopes is not in the bill, okay?

There is nothing in this bill about making ID more accessible. There is nothing in this bill about providing additional education to racialized communities about this drastic change. The minister did not put anything forward in his budget earlier this year for that work. Indeed, at that time the minister gave no indication that he intended to make these sweeping changes. So whatever the minister says his intentions are, they are not in this bill. There is nothing concrete anywhere this government can point to as to its intentions.

Let's be clear, Madam Speaker. If intentions meant anything, then this government's intentions to build 11 recovery communities across this province would have stopped a record number of people from dying of drug poisonings last year, but guess what? Intentions don't do a thing. So what the minister is saying has no basis in fact. He is standing in this House and saying: trust me. What this government is doing is that they are building a wall that keeps people out and saying: it's our intention to build a door.

The same government that told Albertans they would get a significant personal income tax cut, which they have not given, a government which said that they would not attempt to impose an Alberta pension plan and then went ahead and attempted to do so as one of their first acts in office: this is not a government that can simply be trusted, Madam Speaker. When you are taking away something as fundamental as an individual's right to vote, a government needs to be held to a much higher standard than its intentions.

I will say it again, Madam Speaker. This government is putting forward a policy that is racist because it disproportionately impacts racialized communities. That's not me; that is the experts, political scientist Dr. Jared Wesley, hundreds of reports and research which have demonstrated what the impact of this policy has been implemented in the United States. It is ageist because it disproportionately impacts seniors and others who have difficulty accessing ID. It reeks of urban privilege because it makes it more difficult for people in rural areas, who have a harder time accessing ID. The minister can talk all he likes about his intention to make it the easiest province to get ID, but the fact is that he is stripping the right before he has done a single thing to make that true.

3:40

This government is owed no benefit of the doubt. We are here to debate the bill that is in front of us, and what it says is that they are stripping that right away. I will continue to say so because that is what is in the bill until this government actually does something concrete to demonstrate.

Even then, Madam Speaker – let us be clear – there is absolutely no evidence of fraud in the province of Alberta. As I said previously, records from Elections Alberta over a decade: millions of votes cast; seven cases, less than a fraction of a per cent. For that

reason this government is going to strip a fundamental right of Albertans and erect an incredible barrier for a problem that does not exist.

As Paul McLauchlin, the president of the Rural Municipalities association, hardly known as a raving socialist, Madam Speaker, says: this is a U.S.-style conspiracy theory; this creates democratic uncertainty, the assumption that something nefarious is occurring when it is not. These members who we assume are going to support the bill, because they've certainly supported everything else this government has put forward – but we will see when it comes to the vote – it is their constituents that are speaking out. And I thank Mr. McLauchlin for his solidarity with marginalized communities in this province, solidarity that they are not being shown by their own government.

You know, the minister stood last night, and he talked about some other provisions in this bill. He says: "Hey, we're not taking any new powers. We could always dismiss a councillor. We could always take out a bylaw that we didn't like." How incredibly disingenuous, Madam Speaker. That's like saying: "You know what? I've given myself the power to run red lights. But, hey, it's nothing new; I was always licensed to drive." The fact is that this government is removing significant checks and balances on its power, actual democratic process, much as they are doing through time allocation. This is a government that has levels of arrogance and entitlement like we have never seen in this province, who thinks that they should have the right to simply act and never be questioned.

Where the minister once would have had to go through an actual investigative process, issue a public report, he is now going to award himself the ability to simply, stroke of a pen, behind closed doors, in cabinet, fire a councillor or a mayor. Where they once had to walk into this Legislature, introduce a bill to override a municipal bylaw, they are now saying: "Hey, when we feel like it, we can just get together in the backroom with cabinet. Stroke of a pen, it's done." Those are new powers, those are sweeping powers, and those are powers that nobody in this province trusts this government to wield. As hundreds of municipal councillors, reeves, mayors, and many, many others who we know are e-mailing these members, because we're seeing those e-mails, too – they do not trust this government with awarding itself this sweeping power.

That is what is in Bill 20, Madam Speaker: arrogance, entitlement, undermining democracy in the province of Alberta. This government is going to wear this. I can assure you of it. Clearly, I will be voting against Bill 20. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Dr. Metz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I wish to speak briefly to this bill, Bill 20, which I cannot support, and specifically I do support the amendment before us. This is another bill where the Premier attempts to control everything everywhere all at once. This bill would be better named the UCP Authoritarian Act. This bill is an attack on democracy. It moves us towards authoritarianism. It has massive overreach and removes the democratic rights of Albertans. This bill brings in voter restrictions. We have heard that from my colleagues. It removes the democratic voice of Albertans, that is exercised through all those they elect, not just the UCP cabinet ministers. It puts way too much power in the sitting government, and there are no reasonable guardrails. Instead, we're just asked to trust them.

Now we're even creating legislation that, by design, supports the rhetoric of conspiracy theories. Currently the Local Authorities Election Act permits municipalities, by bylaw, to process ballots by automated voting equipment. Bill 20, however, prohibits the use of

tabulators. All votes must be counted by hand. This, of course, will increase the cost substantially for no reason. The minister himself stated that tabulators are being prohibited because some people don't trust them. He stated: I've never called their integrity into question, but if you talk to Albertans, you will find a number of them don't have faith in machines counting ballots; it's not whether the machines are good or bad; the most important point is whether people believe the machines are okay or not.

Now, come on. There is no evidence to support that tabulators are inaccurate. In fact, Dominion Voting won a defamation case against *Fox News* for repeating what were found to be false claims of vote tampering. Criticism of the accuracy of the machines was really a big thing in the 2020 presidential election in the United States, and it was amplified after a conspiracy theory that alleged millions of votes intended for the incumbent Donald Trump were deleted or changed.

Including this prohibition on tabulators is a message that undermines democracy by supporting distrust in the minds of voters. Are the UCP now making decisions based on conspiracy theories? Real leadership would correct the record, not feed into these conspiracies. Unfortunately, we see the same idea regarding vaccines. Instead of correcting the record and sharing truth, all of the truth, of course, we are seeing support for conspiracy theories in vaccines.

I suspect that going down the path of creating legislation that feeds into conspiracy theories is now the way this government is going. This makes me very sad. It really should be requiring the leadership of the government to set the record straight, for people to talk to this small group of people who lean into these ideas and correct things so that we have more truth in our society.

