



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 30, 2024

Day 62

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),  
Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip  
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)  
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),  
Official Opposition Whip  
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),  
Leader of the Official Opposition,  
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),  
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Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
Kasawski, Kyle, Sherwood Park (NDP)  
Kayande, Samir, Calgary-Elbow (NDP)  
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, Rodrigo, 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)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
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Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
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Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
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Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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)  
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)  
Vacant, Lethbridge-West

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 49

New Democrat: 37

Vacant: 1

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Trafton Koenig, Law Clerk

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Executive Director of Parliamentary  
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Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and  
Committees

Amanda LeBlanc, Managing Editor of  
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Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Lang Bawn, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

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Mike Ellis	Deputy Premier, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Mickey Amery	Minister of Justice
Devin Dreeshen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Tanya Fir	Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Infrastructure
Nate Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Brian Jean	Minister of Energy and Minerals
Matt Jones	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Health
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry and Parks
Ric McIver	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Nathan Neudorf	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Advanced Education
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

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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: Member 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  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
Singh  
Yao  
Vacant

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms Pitt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Stephan

Bouchard  
Ceci  
Deol  
Dyck  
Hayter  
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Wright, J.

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

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

Arcand-Paul  
Ceci  
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Dach  
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Johnson  
Stephan  
Wiebe

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Sabir  
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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, October 30, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and 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 interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you a former member who's joining us in the gallery today. Mr. Peter Sandhu served as the 785th member of the Legislative Assembly and represented the constituents of Edmonton-Manning from 2008 to 2015. He joins us today to be part of the Diwali ceremonies that took place in the rotunda earlier today. I'd invite him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, I do have one additional guest to introduce. As you will all know, we had the opportunity of celebrating Diwali in the rotunda. Happy Diwali to everyone. One of the individuals who was influential in making that ceremony possible today is from – a number of groups participated, but in particular the Indian Society of Calgary. It's my pleasure to introduce the president of the Indian Society of Calgary, Dr. Devesh Oberoi. In 2022 the doctor was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal for his service to the community. He and his team, of which there were many, did a great job on the ceremony today. I invite him to rise on their behalf and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Haji:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the junior high school Cardinal Léger and the 67 students in the gallery. I ask the students and educators to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mrs. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly the beautiful students and teachers of Clive school. Please rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to rise today and introduce to you and through you Mr. Shiv Shankar Dwivedi. Mr. Dwivedi is the head priest of the Hindu Society of Alberta, which operates the oldest Hindu temple in our province. I wish him and the team: Happy Diwali. Please now rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Chamber.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce my first guest of the session, probably not my last, my newest legislative co-ordinator, Jaymie Fallon. She is one of the people that holds it all together so I still have my pants on when I come here, so I'd like to make sure that – well, that sounded bad. That's not what I meant. [interjection] Never mind. Please receive the warm welcome of . . .

**The Speaker:** Why don't I help you?

The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Jim and Joanne Johnson, Sue Rogers, and Dr. Lynn McMullen. Jim, Joanne, and Sue do great work with Alberta Prairie Meats, and Dr. McMullen is a retired professor of food microbiology and food safety. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you three very important guests from Lethbridge: Austin, Paige, and Evan Goldie. Austin is the director of the Narnia Daycare centre in Lethbridge. As a personal friend, it is a special honour to have her and her children here today. If they would rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly and make this introduction worthwhile, that would be wonderful.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Happy Diwali, Mr. Speaker. It is good to celebrate light over darkness. I rise to introduce members of the Apna Mill Woods Seniors Group, led by Bharat Shah and Dinesh Patel. All please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms de Jonge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and to the House my good friends Chestermere councillor Kiran Randhawa, Kavita Prasad, Harpal Singh and his wife, Khush, Gopal Saini, Namrata Mangu and her husband, Venkata, Jaskaran Brar, Kuldip Brar, Tejinder Brar, and Sukhdeep Gill. Please all rise and receive the warm welcome. Happy Diwali.

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

**Member Tejada:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you some important community members from Calgary: Bhakti Makwana, Manogyan Mishra, Drupad Patel, and Shubhi Chhabra. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

**Ms Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the Hindu Society of Alberta, led by their president, Mr. Rajeev Arora. This is a historic temple built in 1967, more than half a century ago, and this is the first-ever Hindu temple built in Alberta. I'd ask that they all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Member Kayande:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this House

Shubhdeep Batra, Vihar Bhalavat, Swapnil Kumar, Neha Minhas, Akshay Gulati. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to the House Bernice Taylor from Drayton Valley. Bernice has been a child care director for over 30 years, and she currently manages the town of Drayton Valley's early childhood development centre, which has served their community for 17 years. Thank you, Bernice, for the work that you do in your community and for being here today. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and through you my constituents Harpal Singh and Khush Kaur and Dhruv Sharma, who is with the Hindu Society of Calgary. Happy Diwali to all of the guests in this Assembly. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to rise today and introduce to you and through you Alberta Hindi Parishad, their president, Mr. Amit Aery; Indians in YYC president, Gaurav Srivastavu; and the Hindu Society of Calgary president, Rakesh Punj; Vishali Ji from Chinmaya Mission Calgary. I would request them to rise and accept the warm welcome of the House.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a constituent of mine, Esther Sweeney. Not only was she my constituency manager; she also was in the area during the times of Peter Lougheed and Ralph Klein, serving the province. Esther, if you could please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly, it would be greatly appreciated.

### Members' Statements

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

### Federal Carbon Tax

**Mr. Lundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Repealing the carbon tax was the first piece of legislation ever put forward by our United Conservative government in 2019. When the NDP introduced their carbon tax, it was the largest tax increase in Alberta's history, punishing parents for taking their kids to school, increasing the cost of groceries, and putting pressure on households and small businesses across the province.

Last year the federal Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa, backed wholeheartedly by the members opposite, exempted home heating oil from their carbon tax in a crass and blatantly unconstitutional move to curry favour in Atlantic Canada. At the time they said it was because of pressure put on households and small businesses by the carbon tax. And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what the carbon tax does. Just not, of course, only in Atlantic Canada but in Alberta and across the whole country.