There are certainly a number of issues with this bill. We've heard about the problem with getting voter ID. We've heard, "Oh, no, this is easy," from the minister, but we also know that getting access to photo ID is often very limited in rural areas, and that is particularly where Indigenous people live. We can see that this is another example of excluding vulnerable Albertans. I really feel that we . . .

3:50

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 46, agreed to on May 28, 2024, one hour of debate has now been completed, and I am required to put to the Assembly all necessary questions to dispose of Bill 20, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, at third reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment HA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:51 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

| | | |
|--------------------|----------|---------------|
| Al-Guneid | Gray | Phillips |
| Batten | Hoyle | Renaud |
| Boparai | Ip | Sabir |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Irwin | Schmidt |
| Chapman | Kasawski | Shepherd |
| Dach | Loyola | Sigurdson, L. |
| Eggen | Metz | Tejada |
| Elmeligi | Notley | Wright, P. |
| Eremenko | Pancholi | |

Against the motion:

| | | |
|--------------------|---------|----------|
| Amery | Johnson | Rowswell |
| Armstrong-Homeniuk | Jones | Sawhney |

| | | |
|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Boitchenko | LaGrange | Schow |
| Bouchard | Loewen | Schulz |
| Cyr | Long | Sigurdson, R.J. |
| de Jonge | Lovely | Sinclair |
| Dreeshen | Luntz | Singh |
| Dyck | McDougall | Stephan |
| Ellis | McIver | Turton |
| Fir | Nally | van Dijken |
| Getson | Neudorf | Wiebe |
| Glubish | Nicolaides | Williams |
| Guthrie | Nixon | Wilson |
| Horner | Petrovic | Wright, J. |
| Hunter | Pitt | Yaseen |
| Jean | | |

Totals: For – 26 Against – 46

[Motion on amendment HA1 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 46, agreed to on May 28, 2024, I am required to dispose of all necessary questions for third reading of Bill 20, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:08 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

| | | |
|-----------|----------|---------------|
| Al-Guneid | Hoyle | Phillips |
| Batten | Ip | Renaud |
| Boparai | Irwin | Sabir |
| Chapman | Kasawski | Schmidt |
| Dach | Loyola | Shepherd |
| Eggen | Metz | Sigurdson, L. |
| Elmeligi | Notley | Tejada |
| Eremenko | Pancholi | Wright, P. |
| Gray | | |

Totals: For – 46 Against – 25

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a third time]

Bill 22 Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

[Adjourned debate May 28: Mr. Shepherd]

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 48, agreed to on May 28, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of Bill 22, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, in third reading. There are 44 minutes remaining of the one-hour allotment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has four minutes should he choose to use them.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has risen.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 22 in third reading. I do have an amendment to move.

The Speaker: Perhaps what we might do is that we'll send the page in your direction. If you can provide the copies, as soon as I get a copy, we'll get a copy to the table, and we'll proceed immediately following that.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm moving this amendment on behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Manning, so the amendment reads that the Member for Edmonton-Manning moves that the motion for third reading of Bill 22, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 22, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, be not now read a third time because the Assembly is of the view that, rather than fixing the health care system, the proposed legislative amendments will only result in increased bureaucracy and inefficiency as patients and health care providers are divided into ineffective and arbitrary delivery organizations.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

This is an important amendment, and this is the last opportunity for all members of this House to think about this bill and how it impacts Albertans and their constituents across this province. When this Premier took over, she said that she would fix the health care system in 90 days. That didn't happen. Today, as we speak, there are 20 or more emergency health centres across this province that are closed. Experts have talked about solutions, we have proposed solutions, but this government seems hell bent on dismantling Alberta Health Services instead of fixing the things that need to be fixed. We are concerned about it, Albertans are concerned about it because that's the same government and caucus that didn't get an essay contest right. We can't trust them with restructuring the entire health care system. That's very dangerous.

I urge all members of this House to take this amendment and opportunity seriously and not read this bill a third time now. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise and speak in support of the amendment brought forward by my colleague the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. I wholeheartedly support the amendment. It is very clear that this bill, Bill 22, does absolutely nothing to address what is absolutely the most pressing issue in Albertans' minds. No matter what corner of the province they live in right now, health care is their top concern.

4:30

I only have a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, because I know so many of my colleagues want to speak on this bill because we are hearing from our constituents about how important health care is to them and the lack of access and the declining quality of care that they're receiving. So I have to take this only opportunity that I've had to speak to Bill 22, which has had the least amount of debate in this House before the government brought in time allocation, to bring forward some of the stories of my constituents because I can't leave this place and this bill without speaking for them and their voices.

Fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, what Bill 22 misses and what this government continues to miss is that health care and addressing the crisis we have in our health care system is really about people. It is about the people – all of us: our families, our friends, our colleagues, our neighbours – who access the health care system, it's about the quality of care we receive, and, of course, it is about the thousands and thousands of people in this province who work in front-line health care positions.

From health care aides to nurses to physicians, across the board we see so many people who are not only serving their – you know, they're delivering health care to Albertans, but they are also Albertans who have their own families and their own careers and futures to look forward to. So I want to share a couple of stories about what I'm frustrated about and what Bill 22 does not do.

We all have stories that have probably stayed with us as MLAs. I think about an e-mail that I got earlier this year from a family in my constituency, a young family with kids around the same age as my kids, and the father in that family had just been diagnosed with stage 3 cancer. They were writing to me in frustration because despite having young children and being a relatively healthy person and he has stage 3 cancer, he was going to have to wait three months for cancer surgery. Of course, we know with stage 3 cancer the risk of spread in that period of time goes up. This is a young family, a young parent, and it is devastating because any of us can easily picture that being our families. My mother is currently going through stage 4 cancer.

We all know people who are touched by that, and to hear that and to say: this isn't about how severe the cancer is that you have. It's that your life, your health is at risk because you won't have access to the care that you need because there are not enough oncologists, because there are not enough spaces, that there's not enough time, that your GP might be delayed even having a first appointment with you, because you don't have a GP and you've gone into a walk-in clinic, and maybe you're trying to find care somewhere else, and it takes so long to put the pieces together and say, "Perhaps we need to do a scan. Perhaps we need to do an MRI. Perhaps we need to know," and then you've got to wait for that, Mr. Speaker.

People, their care and their quality of life and health, are being affected not because we don't know what needs to be done, not because we don't have the skills and the talent and the people here who know what to do to treat people but because the system is failing them, because they don't have access to care in a timely fashion. That is heartbreaking.

I want to bring forward the story of a constituent named Ewa who came in and met with me in my office during our last constituency break. She talked to me about how she had previously survived cancer. She had gotten a scan two years ago; it was a scan after her cancer, and she was scheduled to have another scan this September. That was supposed to be to keep on top of making sure that the cancer hadn't come back and it hadn't spread, but when she went to go and get that scan, the one that she was told was necessary to make sure that she would stay cancer free, she was told she'd have to wait, first, six months before she could get a scan.

Well, she still didn't get any contact from the clinic, so she followed up, and she was told by them: it's now going to be up to two years before you're going to get that scan. You know, when she sat down with me, Ewa said: I may just be a number to this government, but I am a parent, I'm a grandparent, I'm a family member, and I'm scared for my health. That is actually a quote. I remembered that, Mr. Speaker, because this is where we are in this province when it comes to health care, and this is what this bill fails to address. There's nothing in here about actually delivering better and more timely care to Albertans where they need it.

It's about reorganization and creating more positions for more ministers. It's about creating more councils and more bodies and all of that kind of stuff, and we've seen this track before in Alberta. We've seen how when Conservatives want to address health care – what do they do? – they either reorg or they disassemble or they reorg again. That's what they do. They don't get to the heart of what's needed, which is actually to address the reality that health care is about people.

Now I want to talk a little bit, Mr. Speaker, about the cost of doing this reorganization, which is exactly what we're doing once again in this province. I want to cite an article from an Edmonton physician named Dr. Stan Houston. He wrote an article that said: "Why Danielle Smith's Massive Health Reorganization Should Scare You. I'm a doctor. And I'm afraid for Alberta's health care." He's very well respected; he teaches at the University of Alberta in the School of Public Health.

He writes a number of things. One of the things he talks about that's missing from Bill 22 and this reorganization that this government has put forward is that it's not addressing at all public health and prevention. He says that this is long undervalued in Alberta, but it's nowhere highlighted in the new model although it has the potential to have a greater impact on health outcomes than many health care interventions as well as reducing costs. He talks about the fact that "the real issue is not which model is adopted. The model was not the problem and a new model is not the solution." The problem is that we have not kept our health care workers. We have not trained health care workers. We've not valued them. We've not respected them. We've not invested in primary care, which is the first stop for most Albertans. We are still delayed in having a family medicine compensation model that's going to keep the family doctors that we are losing at a rapid pace to other provinces.

Many of us in our caucus, and I'm sure some of the government caucus, met with some of the medical students from the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary who talked about: they are not considering family medicine in Alberta as an option for them because they don't see a model for them that makes sense, that actually helps them deliver the kind of care they want. So, yes, they are talking about going to B.C. We claim to be a province that wants to be competitive about drawing people, about keeping people. But you know what draws people and keeps people? Knowing that they have a strong health care system. This government is not interested in drawing health care workers to this province. They boast about the 200,000 new Albertans who have come, but those people who are coming need doctors, and the people who are coming are not primarily health care professionals.

The additional cost, Mr. Speaker, of Bill 22 is not just the failure, which is a spectacular failure, to address the profound needs that we have in our health care system, that would actually make a difference to my constituents and to all the constituents of all of us in this House, but it actually also comes with the cost of doing a reorganization at a time when we are in crisis. Dr. Houston says, "the biggest cost is the unavoidable period of paralysis" that will follow.

For a substantial time, nobody knows what decisions they can make, whom to talk to, how to get things approved or just how things work in the new order. Plans are put on hold, and frontline initiatives, however urgent, must wait until it is determined whether and how they fit into the new structure. Recruitment, so critical right now, is one of the decisions almost always postponed during restructuring. A general uncertainty and hesitancy prevails until the dust settles, typically a couple of years.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have a couple of years in Alberta. We are not looking at a health care crisis; we are in a health care crisis.

We have almost a million Albertans who don't have access to a family doctor. We have family physicians who are leaving this province. We have care that is appalling in this province, to hear the stories of the lack of care that we are getting. I listen every day. I've spent a lot of time in my constituency with the seniors in my constituency or over at the continuing care facilities and the independent living facilities in my riding, and in continuing care the stories are atrocious. Meanwhile at that very facility in my riding, a continuing care facility, recently that for-profit provider has announced that they are laying off all their health care aides. This government has eliminated minimum hours of care in that facility, and those workers are now going to work far fewer hours for less pay. And they're saying that that is an improvement in health care.

I'm of the sandwich generation, Mr. Speaker. I've got young kids – they're still going through elementary school – but I also have an aging mom, who I've also already indicated is going through health concerns herself. I look at my mother's future in health care, and it is something I never conceived of in this province. I don't know what kind of care and where she will get the care she needs, and I worry that whatever care, even if we found her a spot, would be so appallingly negligent that it would taint the relationship and the commitment that I've made as her daughter to care for her because I won't be able to deliver and make sure and promise her that she will get the care that she needs. And I'm not alone; there are thousands and thousands of Albertans who are dealing with this every day.

Bill 22 does absolutely nothing to make that better for Albertans. It is just more vendetta, firing people, restructuring, moving things around, when once again a Conservative government – although I will take issue with the idea that they're actually conservative. But what they're doing over there is that they're messing around with people, with the structures; they're giving themselves more authority, more political interference into the health care system. Meanwhile Albertans, both those who work on the front lines and those who access health care, are receiving worse care. That is the legacy of this government. That's the legacy of the UCP over the last five years, and Bill 22: they're going to ensure that that's their legacy going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 22. It's a health care restructuring bill with what one can only conclude is the wholesale restructuring and introduction of privatization into the health care system.