**1:40**

What is shocking to me is that the new NDP leader and his colleagues continue to support the carbon tax and side with Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh over Albertans. Yesterday the Premier and the Minister of Justice announced that we are going to be challenging the constitutionality of the home heating oil exemption, particularly since over the last year the federal government has refused multiple requests to grant a similar carve-out on other heating methods from Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. Albertans will not accept continuing to be treated unfairly by this hostile and deeply unpopular federal government. It is time to scrap the carbon tax and its unconstitutional carve-outs once and for all.

Thank you.

### Women's History Month

**Ms Hayter:** October marks Women's History Month in Canada, a time to celebrate women and girls from our past and our present. I took time to reflect on what future historians would think about in our era. I think about those who fought for women's voices to be heard in these halls.

In 1907 Henrietta Muir Edwards declared that if women had the vote, they could demand better wages and working conditions for women. If women had the vote, male politicians would finally have to listen to them or risk losing office, and her words have proven true. In 1916 Alberta women won the right to vote provincially. A year later Alberta elected two women to represent them in the Legislature. From 1917 to 2015 94 women walked the halls as elected members. Fast-forward to 2015, when 28 MLAs were elected. In '23 we reached a new milestone of 33 women elected as MLAs, including 22 proudly serving in the NDP caucus.

The message is clear. If you want more women in power, you must create space for them to lead. When women govern, we see real change: higher minimum wages, workplace harassment protections, expanded midwifery, and protection for abortion clinic patients. We've seen ministers balance motherhood with public service, creating a new pathway for future leaders.

However, change still needs to be done. By refusing to join the federal pharmacare plan, this government is denying Alberta women access to universal prescription contraception. Women fleeing violence in this province find shelters at capacity. This government's priorities are clear. Supporting vulnerable women isn't among them.

I stand proudly with every member on this side of the House, that we can say without hesitation that transwomen are women, period. We would like to know if, across the aisle, you can say the same. As women in politics we must continue to combine our strengths to dismantle systemic barriers. Together we can advance gender equality.

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

### Diwali

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Diwali, also known as the festival of lights, is a major tradition originated from India and is often the heart of traditions that resonate with devotees world-wide. It is celebrated in Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and by millions of individuals across the world. Diwali is the celebration of triumph, of good over evil and light over

darkness. Diwali is about unity among all and to participate in sheer happiness together.

Traditionally, families decorate their homes with vibrant rangoli patterns, diyas, and colourful lights. Sweets and gifts are exchanged, and fireworks light up the night sky. Diwali fosters a sense of community and togetherness, promoting love, joy, and hope as people come together to celebrate new beginnings.

During Diwali the festival warmly welcomes Maa Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, prosperity, and abundance. Her presence is central to this celebration as families invoke Her blessing for success and happiness in the coming year.

This sacred time is marked by a variety of rituals and activities that enrich the overall experience, including lighting diyas to dispel darkness, creating intricate Diwali designs to invite good fortune, and participating in communal prayers. Each ritual serves to deepen the sense of connections among family members and the community, reinforcing the festival's theme of gratitude, renewal, and shared joy.

As a proud and practising Hindu, I feel honoured to celebrate Diwali alongside my fellow constituents and Albertans. Festivals like this play a crucial role in fostering a deep understanding of our shared culture, history, and heritage. Wishing everyone a joyful and prosperous Diwali.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Support for Arts and Culture

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share my experiences as the shadow minister of arts and culture. Over the last several months I've travelled this province to engage in the offerings of Alberta's artists, creators, and cultural organizations, all that they present. A massively condensed list of the activities I've engaged in of late include attending the world premiere of the Stoney-Nakoda film *Stories We Have Earned* at CIFF, taking in Rosebud's *Little Women*, and attending shows at both Theatre Calgary and ATP. I hosted an arts and culture round-table in Lethbridge and discussed how to improve cultural supports with representatives of the Southern Alberta Art Gallery. I caught Corb's concert at the Badlands Amphitheatre, and I attended the 45th annual Calgary Folk Music Festival. I sat amazed at the Alberta Ballet's world premiere of *GRIMM*. I met with many hard-working musicians, including Kirby Sewell, Tom Phillips, Dan the One Man Band, and others. I connected with the music venue owners across Alberta, including at the Blues Can and the Starlite Room. I met with da lyrical pitbull, poet laureate Wakefield Brewster, and I toured the KOAC sculpture garden and met with the beautiful Katie Ohe. I toured the massive Rocky Mountain Film Studio in Calgary, and I screamed with laughter at Grindstone Theatre's *Rocky Horror Show*, on right now, featuring two of my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, artists, arts organizations, and culture add so much beauty, fun, and economic stimulation to our society. Without them, our existence would be less fulfilling. But the arts can't thrive without support from this government. The gaps I've witnessed in the ecosystem for arts can be filled. That's why I introduced private member's Bill 211, Arts and Creative Economy Advisory Council Act. I look forward to continuing to raise the voices of artists in this place and take more of their magnificent work in.

Thank you.

### Waste-water Treatment on Enoch First Nation

**Mr. Boitchenko:** Mr. Speaker, last month a very important MOU was signed in collaboration with the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, the Minister of Indigenous Relations, myself,

and the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. This MOU between Enoch Cree Nation and Arrow Utilities will connect Enoch's waste water to the Arrow Utilities network. For the last six decades Enoch Cree Nation waste water was disposed of on their own land. Living in the area for almost three decades, I know that this issue has been a sensitive subject for the residents of the Enoch Cree Nation. Thanks to the collaboration between Arrow Utilities and Enoch Cree Nation this issue will now be solved.

As the parliamentary secretary for Indigenous Relations and the MLA for the Enoch Cree Nation this partnership is very meaningful to me. I'm proud to have been part of this process and want to thank the leadership of Enoch Cree Nation and Arrow Utilities for their partnership. It is very significant that this partnership was established on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Taking action as partners is a key part of the reconcili-action.

Our UCP government is proud to be a trailblazer in environmental initiatives. The \$50 million investment in the Train 4 expansion at Arrow Utilities will lead to the recycling of millions of litres of water every day and completely off-set the intake of water from the North Saskatchewan River needed for these projects. Mr. Speaker, our UCP government remains committed to reconciliation and environmental initiatives.