Dream no little dreams, Tommy Douglas told us. It was no little dream to introduce a public medicare system across the country, eventually modelled on what he brought in in Saskatchewan, based on the very simple premise that you'll not be destitute if something happens to you. You can go on and live your life.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, my grandmother Ella Phillips* was kicked in the leg by a horse when she was about 19. They amputated her leg in prepenicillin days. This would have been in the 1930s. They didn't pay off those medical bills until they got a settlement from a car accident in the early 1960s. Her husband, Cede Phillips,* grew up for at least seven years, as the family history goes, in either the Rosedale or the Riverdale flats. I never got a straight answer on which flats it was. He lived in a tent for seven years, until there were enough of those 10 kids to be able to work in the meat-packing plants up on 66th Street. The great equalizers in our society are health care and education, and without them I don't stand here today.

Markets are necessary, as social democrats have taught us. Ed Broadbent famously said – I will never forget him saying at an Alberta NDP convention in 2000: markets are necessary, but the answer to every question is not necessarily markets, and that is what defines us as social democrats. That is why who we are is public health care. It is foundational to our party.

That is why when right-wing governments come to power, the first things they do: cut taxes for the rich, undermine labour rights, and they try to undermine the health care system. The third thing has been the hardest for them. It is the one thing that holds this very fragile country together. It's part of our identity. This country has always been something of a delightful but precarious experiment in federalism and pluralism. We have many successes. But the one thing that we have to be that jewel atop the continent, as Tommy described us, is our health care system. It's been the hardest thing for right-wing governments to open up those new markets. There's lots of money to be made in health care. We know this, south of the border. And so they wait. They bide their time. Brick by brick they undermine confidence. It has been my entire adult life.

When I learned I was a New Democrat was when I was in my late teens, early 20s. I started to learn about health care, and I started to understand what the difference was between us and the United States. Then I looked across at my options of parties, and I only found one that had a straight answer for me on where we stand on that great equalizer so that working-class people like me can have a chance and all the working-class people who come to this country now looking for a better life.

Bills like this will undermine public confidence in the system. The goal is not to fix the public system; the goal is to dismantle it. The goal is to create the social and market and economic inequality and workforce conditions to create the appetite for privatization so that those of us who are in the sandwich generation, that my learned friend just referenced, will look at our options and go: well, we don't have a choice.

That's what we need to reflect on, the great gift that is health care, what is at risk for my kids and my grandkids, and whether the great experiment of public health care, that holds together this country, pioneered, of course, by a CCF NDP government in Saskatchewan and then spread across to the country, will be a mere historical artifact or if it will be the reality for future generations. That is the question before this House.

That is why this bill ought not proceed, and that is why we need to have a real effort to ensure that we shore up our public health care system, ensure that it keeps pace with the times, whether it's technology or otherwise, so that it is there for our children and our grandchildren, so that it can accomplish the function that it does, which is hold this country together with the promise of social and economic equality and the right not to be destitute if something happens to you. That is the legacy that New Democrats leave. It will only result, that health care system, from a change of government.

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

Like I said, it's just not in the DNA of Conservatives or even some of the other parties.

That is the challenge before us. This bill should be scrapped now, and we should go on with the exercise of dreaming no little dreams because without them the world is barren and destitute and an anchorless, rudderless wilderness. Hold fast to our dreams, New Democrats. That's all we got sometimes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any others wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-Varsity has risen to speak.

Dr. Metz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are still many things that we haven't had a chance to say about this bill, but I think we need to focus on one of the big issues that we know was in the briefing notes to the minister prior to bringing this in, that there was risk of service failure, service disruption, and fragmentation. I definitely support this amendment that we need to set this bill aside for a period of time and come back to it in the fall.

We can see that all of these risks are actually happening right now. Things in the health care system have indeed been getting worse over these last few years, and there is no question that there needs to be improvement in the health care system. Ever since the UCP came into government, we have seen more and more problems in the health care system, and it wasn't all due to COVID. Even before COVID we had the difficulties with the Health minister at the time turning on the physicians and starting to chase physicians away. It got worse from there such that many of our staff were not wanting to work in Alberta and in this health care system. Everywhere has staff shortages. We used to have advantages here in Alberta, but we lost all of that, and it's really due to the actions of this government that things have gotten to the terrible state they're in.

Placing this whole argument for doing this reorganization into the argument of, "Well, we have to do something, so we will blow it up," is just false rhetoric. I mean, we planned and would have made a lot of changes and improvements in the system, but they would have been done to focus on things that needed to be dealt with, including things that were listed in the now four pillars. However, we would have focused on making the improvements based on best practices and evidence of what could be made, not just spending all the time, efforts, and moving money out of the care part of the system into building more bureaucracy, more levels, and without having even a decent transition plan. Things are disconnected. People don't know who they report to. People don't know how they get things done at this point, and many, many workers are looking at leaving, at changing jobs. There's huge concern about where they fit within the health care system.

We already knew that one of the ways to engage people is to have them involved in helping create solutions, and I've heard from so many of the people that have attended the consultant meetings where they sit around the table and information goes in, but it's after the decisions have already been made. I have yet to meet with anyone or hear from anyone who went to any of those meetings that felt their voice was heard.

Yet we know that there are solutions that could be done at the individual level if we just had the proper will and structures in place to help go about solving the problems rather than delay, plan to plan. I mean, look at the plan for getting more physicians. I mean, when are we actually going to see anything happen from that? You know, we've seen a plan. There was a plan to have a plan. Then there was a bit of a release. Then it's talked about again. But nothing has happened. We heard about the problems with physicians even being paid for seeing patients, out of goodwill, that didn't have a

health care number. They're still waiting because the billing system is broken. That's not even fixable.

4:50

I spoke with a physician that lives in Peace River that is a family physician, that works in emerg, that does anaesthesia, and he's at his wits' end because for a year he has been trying to get the PCN staff access to the connect care records so that they can do their job, which is to work with him and support his patients, but they can't even see the lab results and the records to move forward on this. He wants to use his own money to hire a physician assistant so that he can be doing anaesthesia; the physician assistant can do rounds on hospital patients, see people in the emergency department. But he can't. This has been a year, and they haven't been able to work through this process of finding how his employee can get access to the records of the hospital patients. It's now electronic records, and the physician assistant has to be able to do that. He's gone to all the levels, but nobody really knows where to go next, so therefore care waits and people aren't getting help.

We know that in the mental health area all of the discussion and focus is around addictions medicine. Mental health is not equal to addictions medicine. Mental health is a health issue on its own. Separating it out from the health issues that people have or taking them away from a regular hospital because they also have a mental health issue is going to cause no end of problems and pain. I'm sorry, but you don't recover from schizophrenia. It is a chronic problem that needs to be managed medically and with support in the community.

We also have seen nothing in this whole area as to how we're going to support development of primary care teams. We know that the best way to deliver care to people, that gives the best care and with the most efficiency, is to deliver care in team-based models, but we need to help them set this up. We need to help municipalities who want to build a team for their community, but they don't even know who to ask. They're totally on their own. And we're seeing physicians leaving because they are part of a group practice and now they can't afford the lease anymore because a few physicians have gone, and it's like a domino. Next thing you know, the practice closes. We need action on this, not just more talk.

There are ways to do this, but it doesn't need restructuring of the health care system. It just needs focusing on these issues that we have to deal with. So I am really sad that the way that this government is taking the health care system is just off the edge of a cliff. We are guaranteed of the service failure. We have it now; we see it now. We're guaranteed of the disruption. We have it now. And the fragmentation is only going to increase. So I am calling on them to assure that we get the data so that we can see what the outcomes are that we want to achieve. If it's just new people in admin jobs: okay; that's all you're achieving. But if we're really going to achieve something with regard to patients and having doctors and looking at wait times, we need to have ongoing data, and it has to be reliable, defined, understood. We expect that you're going to be able to prove that this system that's being blown up is actually any better for it rather than worse for it.

Remember, there is data that dates back a very long time, so we're going to know over time what these issues are and what they've been. So I really expect that we're going to have answers to this, that we're going to see that the system is indeed better if that's what you're doing. I have complete confidence that that's not going to be the case, but I'm very worried that it's going to be hard to show because of all the hidden dashboards and missing data. We need Albertans to see transparently what direction things are going in.

I urge all of you not to support this bill. I believe that the best thing is to set it aside, come back to it, and see where we go in the next few months because we're hearing lots of promises, and I don't have confidence; it's just more people working in the system at different levels with no connection to things that are going on.

Now, in addition, I might – I'm going to close and pass this on to one of my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 22, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and of course to speak in support of the amendment that is before us at the moment. Our health care system is being held together, really, because of the passion and selflessness, the dedication of those on the front lines. It's their level of professionalism and commitment to our health care system that is really keeping the health care system such as we have it right now from total collapse. What we need to do is to honour and celebrate those workers instead of blowing up the conditions in which they're working at the moment because they deserve better.

Bill 22 as it stands doesn't do anything to address what isn't working in health care right now, and it certainly, Mr. Speaker, doesn't do anything to honour those workers who have been there for us for so very many years. They are indeed the professionals who are at the backbone of our system, and whether they're a health care aide, whether they're a nurse, whether they're a doctor, whether they're a nurse practitioner, we count on them to help us when we need them to.

Certainly, we know, Mr. Speaker, that workers in continuing care have been crying out and telling us that they need more staff, more beds, more resources, more equipment, but they're not the only workers who have been crying. Each one of the different folks in the different sectors has told us that indeed there is a problem. We understand there's a problem; we understand the problem is acute. We understand that there is a crisis, but as I said, this bill doesn't do anything to help the crisis such as it is.

In the northeast of Edmonton you cannot find a doctor taking patients. In my constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview we do not have doctors coming in. We have doctors leaving in droves. In fact, there's a practice that will be closing its doors in the next couple of months, which means that the folks in my community will no longer have access to primary care. That is a bit of a problem, particularly for those women out there as well who require, be it because of cultural issues, to have a woman doctor. You can't find a woman doctor who's accepting patients in all of Edmonton, much less northeast Edmonton, and that's just one example of access to health care and how we don't have it at the moment.

Certainly, I think about my own experience with my dad when he was in hospital fairly recently. He had broken his hip. He ended up in the hospital. He ended up going off to a rehab facility, and I saw over a period of months what working short actually means. Every single day that health care facility, which was fabulous, and the people attached to it were fabulous, but every single day the folks there were working short. They were short of nurses, and they were short of health care attendants. They were short of housekeepers. They were short of cleaners. They were short of everyone. And what ended up happening too many times, Mr. Speaker, was that because of that shortness they ended up having to bring in travel agency folks. They had to bring in agency nurses. They had to bring in agency aides.

5:00

So what it meant is that, as the advocate on behalf of my dad, I had to talk to people every single day that I was there about the needs of my dad. It also meant that the staff who were there, incredibly professional folks who cared about my dad and who cared about all their patients, had to do the same thing, too. It's not the fault of the agency nurse who's coming in. They're there to do the very best job they can on behalf of everyone, all the folks like my dad. But they don't come equipped with all the knowledge and the information that they need. They don't come with a history. They didn't know that my dad couldn't have his blood pressure taken out of his left arm because of other things that had happened. They didn't know that my dad needed an awful lot of assistance for mobility, because they were there just for that day or just for a few hours.

What we see right now, Mr. Speaker, is a system that's more willing to pay, sometimes double, triple, for those agency nurses, for those agency aides than they are for the nurses and the aides that are in our system right now, and that's a problem. We know that we have a population that's growing, yet we simply do not have the health care workers, the infrastructure in terms of workers to be able to take care of all of those hundreds of thousands of folks who are coming to Alberta.

We know that workforce planning, apparently, is a thing of the past. Dr. Parks has talked about how concerned he is about it. Jon Meddings also shares concerns about the fact that we don't seem to have any kind of a workforce implementation group going on. It used to be comprised of folks from government, from AHS, training centres, student groups. What Jon Meddings talks about is that it planned out what we needed 10 years into the future by postal code, by region, so it made sense. It meant that folks were thinking about what a particular region of the province actually needed at that time. So they were able to be responsive. They were able to be nimble. They were able to be flexible.

Certainly, there are many concerns about whether or not a co-ordinated approach to workforce planning will even be able to happen within this new system because it doesn't talk about that in this bill. How on earth will four new agencies or organizations be tasked with the issue of recruiting and retaining all of these workers that our health care system so desperately needs? Whose ultimate responsibility will it be, Mr. Speaker? Will it be the overarching minister, that oversight minister, or will it be the individual sectoral ministers? How on earth will they be able to make sure that we are creating the conditions to not only recruit health care professionals but also to retain them? What I also wonder – and this is because of a conversation a bunch of us had with some care providers a few months ago. Was the question, "What exactly makes a good health care system?" even asked before this bill was created? If it wasn't asked, I've got some great people that people can ask. They can go to the OECD. They can go to the World Health Organization.