### Transgender Youth Policy

**Member Irwin:** I have a nonbinary family member; I believe these decisions are very personal and should not be debated in public; we shouldn't be making any child feel like the issues they're struggling with are something that's a political football: those are powerful words, but they're not mine. They're this Premier's only two years ago. I think of that person, that Premier, the same one who tearfully pleaded in this Chamber a decade ago that supporting queer and trans youth really is a case of life or death, noting that so many young people have nowhere else to go if they're not accepted by their community and not accepted at home. She shared stories from youth who faced rejection, abuse at home, but now she falsely claims that these circumstances are rare, despite the fact that 30 per cent of trans and nonbinary youth report being rejected by their families after coming out.

1:50

Something has changed for this Premier, and it's unconscionable that she plans to attack the rights and safety of transgender Albertans with not one but three pieces of harmful legislation. With an opportunity to be a real leader in one of the best places to live in this world, the Premier is instead choosing to attack our vulnerable friends and family members, and for what? A few votes for her own leadership ambitions?

I think of this Premier's own words 10 years ago: live and let live. That was her mantra. She said: to me, it comes down to choice; I'm not interested in imposing my views on anyone any more than I'm interested in having their views imposed upon me.

Premier, trans people aren't a threat. They're not a problem to be fixed, and choosing to put them at risk by presenting them as a problem is wrong. We hear from Albertans every day about their priorities, and this isn't one of them. Albertans want a strong public health care system, well-funded education, affordable housing, good-paying jobs. They want a government that takes human rights seriously and protects these rights.

It's not too late for the Premier to change course, to admit she's wrong, and do the right thing. Let's make Albertans, including trans Albertans, proud to live here. Make your former self proud, Premier. [Some applause]

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

### Oral Question Period

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

**Ms Gray:** Happy Diwali to our friends in the gallery today.

### Funding for Policing

**Ms Gray:** It has been five years since the UCP took over government, and Alberta has never felt less safe. In fact, Albertans feel and see in the stats that crime is worse under this government's watch. Albertans are worried about addiction and mental health issues, gang activity, the illegal drug trade, and a court system that is falling behind. So to the Premier: with Albertans so worried about safety, why is this government distracted by pet projects and the Premier's own party leadership?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the members opposite, who want to defund the police and have advocated to defund the police, we on this side support our men and women in uniform on the front line. That is why we have 50 new officers hired in Calgary, 50 new officers hired in Edmonton. We have embedded sheriffs at the request of cities when they need the extra backup. We've built out additional teams. Our SCAN team is shutting down drug houses all over the province. We have our fugitive apprehension team, which executed 3,000 warrants and caught 350 bad guys. That's the record of this government.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, do you know who literally defunded the police? That government did in their first budget.

Let's remember that this Premier prioritizes investigating chemtrails and banning vote tabulators rather than improving public safety. Albertans want to see improved services for people who are struggling. They want safer communities to ensure police are supported with tackling crime head-on. So instead of dictating to communities how to police themselves, will the Premier commit to listening to Albertans and actually focusing on improving public safety?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, now we know why none of the members opposite want to give up their seat for their NDP leader, because he's the one who actually voted to defund the police in Calgary.

I can tell you what we have funded, \$55 million for ALERT. We funded as well the support for different communities who want to look at how they might be able to get better value for policing, hire more policing. In fact, there's a story today from Grande Prairie, who is developing their own police force. They're going to be able to save \$8 million, hire 110 officers, and be able to hire more. These are the kinds of ways that we are empowering our communities to be able to choose the type of policing that matters for them.

**Ms Gray:** In black and white, the UCP government cut police budgets with their cuts. Now, that's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because the former police chief of Lethbridge had a lot to say about UCP policing. In an interview last November he said that what this government has done has resulted in a significant displacement of lawless behaviours to mid-sized cities just like Lethbridge. Oh, I might mention that that person is the UCP's candidate in the Lethbridge-West by-election now, which the Premier refuses to

call. So since Albertans have made it clear that what the UCP is doing now is not working, will the Premier listen to Albertans?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have a couple more weeks to be able to decide for one of them to step aside to make room for their unelected leader. We're on 130 days that they haven't wanted him in this Legislature.

I'm looking forward to having the candidate from Lethbridge-West join us to give us his expertise on how we can address front-line policing. I think he has incredible expertise, as does our Deputy Premier, who has gone far and wide to make sure that we are restoring confidence in the policing services and restoring confidence on the front line after it was ruined by those guys.

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

**Ms Gray:** Five years under the UCP government, and Albertans feel less safe. That record is real, and they need to speak to that.

### Resource Revenue Projections

**Ms Gray:** The rosy financial picture that the Premier put in the budget was not worth the paper that it was printed on. Yesterday she mused about lower oil prices that might result in a deficit, so to the Premier: how has the government accounted for the recent shrinkage of the WCS-WTI differential? And what is the new WCS oil price that would trigger the province to go into deficit?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We made it very clear at the beginning of the budget cycle that \$74 was the average that we needed to have WTI be over the course of the year. I mean, I watch the WTI price every single day to see where we are relative to where we need to be. When it gets below \$70, we get nervous on this side, and we want to make sure that the public understands that there aren't unlimited dollars. We did have some success in recent years, having a surge in WTI, and we spent that money properly. We paid down \$13 billion of an NDP-era debt, and we made sure that we shored up the heritage savings trust fund.

**Ms Gray:** The Premier talks about wanting to make sure Albertans understand, yet can't answer a straightforward question that I asked about the differential.

This Premier struggles to keep her promises. You'll recall her priority before the spring budget was putting money into the heritage trust fund. But let's recap. She struggled to hold off a big deficit. She's failed to bring in her promised tax cut. She's also failed to invest in services like health care that she promised to improve. She's now faced with fiscal pressures on all sides due to her own bad planning. What cuts is this Premier planning to make to the vital services that Albertans rely on to balance her budget?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister brought forward a responsible plan. I remember it was the guys on the other side who kept on asking for more and more and more. And what did we say on this side? We said: well, look, we have uncertainty in when Trans Mountain will come along, what the WCS price is going to be when that happens, what the WTI price is going to be. So we were very cautious. We forecast a \$300 million surplus at the beginning of the year, and we made sure that every single one of our departments was funded appropriately: health



care, education. We're building schools. We're investing in public safety. We can balance this.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the oil futures markets don't show prices anywhere near to what this government projected in the budget, and the only thing saving the budget now is the completion of the Trans Mountain expansion, which was championed by our former leader and our new leader. Does the Premier agree that the completion of the TMX expansion, something that only occurred due to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona's tireless efforts, has been a vital part of Alberta's recent success? What is that new WCS price post-Trans Mountain? That was the first question today. Will the Premier answer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we have private-sector building projects, they can do it efficiently. The Trans Mountain pipeline, as you may recall, started off as a \$5.5 billion project, but because the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa continued to block access for every single other pipeline proposal, the only thing left was the Trans Mountain pipeline, and the only entity able to take that to the finish line at massive cost, \$34 billion, was the federal government. I would hope that the members opposite would actually support more egress. They seem to be excited about it now. Maybe Energy East. Maybe Keystone XL. Maybe Northern Gateway. Oh, wait a minute. They campaigned against all of those.

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

#### Alberta Board of Skilled Trades Membership

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades to give advice on apprenticeship training. The UCP government invited a representative of the Alberta building trades to sit on this board. That representative did a great job to help this province get more people apprenticeships and get them into the workforce. Can this minister confirm that she removed this representative from the board because the building trades union endorsed Naheed Nenshi in the Alberta NDP leadership race? [interjections]

2:00

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely untrue. We value the work that the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades does, and we have great membership on that board as well. From time to time the membership changes, and it has nothing to do with anything other than having qualified, well-informed people to serve on that board.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, funny thing, that, Mr. Speaker, because this member was chosen by the UCP government, had his term extended, did a great job building apprenticeship programs for the province of Alberta, and now there's nothing but a vacancy where that skilled person used to be. Given the importance of the skilled trades in the future of this province, does the minister believe that politicizing this board will in any way help to increase the number of apprenticeships here in the province of Alberta?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, nothing has been politicized. In fact, I have a good working relationship with building trades. In fact, they are going to submit a proposal to the government very soon for a skills centre, and we'll continue working with them. The membership of the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades does change from time to time. We want to make sure that other organizations

also have the ability to bring their voice forward and advocate for the trades.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, again, this board explicitly said that they were removing this member from the board because of the endorsement that the building trades made to Naheed Nenshi's leadership campaign. Can the minister confirm that this spring she told the representatives of the Building Trades of Alberta that the Premier was very angry at this union for supporting Naheed Nenshi and thus must remove this board member?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, that's unbelievable. This is ridiculous. The only one politicizing anything is the NDP. That message is completely untrue. That was never delivered. They've completely made it up. In fact, I will reiterate that I have a good working relationship with the building trades, and we are going to continue to work together, and the fact that that member is not on the board is not indicative of anything other than that we refresh that board from time to time. So I think he owes me an apology for that. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

#### Minimum Wage Rate

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, the gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider. According to Statistics Canada it is worse in Alberta than anywhere else in the country. In Alberta the top 40 per cent of earners take home 75 per cent of the income; the bottom 40 per cent take home just 11 per cent of the income. That is a massive disparity, and it leaves many unable to afford the basics. These Albertans deserve a government that does more than just complain about it, so what is the UCP's plan – and I mean actual, concrete actions – to address this growing problem?

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are happy to work for all Albertans to make sure that they have access to all kinds of opportunities, no matter where they live, what they're doing, or what their future dreams are. We want to make sure that they have the education to lead them into their future goals and dreams, that they have access to affordable housing, that they have access to affordable electricity, utilities, food and clothing, gasoline, whatever it takes to make their life more prosperous. That's the number one target for our government, and I'm very proud to be part of a government that seeks to make life better for all Albertans.

**Ms Ganley:** So no plan at all to address the eroding wages they caused.

While inflation has gone up 18 per cent since the UCP took office, at the same time minimum wage has not gone up one single dime. Those minimum wage earners are struggling to support themselves and their families on multiple jobs. Alberta now has the lowest minimum wage in the country. When is this government planning to step up and give these hard-working Albertans a hand up by raising the minimum wage?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the pressure many Albertans are facing, particularly in light of recent high national inflation and elevated interest rates. At the same time we recognize that changes to the minimum wage could have unintended consequences on small businesses, on youth, part-time workers, and those that are entering the workforce. This is an important issue, and our government will take the time to consider

all of the relevant factors while evaluating the appropriateness of our minimum wage calculation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, five years seems an awfully long time to consider the issue.

The UCP government policy is absolutely making the gap between the rich and everyone else larger, everything from a low minimum wage to placing a disproportionate share of the tax burden on working people. No one from the UCP seems able to provide even one credible, concrete step this government will take to address either high costs or low wages. I'm going to try one more time. Premier, when will this government do the right thing and give hard-working Albertans a raise?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta boasts the lowest provincial income tax rates and the highest basic personal tax deductions in Canada. We also have a competitive cost of living, no provincial sales tax or health premiums. These factors enable Albertans, including those earning minimum wage, to retain more of their earnings. It's no surprise that under our policies record numbers of Canadians continue to choose Alberta, which is a sharp contrast to the NDP, whose reckless mismanagement of our economy resulted in tens of thousands of jobs lost and 13 quarters of people leaving the province.

### Accessibility Legislation

**Ms Renaud:** Alberta is one of the last jurisdictions in the country without accessibility legislation. There are 1.3 million Albertans without this legislation in a province of almost 5 million. Without this framework that enables us to identify, remove, and prevent barriers, disabled Albertans will continue to be excluded from the built environment, information and technology, procurement, the design and delivery of programming, employment, education, and more. To the minister responsible: when can Albertans expect to have accessibility legislation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of community and social services.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've discussed in the Chamber, I've had the disability advocate go around and compile a report after meeting with activists and organizations all across the province. That report has been brought together to advise government on the next steps. We are working right now with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who just recently released his accessibility design guide. We will be making sure that what we are learning, as the ministry that's responsible for disabilities, is going directly to Municipal Affairs to support the minister's work, and I'm sure he'll be happy to rise and tell you about that work shortly.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that that disability advocate's office, which is housed in the ministry of this minister, contracted Happy Cities to complete the consultation on the need for accessibility legislation in 2022-23 and given the ministry refuses to publicly share those recommendations that the disability advocate has, will the minister responsible for disability supports tell Albertans and the people that attended those consultations, like myself and like many others, when we can expect to get a report with that information, recommendations, and a plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member should take yes for an answer. The minister just said that the report will be released, and again he also pointed out that we just released the accessibility guidelines for construction, just in the last few days. We're very concerned about making sure that we take care of people with disabilities. We know that there are several pieces of legislation that exist, but they are not all in one place. I guess that's the only thing I'll a little bit agree with. But the fact is that we know the job is not done. Until every person with a disability can go to every public place like anybody else, we are not finished our work.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that accessibility and inclusion improves economic growth, productivity, leads to better employment outcomes, increases consumer spending, expands the tax base, and decreases the need for income supports and replacements and given we have already heard these excuses for years – "We're consulting; we met with Rick Hansen; it's coming; trust us; we love people with disabilities" – we need action. We are among the last provinces in this country without accessibility legislation that opens up the world for 1.3 million Albertans. When? When will we get it?

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what those with disabilities don't need. They don't need the sarcasm and the ridiculous behaviour that you see from the Official Opposition. To be disparaging to the disability advocate and the hard-working people that work with those who face disabilities each and every day, who have worked across the province to consult – the hon. member got to participate – to come up with a clear plan forward for this province: it is outrageous and disappointing that the NDP would do that. We've seen the Minister of Municipal Affairs already make some announcements as a result of this important work that we're doing with the disability sector, and rest assured that we're going to keep doing it, and we're going to ignore the silly games of the Official Opposition.

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

### 2:10 Transgender Youth Policy

**Ms de Jonge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the greatest responsibilities we have as parents and community leaders is to preserve for our children the right to grow and develop into mature adults so they are better prepared to make the most impactful decisions affecting their lives. To do so, our UCP government has announced a new policy direction to protect the choices of youth who identify as transgender or who are affected by gender dysphoria. To the Minister of Health: can you please tell the House why it's so important to implement policies that will support these youth as they enter adulthood?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that important question. Alberta's government recognizes that minors who identify as transgender or gender diverse often grapple with complex feelings and emotions. We also recognize the profound impact these challenges have not just for themselves but also for their families. That's why we are committed to putting forward policies that will support them as they enter adulthood and grapple with life-altering decisions. I want to make it clear that we are going to continue to make sure that these individuals, every Albertan who identifies as transgender is supported and that their rights are protected.

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

**Ms de Jonge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the minister for that answer. Given that all parents can agree that they want to be in the best position possible to ensure that they are able to support their children throughout their education and given that our government recognizes that parents are a key stakeholder in the education system and we should be knocking down barriers that create a lack of transparency, clarity, and consistency for parents in their children's education, to the Minister of Education: why is it so important to remove these barriers so parents can be more involved in their child's education?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. An important question. Of course, the primary focus and benefit is to ensure that parents and educators are working as closely as possible to provide the best possible support and arrangement for students and subsequently their children. We know that when educational staff, be they teachers or other support staff, and parents are working closely together, we create the best possible environment to support children in both their academic, social, and emotional well-being. Those are our objectives.

**Ms de Jonge:** Thank you to the minister for that answer. Given the positive impact of sport on health and well-being and sport's known ability to build lifelong healthy habits for participants and considering the decline in numbers of women and girls participating in sport after reaching puberty and our government's commitment to making sport safe, fair, and accessible for all Albertans, to the Minister of Tourism and Sport: can you please explain what the government is doing to protect and promote Albertan women and girls in sport?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism and Sport.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sports are for everyone. Recreation is for everyone, and the impacts and the lessons that we learn playing sports and recreating last us a lifetime, but there is an alarming trend happening in Alberta right now and across the country, that young girls are dropping out of sports around the age of 12, 13, at puberty, at an alarming rate. We have to make sure that those young girls have a place to play. I am not in a position, nor will I be in one, to allow safety and fairness to be sacrificed at the expense of inclusion. If we are willing to wait one more sleep, we'll have legislation coming forward on that.

### Public-sector Collective Bargaining

**Ms Wright:** Mr. Speaker, workers in this province are fed up. Last week my colleagues and I stood with thousands as they rallied for an end to disrespect, low-wage mandates, and government interference that ignores Charter-protected rights. Over 200,000 public-sector workers are in the midst of bargaining. Albertans depend on these workers in health care, education, and our postsecondary system, but the government is interfering in the collective bargaining process by imposing secretive bargaining mandates and dictating deals. Is this UCP government willing to commit here and now to stop undermining collective bargaining?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, I would expect the party that the members opposite are part of, that has ties to the labour movement, would appreciate this answer: we're not going to speak about ongoing bargaining in this Chamber. It would be inappropriate and

unfair to the process. I think, if we look at the record of the NDP when they were in power, they believed in the process, they stood behind it, and we're going to do the same thing. That's what the public sector deserves in Alberta, and that's what we're going to do.

**Ms Wright:** Given that in 2015 the Supreme Court of Canada recognized a constitutional protection of the right to strike, ruling that it is an indispensable part of collective bargaining, and given that this government claims they care about all of the rights of all Albertans, will this government apologize for their flagrant disregard for workers' rights when they sent workers to a disputes inquiry board and right now, right here in this Assembly, commit to fair, good-faith bargaining for all of Alberta's public-sector workers?

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

**Mr. Guthrie:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government respects collective bargaining and encourages parties to work towards beneficial agreements and outcomes. Our system does tend to work, which is why we have not had a work stoppage in almost two years. The recent disputes inquiry boards in Fort McMurray and Edmonton aim to facilitate dialogue and prevent disruptions. Our focus is on fostering negotiations that benefit both workers and the students.

**Ms Wright:** Given that these are dedicated workers who show up every day to do their best and given the affordability crisis, health care crisis, staffing crisis, housing crisis, as well as issues with recruitment and retention in our public service and given that these workers, who provide such important services to us, should expect better – safe staffing, better working conditions, fair pay – and deserve to be respected, what assurances will this government give this group of dedicated workers that they will not be cast aside, that government is listening, will take a breath, step back, and do the right thing?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, our government encourages ongoing negotiations by allowing parties to work through their respective positions to reach an agreement. This is a collaborative type of approach that contrasts sharply with the NDP's record. By focusing on mediation, we do our utmost to ensure that disputes are resolved without strikes. And as we move forward, we remain dedicated to a fair bargaining process that prioritizes the needs of Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Calgary LRT Green Line

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, on September 3 the UCP government and the economic geniuses within it withdrew more than 1 and a half billion dollars in funding for the green line LRT and effectively killed Alberta's largest ever infrastructure project. Now, after spending hundreds of millions of dollars in preparatory construction work, hundreds of millions of dollars more on construction contracts, they demonstrated clearly that they are an unreliable partner on major infrastructure projects. Why, as a junior funding partner, did the province choose confrontation and grandstanding rather than just getting to work?

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

**Mr. Dreeschen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's great to rise in this House. You want to talk about your cat maybe a little

later, but with the member opposite I really do hope that he maybe will announce that he is going to step down and actually let the NDP leader, Naheed Nenshi, actually go and actually be their candidate in Lethbridge.

But when it comes to the green line, Mr. Speaker, we're working with the city of Calgary to get the green line built, so I really don't understand his question. Maybe it'll come out a little clearer on the next one.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to see the minister so excited about the election of our new leader, because Albertans are really excited about him, too. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. I might just remind the Member for Edmonton-McClung that a preamble after question 4 is not allowable.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you for that guidance, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this government's reckless funding withdrawal of hundreds of millions of dollars has cost hundreds of millions of dollars in penalties and given that, at the end of the day, it's Albertans who will be paying the bill for the government's pathetic attempt to score political points rather than just creating the jobs and building public transit and given that the minister now has claimed it's going to be worth while . . .

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

2:20

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we learned it here: Naheed Nenshi is running in Edmonton-McClung. It's really exciting. We now know that.

But, Mr. Speaker, the question made no sense. The city of Calgary isn't going to pay any penalties. We're actually working with the city to make sure that the green line can get built. There are lots of contracts that they've had to work on to make sure that the work will continue. There are working groups that we have. There are members here on this side of the aisle that are working with administration and the mayor of Calgary as well as councillors to make sure that we can get the green line built, that it will be a transit option that Calgarians will really enjoy.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that the province has now decided to reinstate the funding commitment after holding the city of Calgary hostage to accept their plan and given that this so-called plan has yet to be analyzed and engineered, leaving it half baked and still truncated, how much confidence should Calgarians, the Calgary Construction Association and other global infrastructure contractors have that the UCP government won't once again put a halt to this project, especially if the Premier suddenly has another stream-of-consciousness revelation about the best way to build the project?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know who writes his questions. It could be the phantom of the opposition. He might be haunting us somewhere around here. But it really sounded a lot like Naheed Nenshi when he would go out and say that somehow we're killing the green line, that it's going to be dismantled. Nothing could be further from the truth, to coin a phrase, because we're actually working with the city of Calgary to build the green line, and we're actually extending it. The city was just going to have it go from Lynnwood-Millican; we're actually working to make sure

it stretches down to Shepard so more Calgarians can actually benefit from the green line once we can build it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose has a question.

### Rural Crime Prevention

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural crime is becoming an increasingly worrisome issue for my constituents as the culprits are becoming more advanced. Some constituents have reported criminals causing a disruption in one area of the community to draw law enforcement's attention, only then to carry out the real crime elsewhere. Some constituents are afraid to leave their property unattended as criminals have been timing their strikes for when farmers or acreage residents are drawn into town for important events. Could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services please tell the Chamber how his ministry is working to address these increasingly elaborate criminal tactics?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier, the minister of public safety.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and of course I thank the member for the question. Of course, rural crime is an issue, and nothing was more evident a number of years ago when thousands of rural Albertans were on the steps of this Legislature, when the NDP did not take rural crime seriously in this province. But I can tell you what we have done in this province: the safer communities and neighbourhoods teams, the fugitive apprehension teams, the sheriff surveillance teams, the augmenting and supporting of our local police services, not only in municipalities but in rural Alberta with the RCMP as well. We believe on this side of the House in keeping rural Albertans safe, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

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

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for that answer. Given that there is less foot and vehicle traffic in rural areas and given that this reduced visibility can draw a criminal effort to set up drug production or other illicit operations in rural communities with fewer people to report them and further given that these criminal operations may prey upon nearby properties for items such as copper wire or gasoline, could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services share what steps our government is taking to dislodge these centres of criminality that threaten the security of rural Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member for recognizing the fact that the Liberal-NDP government in Ottawa has made it so that organized crime can thrive with little to no consequences. That's why we put enormous investments in helping folks in rural Alberta, where they're having issues regarding response times, where they're having issues making sure that repeat violent criminal offenders are not wreaking havoc on their communities. That's why we've invested \$4.3 million in ensuring that we have support services such as the safer communities and neighbourhoods teams, the sheriff surveillance teams, to help communities in rural Alberta.

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

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for that answer. Given that there have been reports of criminals targeting important infrastructure in areas such as power lines and transformers and given that the loss of power or other utilities is disruptive and could threaten public safety in other rural communities and given that repairing damaged infrastructure means extra costs for Alberta taxpayers, could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services explain how rural critical infrastructure is being protected in Alberta?

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we are attempting to use all of our resources that we have available to us, including much more, and that's why we've an unprecedented amount of money into Alberta law enforcement response team, over \$55 million, to ensure that the tools are in the tool box for the law enforcement community to tackle the organized crime. As I've stated before, we are in this situation because of the Liberal-NDP government. Their policies have made it unsafe in Canada. Let me be clear. On this side of the House we're going to protect rural Albertans, and we're going to do whatever it takes to keep Albertans safe.

#### Fish and Wildlife Officers

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Alberta's fish and wildlife staff play a crucial role in helping us all, especially rural Albertans, better coexist with wildlife, including bears. In 2020 this government merged fish and wildlife with the Alberta sheriffs. That eliminated the fish and wildlife department from ministry business plans and even dropped mentioning the words "fish and wildlife" from the 2023 budget entirely. The minister of public safety just said that safety in rural Alberta is a priority. How does he think the capacity of fish and wildlife staff affects this safety?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of public safety and the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. Of course, I would like to applaud our members from fish and wildlife for the work that they do in rural Alberta, the outstanding work. In fact, I met with the minister of forestry today as well as the head of fish and wildlife today just to talk about the issues facing rural Albertans and the effects that bears have within the community. I can tell you that – and I know the NDP typically wants us to politically interfere and direct law enforcement, but that's not what we're going to do on this side of the House. I can tell you that we've had our discussions with fish and wildlife to make sure that rural Albertans are taken care of.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Given that fish and wildlife staff kill several grizzly bears each year due to extreme conflicts such as killing livestock, given that recently constituents of mine lost full-grown cows and a horse in what appears to be a grizzly bear attack, given that when fish and wildlife finally responded, they didn't launch an investigation but told my constituents to take some pictures of the bear the next time they saw it, and given that leaving it up to an untrained member of the public to track an aggressive grizzly bear is dangerous and reckless, can the minister explain why fish and wildlife don't have the capacity to do their jobs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Parks.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. When it comes to the safety of Albertans, this government considers that our first priority. Let's be clear that it is a priority to this government to make sure that when we have problem wildlife causing damage and endangering people's lives,

we're there to protect them and do everything we can. The idea of having Albertans help with wildlife management is something that's been a policy of this government for decades, and we'll continue with that going forward.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Well, given that, again, asking people from the public to track an aggressive grizzly bear is a ridiculous, preposterous idea, given that my constituents have actually mounted their own remote cameras, collected hair, sent them to labs for DNA analysis, and even hired a human-bear conflict specialist for advice, given that the grizzly bear recovery plan recommends hiring a human-bear conflict specialist for each bear management unit to do this exact work and to work with landowners yet no specialists have been hired, and given that the lack of fish and wildlife support is inciting a shoot, shovel, and shut up vigilantism, can the minister commit to investing . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Forestry and Parks.

**Mr. Loewen:** I find this pretty insulting to the good people that work in fish and wildlife services and our fish and wildlife officers that are doing the good work. Their job is to take care of these issues as they come forward, and part of that is bringing Albertans to be involved with the process of managing problem wildlife. Again, our focus is on the safety of Albertans. We have rural Albertans, we have rural municipalities that come to us all the time concerned about their safety and concerned about their livestock and their pets and being able to live right in their own home, right in their own yard, and not have these dangerous animals coming in. We have had dangerous animals attacking Albertans even just this year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### Supports for Veterans

**Mr. Wright:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since being appointed the military liaison, I've met with the brave men and women who put their lives on the line for our freedoms. The contributions of veterans in our community serve as a reminder of strength and inspiration to future generations to uphold the values of service and dedication. However, the struggles of transitioning back to civilian life can be significant, and this is why we must provide the necessary mental health supports and resources. Can the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction share what our government is doing to enhance mental health supports for our veterans?

2:30

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

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to that member for his important work as that liaison. I along with, I believe, every member of this Chamber wear our poppies with pride during this Remembrancetide. I continue, of course, to work with members opposite to make sure that we support veterans, who have a disproportionate diagnosis of PTSD, anxiety, panic disorder. Our government continues to fund initiatives like Alberta 211, OSI-Can, Heroes in Mind, Counselling Alberta, amongst many others. All of these programs are connecting veterans with supports within the province to make sure we protect their future as they transition into civilian life.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Wright:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that many Canadian military veterans have unique

lived experiences that can make adjusting back to civilian life difficult at the end of their service and further given that veterans are more likely to experience homelessness in Canada than the general population, most recently noted in an October 27 *National Post* article, can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services please explain to this House what our government is doing to address veterans' homelessness and pairing them up with local veteran services?

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just recently we've invested millions of dollars in specific veteran supportive housing here in the province. The other big thing that we've been doing, as a direct result of the hard work of the hon. member, is making sure that in the navigation centres working with the homeless in both Edmonton and Calgary, a process has been brought forward to identify homeless veterans immediately when they enter the system and be able to connect them to all of the supports that are available for them beyond just the province. Many times a lot of that support actually comes from the federal government. But as a result of the work that the hon. member has done, we've been able to bring that system in place to be able to respect our heroes and give them the best support that we can. I want to thank him for all of his efforts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Wright:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister again. Given that families of military personnel also face personal struggles such as long separations, relocations, and the uncertainty of safety of their loved ones and further given that these military families are the backbone of our great nation's defence, providing unwavering courage and support to all those who serve, can the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction please explain to this House what our government is doing to support the Armed Forces members, reservists, veterans and their families as they transition back to civilian life?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question, again for his diligent work supporting veterans and, importantly, their families. Many of us if not most of us have had connections with family members returning not just from service but also combat, and it's incredibly important to see that transition go smoothly, which is why we continue to support in a tailored fashion through a number of different programming, some programs of which include Wounded Warriors, Homes for Heroes, Heroes in Mind, of course many different programming that happens through the Royal Canadian Legion, of which, everyone knows, I am a very big fan, and many others, helping military families with the support that they need.

### Prescription Contraception Access

**Ms Hayter:** Mr. Speaker, one year ago this government voted down universal prescription contraception coverage. With B.C.'s program showing \$9 in savings for every dollar spent and unplanned pregnancies costing our health care system \$320 million annually, for the women in rural Alberta who live more than 200 kilometres away from women health specialists, this isn't just about the \$400 cost of an IUD. It's about the \$100 in gas, lost wages, finding child care just to get a prescription. Will the minister finally admit that joining the federal pharmacare plan isn't just smart but is essential for rural health care?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll admit that Alberta has already a very robust pharmacare program, and in fact we want to have discussions with the federal government to enhance those programs that we already have. We already provide – what is it here? Let me just check my numbers so that I don't get it wrong. Fifty oral and uterine contraceptives are already provided, and most women have it through their own plans. Of course, we support women. We have invested heavily in research for women, and we're going to continue to invest in women.

**Ms Hayter:** Given that insurance isn't pharmacare and given that in communities like Lethbridge there's a shortage of women health specialists such as gynecologists and given that people from Lethbridge are told to drive to Calgary and given that 74 per cent of Albertans support universal prescription contraception yet this government continues to tell rural women to rely on private insurance that they don't have, given that under this government's watch rural health care is in crisis, with shuttered pharmacies, overwhelmed clinics, doctors leaving in droves, public health units struggling with skeleton staff and outdated equipment, will the minister explain to Alberta women outside of the big cities why they can't find the money to bring essential reproductive health care to their communities?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, of course, is not being factual. In fact, we have a very robust pharmacare program, and we also have provincial jurisdiction on pharmacare as well as health. What we are not seeing from the federal government is the respect of that. We've been able to negotiate quite well with the federal government on the aging with dignity, on the shared priorities agreement, and we'll continue to negotiate. I've heard from Minister Holland that, in fact, he wants to have those conversations, and I'm looking forward to them.

**Ms Hayter:** Given, again, that pharmacare isn't insurance and given that one year ago, after voting down the universal prescription contraception, this government now claims that real health care is a priority and given communities like Grande Cache, where there is only one family doctor for 3,400 residents, or Athabasca, where women, again, are driving two hours to see a gynecologist, contraception isn't a luxury; it's a necessity. Will the government commit today to stop playing politics and provide provincial coverage to contraception to help keep rural women's health services alive?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, do you know what we did to help women's health? We actually invested not just \$10 million but \$20 million in health research specifically for women. The members opposite didn't do that when they were in office. Since January of 2024 AHS has recruited more than 125 physicians to rural Alberta alone. We are seeing record numbers of physicians coming to Alberta, and a lot of them are family physicians operating in rural communities. But we know more needs to be done. We're on the job, and we're going to get it done.

### Supports for International Students and Temporary Foreign Workers

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, while governments like Manitoba stepped up to help international students and temporary foreign workers, this government has created a mess: the erratic pause to AAIP streams in February, a broken website, and the lucky draft system that's lasted three months, experiments in the system that lack

fairness, impacting the future of thousands of international students, temporary foreign workers, and their families. How will the immigration minister answer to those who are currently out of options due to the sheer incompetence of this ministry?

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As the member should know, foreign students are controlled by the federal government. They make decisions on how many students are allowed for Canada, and from that we get our proportional share, and we do our best to accommodate them in this province.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, given that IRCC has a temporary policy in place until the end of this year which allowed a two-year open work permit to those who lost their work status while awaiting a PNP decision from their provincial jurisdictions like ours, given that applicants will immediately need a support letter from the province to apply for a work permit, given that there is no easy way to request one from this government, will this minister, right here, promise to issue the provincial support letters by the turnaround time of three working days?

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question again. I would like to say that the extension of work permits is, again, a process that we work on with the federal government, his partners, to get the extension. And I'm very happy to report that for 2024 we were able to make that work with the federal government, and we got that extension for 2024.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that the minister didn't really answer the question, given that hateful and racist incidents against immigrants and ethnic communities are on the rise in our province, given that thousands of vulnerable temporary foreign workers and international students have fallen prey to human traffickers and are being exploited due to lack of timelines, transparency, and support and given that these vulnerable people want to know what this minister is doing to protect them, will the minister meet with them within the next two weeks and work on protecting them?

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

2:40

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member again for his question. I must say that the member needs to understand about the system, how it works with respect to immigration and foreign workers and foreign students in this country. We do our best, when people come to our province, to accommodate them based on the labour shortage needs in this province, and we have been able to make a huge difference in terms of when we extended the work permits last year to accommodate those people in our PNP program. We call it the Alberta advantage immigration program. We are so proud of it.

#### Health Care Professionals in Rural Alberta

**Mr. Sinclair:** Mr. Speaker, Indigenous people, myself included, like to speak from the heart usually, but I'm going to stick to the script on this one. It's hard to tell – I'm pretty dark – but I'm still blushing from before.

Our UCP government is committed to maintaining open lines of communication with Albertans to establish new provincial health agencies across this province. However, Albertans in rural areas like mine face unique challenges that often lead to inadequate care, leaving our people feeling ignored and justifiably angry. A life in northern Alberta is worth the same as anywhere else in this province. Could the Minister of Health please explain to this House what steps we've made in rural health care services?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2024 invests \$164 million towards initiatives to attract, train, and retain physicians, especially in rural and underserved communities. Through Alberta's health workforce strategy our government is working with the universities to increase the number of medical training seats to ensure that more than 100 additional Alberta-trained physicians will be ready to practise annually. Furthermore, the establishment of the nurse practitioner primary care program has enabled nurse practitioners to open their own clinics and offer primary care services. This is great news for Alberta.

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

**Mr. Sinclair:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for that answer. Given that rural communities face serious challenges accessing health care services, including long wait times to see a doctor, even delivering babies has become a luxury in my hometown of Slave Lake. Chemo treatments, dialysis: there's lots of work to do. People in northern Alberta deserve better, and our government is taking real action. Can the same minister please explain what our government is doing to ensure the people of rural Alberta have access to a family doctor in a timely manner?

Thank you.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to explain. Our government understands the important role that family and rural generalist physicians have in our communities and in our families. In fact, a key aspect of our commitment to support the recruitment of physicians to rural areas includes developing that regional training centre in Lethbridge and in Grande Prairie as evidence shows that students who learn in rural areas tend to practise in rural areas. This is going to be great news, again, for our rural communities. We'll continue to work closely with the Alberta Medical Association, physicians, Alberta Health Services, and other health partners to develop solutions on building a stronger, more resilient health care system for all Albertans.

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

**Mr. Sinclair:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for that answer. Given the increasing demand from northern