The World Health Organization, for instance, talks about how quality of care is the degree to which health services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes. Makes sense. It needs to be evidence-based, professional knowledge, and all of that is critical for achieving universal health coverage. As countries commit to achieving health for all, it's imperative to carefully consider the quality of care and health services. Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the World Health Organization makes perfectly clear is that it does indeed need to be evidence based. One of the things the World Health Organization also says is that you need to have assessment measures in place to really find out where the gaps are, what's going well, what's not going well. Where do you need to place your emphasis?

Interestingly enough, the OECD also talks about health system performance assessments. I'm wondering if that sort of thing was done, and if it was, why haven't we seen evidence of it? I haven't seen any evidence of it.

One of the primary concerns that I do have, Mr. Speaker, of course, has to do with the workers who are presently right now working on our behalf, and, as I've mentioned, they're working short all the time. Right now these are folks who were with us during the pandemic. They were with us before the pandemic. They've delivered our babies. They've taken care of our children, like when my daughter split her back open. She needed that nurse there to help calm her down. She needed the doctor there to help stitch up her back so that she was going to be okay. When my granddaughter broke her arm playing in the trampoline park, she needed that hospital to be there for her. She needed the emergency room doctor to be there for her. She needed the anaesthetist to be there for her. She needed all of those folks to be there for her. And I'm worried right now that all of those folks can't bear what it is we continue to give them, because we aren't giving them what they need right now. They're overwhelmed. They're feeling undervalued, and certainly they're feeling disrespected.

Too many of our health care workers, particularly those who are working some of those jobs in continuing care and in home care, end up working two jobs just to barely make ends meet. What I wonder on their behalf is whether or not they'll be able first of all to continue working those two jobs. As we know, who knows who their employer is going to be? Are they going to be flitting between two different employers, two different care providers within this new system that we are apparently setting up? All of this, of course, as my colleague from Lethbridge-West noted, is happening behind the looming threat of privatization within our health care system. That's to say nothing about it also happening, Mr. Speaker, in the midst of bargaining for thousands of health care workers. The timing is egregious, and I do have to wonder if the timing is absolutely deliberate.

Publicly funded and publicly delivered health care is a must. It should be a given. It should be what we all expect. There are many, many ways, Mr. Speaker, to insert creeping privatization of a whole bunch of services into the mix. This is a government that right now has an unfair labour practice complaint against it filed on behalf of the United Nurses of Alberta: bad-faith bargaining and interference, which is not exactly, in my view, a ringing endorsement of this government's relationship with workers. Despite the fact that we are told, "It'll be fine; ten thousand workers will magically move from one employer to another," it can't be fine because it's too big a move and because there's too much that's unknown right now.

These are essential workers. They're essential jobs. These are folks who are essential to keeping us safe and healthy during the pandemic. They are essential now. They are workers who deserve respect. They deserve fair wages. But the chaos that's created by this bill simply creates more challenges for those workers who simply want stability. They want to know that they can depend upon us. These are front-line workers who are desperate for that stability, and right now they don't have the stability that, quite frankly, we owe them.

This bill will do harm to patients, to families through all sectors of health care. When I look at the bill, I see only a destructive restructuring plan that will lead to more chaos while providing cover for more privatization in a system that is supposed to be public. Not just public in terms of the funds that are going into it, Mr. Speaker, but public in terms of the way in which that health care is delivered. We shouldn't have to worry about whether or not an agency is going to be a private agency where the motive will not be patient care. It won't be patient care at the centre; instead, it will

be profit at the centre. We know and we've had many recent examples – and my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud has talked about it – of where it isn't about the patient in the middle. It's about the dollars that can be earned at the end of that week, at the end of that month.

This bill will do harm. It's about starving our system, splitting it off and then selling it off, and that seems to be this government's plan for health care. It's egregious. We should not have this bill in front of us. This bill doesn't fix anything, as all of my colleagues have noted. This isn't a bill about fixing things. This is about destroying something. It's about blowing up a health care system. Certainly, as we have all noted, myself included, this is a system that absolutely needs to be fixed. But, Mr. Speaker, the answer is not to do what this bill says. This bill isn't about fixing. This isn't about making sure that people in my community have doctors right now, that they have access to health care right now. This is about this fundamental difference of opinion of what health care should be. It should be publicly funded and publicly delivered in publicly owned centres.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues, including the folks across the aisle, to vote for this amendment and ultimately to vote against this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Any others wishing to speak? Calgary-Currie.

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, recovery Alberta is going to become the first of the health care organizations that will be formed as of July 1. I don't think anyone in these Chambers needs me to tell them that that process still has many questions that remain as far as how labour is going to work, what programs are coming over. There are an awful lot of question marks that remain.

5:10

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 48, agreed to on May 28, 2024, one hour of debate has now been completed, and I am required to put to the Assembly all necessary questions to dispose of Bill 22, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, at third reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:10 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

| | | |
|-----------|----------|------------|
| Al-Guneid | Gray | Phillips |
| Batten | Ip | Renaud |
| Boparai | Irwin | Sabir |
| Chapman | Kasawski | Schmidt |
| Dach | Loyola | Shepherd |
| Eggen | Metz | Tejada |
| Elmeligi | Notley | Wright, P. |
| Eremenko | Pancholi | |

Against the motion:

| | | |
|--------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Amery | Johnson | Sawhney |
| Armstrong-Homeniuk | Jones | Schow |
| Boitchenko | LaGrange | Schulz |
| Bouchard | Loewen | Sigurdson, R.J. |
| Cyr | Long | Sinclair |
| de Jonge | Lovely | Singh |

| | | |
|----------|------------|--------------|
| Dreeshen | Lunty | Smith |
| Dyck | McDougall | Stephan |
| Ellis | McIver | Turton |
| Fir | Nally | van Dijken |
| Getson | Neudorf | Wiebe |
| Glubish | Nicolaides | Williams |
| Guthrie | Nixon | Wilson |
| Horner | Petrovic | Wright, J. |
| Hunter | Pitt | Yaseen |
| Jean | Rowswell | |
| Totals: | For – 23 | Against – 47 |

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 48 I am required to put to the Assembly all necessary questions to dispose of Bill 22, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, at third reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:28 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

| | | |
|----------|----------|--------------|
| Batten | Gray | Phillips |
| Boparai | Ip | Renaud |
| Chapman | Kasawski | Sabir |
| Dach | Loyola | Schmidt |
| Eggen | Metz | Shepherd |
| Elmeligi | Notley | Tejada |
| Eremenko | Pancholi | Wright, P. |
| Totals: | For – 47 | Against – 21 |

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we are now drawing to the end of session, it's important, I think, that we would take a

moment to reflect and show our appreciation to all those who have been involved in helping us get to this point.

First, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for your diligent time working here in this Chamber, the Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Chair of Committees. I'd also like to thank *Hansard* for bearing with us through some of the late nights recently and all the debate, the table officers, LASS guards, the pages, the opposition caucus, independent, the government caucus. In particular, I'd also like to thank the Opposition House Leader for her time working with me as the Government House Leader and the collaboration that she showed.

With that, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Government Motion 45 I wish to advise the Assembly that the business of the 2024 spring sitting is now concluded.

Let's go, Oilers!

Statement by the Speaker

Remarks at the End of the Spring Sitting

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, thank you so very much for a very productive session. Thank you to the hon. Government House Leader, the Official Opposition House Leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the entire leadership of both caucuses. They say that it takes a village to raise a child. It certainly takes a team to put on a legislative session. Of course, I also want to extend my gratitude to the table officers as well as *Hansard* and some of the folks that we don't often think about in and around the Legislature whose workload dramatically increases during a legislative session, including IT, HR, the library, and all of the other incredible employees at the Legislative Assembly Office, including our legislative security staff. I hope that members will join me in thanking all of them.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn't extend a very personal and heartfelt thank you to members of the Speaker's team, including my chief of staff and her entire team at the Speaker's office. I know that during this period of time they go above and beyond. Certainly, I value their service to our Assembly as well.

With those things said, I think it's important that we just very briefly talk about some of the successes of this session. It may come as a surprise that we broke another record during this legislative session. In this session it was the greatest number of introductions of mascots than any other time in Alberta's history. The other thing that I think is important to note is that we had 40 sitting days, 43 individual sittings, three evening sittings, two past midnight, 240 sessional papers, of which the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung personally tabled at least 200 of them. There were 21 bills introduced, 25 government motions, nine private members' motions, and 358 introductions of visitors, of which, of course, the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake personally introduced 325 of them.

At the end of this session, the spring sitting, the 31st Legislature First Session, there have been 40 sessional days, and the Assembly has sat for approximately 160 hours. That's the equivalent of watching the *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* movies back to back 33 times. And *Hansard* has recorded over 1.3 million words.

Hon. members, let that be the last.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:50 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 45]

Bill Status Report for the 31th Legislature - 1st Session (2023-2024)

Activity to Wednesday, May 29, 2024

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

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

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

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

First Reading — 10 (*Oct. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 57-58 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft.*), 96-97 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 145-47 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 147-54 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c6]

Bill 2 — Alberta Pension Protection Act (Horner)

First Reading — 89-90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 154-55 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 274-85 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft.*), 336-43 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft.*), 394-400 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 424-30 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 522-30 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft.*), 552-59 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed*)
Third Reading — 565 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve.*), 583-90 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 cA-29.5]

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

First Reading — 22 (*Oct. 31, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 90-93 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft.*), 180-87 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft.*), 272-73 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 307-09 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 334-36 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c10]

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

First Reading — 55 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 159-63 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 155-56 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 187-90 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 309-13 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 336 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2023 c13]

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

First Reading — 55-56 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 156-57 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 190-97 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft.*), 265-72 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft.*), 403-09 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 430-35 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 456 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*), 519-22 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., recommitted*), 559-62, 563-64 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed with amendments on division*)
Third Reading — 515 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., recommitted to Committee of the Whole*), 564-55 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve.*), 575-83 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2023 c12]

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

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

Second Reading — 157-58 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 313-20 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft.*), 435-38 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 456-62 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 462 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c11]

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

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c7]

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

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2023 c8]

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

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c9]

Bill 10 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 673 (*Mar. 12, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 705-16 (*Mar. 14, 2024 aft.*), 868-73 (*Mar. 26, 2024 aft.*), 904-05 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft.*), 899-901 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft.*), 970-75 (*Apr. 9, 2024 aft.*), 1003-05 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1005-09 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1040-43 (*Apr. 11, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2024 c4]

Bill 11 — Public Safety Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Ellis)

First Reading — 685 (*Mar. 13, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 976-90 (*Apr. 9, 2024 aft.*), 1009-15 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft.*), 1091-96 (*Apr. 16, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1217-20 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1334-1341 (*May 7, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1448-55 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force May 16, 2024, except section 1, which comes into force on proclamation; SA 2024 c6]

Bill 12* — Consumer Protection (Life Leases) Amendment Act, 2024 (Nally)

First Reading — 727 (*Mar. 18, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1015-22 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft.*), 1043-46 (*Apr. 11, 2024 aft.*), 1096-102 (*Apr. 16, 2024 aft.*), 1135-40 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1220 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1239-48 (*Apr. 24, 2024 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1367-74 (*May 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force May 16, 2024; SA 2024 c3]

Bill 13 — Real Property Governance Act (Guthrie)

First Reading — 779 (*Mar. 21, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1102-09 (*Apr. 16, 2024 aft.*), 1132-35 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft.*), 1161-63 (*Apr. 18, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1220-28 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1341-43 (*May 7, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1395-1400 (*May 9, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force May 16, 2024, with some sections deemed to have come into force on March 21, 2024; SA 2024 cR-5.3]

Bill 14 — Appropriation Act, 2024 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 791 (*Mar. 21, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 855-63 (*Mar. 26, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 887-93 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., adjourned*), 903 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 920-24 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on March 28, 2024; SA 2024 c1]

Bill 15 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2024 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 841 (*Mar. 25, 2024 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 863-68 (*Mar. 26, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 893-99 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., adjourned*), 901-04 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 924 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed*), 920 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft.*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on March 28, 2024; SA 2024 c2]

Bill 16 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Nally)

First Reading — 935-36 (*Apr. 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1127-32 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft.*), 1248-53 (*Apr. 24, 2024 aft.*), 1279-82 (*Apr. 25, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1456-60 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1490-92 (*May 15, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2024 c7]

Bill 17 — Canadian Centre of Recovery Excellence Act (Williams)

First Reading — 959 (*Apr. 9, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1156-61 (*Apr. 18, 2024 aft.*), 1272-79 (*Apr. 25, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1361-67 (*May 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1464-66 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2024 cC-1.5]

Bill 18* — Provincial Priorities Act (Smith)

First Reading — 993 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1122-27 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft.*), 1209-17 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1253-60 (*Apr. 24, 2024 aft.*), 1329-34 (*May 7, 2024 aft.*), 1533-40 (*May 21, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1540-42 (*May 21, 2024 aft.*), 1569-77 (*May 22, 2024 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1664-68 (*May 28, 2024 aft.*), 1692-99 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 19 — Utilities Affordability Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Neudorf)

First Reading — 1177 (*Apr. 22, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1344-48 (*May 7, 2024 aft.*), 1400-03 (*May 9, 2024 aft.*), 1455-56 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1460-64 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1492-96 (*May 15, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2024 c8]

Bill 20* — Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (McIver)

First Reading — 1271 (*Apr. 25, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1374-82 (*May 8, 2024 aft.*), 1562-69 (*May 22, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1591-94 (*May 23, 2024 aft.*), 1669-75 (*May 28, 2024 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1699-1700 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1712-13 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1729-35 (*May 29, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 21 — Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Ellis)

First Reading — 1394 (*May 9, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1508-19 (*May 16, 2024 aft.*), 1542-48 (*May 21, 2024 aft.*), 1634-41 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1649-50 (*May 27, 2024 eve.*), 1675-81 (*May 28, 2024 aft.*), 1683-84 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1700-01 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1704--11 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 22 — Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (LaGrange)

First Reading — 1447 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1594-1600 (*May 23, 2024 aft.*), 1641-48 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1650 (*May 27, 2024 eve.*), 1684-90 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1700-01 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1713-15 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1735-41 (*May 29, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bill 203 — Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act (Dyck)

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

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

Committee of the Whole — 730-43 (*Mar. 18, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 805-12 (*Mar. 25, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on June 28, 2024; SA 2024 cF-16.5]

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

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

Second Reading — 486-92 (*Dec. 4, 2023 aft.*), 649-58 (*Mar. 11, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 812-17 (*Mar. 25, 2024 aft.*), 938-48 (*Apr. 8, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 1059-66 (*Apr. 15, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force May 16, 2024; SA 2024 c5]

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

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

Second Reading — 658-62 (*Mar. 11, 2024 aft.*), 948-50 (*Apr. 8, 2024 aft.*), 1066-71 (*Apr. 15, 2024 aft.*), 1178-81 (*Apr. 22, 2024 aft., defeated on division; not proceeded with*)

Bill 206 — Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Advisor) Amendment Act, 2024 (Cyr)

First Reading — 917-18 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1181-90 (*Apr. 22, 2024 aft.*), 1294-1300 (*May 6, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 207 — Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education (Valuing Skilled Workers) Amendment Act, 2024 (Hoyle)

First Reading — 1152-53 (*Apr. 18, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1300-09 (*May 6, 2024 aft.*), 1417-20 (*May 13, 2024 aft., defeated on division; not proceeded with*)

Bill 208 — Psycho-Educational Assessment Access Act (Hayter)

First Reading — 1359 (*May 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1420-29 (*May 13, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 211 — Arts and Creative Economy Advisory Council Act (Ceci)

First Reading — 1590 (*May 23, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 212 — Organ and Tissue Donor Information Agreement Act (Metz)

First Reading — 1663 (*May 28, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 214 — Eastern Slopes Protection Act (Notley)

First Reading — 1729 (*May 29, 2024 aft., passed*)

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

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c14]

Bill Pr2* — Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta Amendment Act, 2024 (Justin Wright)

First Reading — 918 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills*)

Second Reading — 1633 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1691 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1711 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Bill Pr3 — Providence Renewal Centre Amendment Act, 2024 (Calahoo Stonehouse)

First Reading — 918 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills*)

Second Reading — 1633 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1691 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1711 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Bill Pr4 — Rosebud School of the Arts Amendment Act, 2024 (Petrovic)

First Reading — 918 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills*)

Second Reading — 1633-34 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1691 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1711-12 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| Prayers | 1717 |
| Statements by the Speaker | |
| Member for Edmonton-North West's 15th Anniversary of Election | 1717 |
| Remarks at the End of the Spring Sitting | 1742 |
| Introduction of Guests | 1717 |
| Ministerial Statements | |
| Tribute to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona | 1718 |
| Oral Question Period | |
| Health System Reform | 1720 |
| Government Policies and Cost of Living | 1720 |
| Transgender Youth Policy | 1721 |
| Support for LGBTQ2S-plus Albertans | 1721 |
| Bill 20 | 1722, 1724 |
| Supports for Seniors | 1722 |
| Municipal Voting Rights of Indigenous Persons | 1723 |
| Government Policies | 1723 |
| Automobile Insurance | 1725 |
| Recycling Programs | 1725 |
| School Construction in Calgary-North East | 1726 |
| Alberta Advantage Immigration Program | 1726 |
| Supports for Deaf and Hearing-impaired Persons | 1727 |
| Members' Statements | |
| Provincial Election Anniversary | 1727 |
| Tribute to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona | 1728 |
| Provincial Election Anniversary | 1728 |
| Tribute to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona | 1728 |
| Tourism Promotion | 1729 |
| Candora Society of Edmonton | 1729 |
| Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees | 1729 |
| Presenting Petitions | 1729 |
| Introduction of Bills | |
| Bill 214 Eastern Slopes Protection Act | 1730 |
| Tabling Returns and Reports | 1730 |
| Tablings to the Clerk | 1730 |
| Orders of the Day | 1730 |
| Government Bills and Orders | |
| Third Reading | |
| Bill 20 Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 | 1730 |
| Division | 1735 |
| Division | 1736 |
| Bill 22 Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 | 1736 |
| Division | 1741 |
| Division | 1742 |

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca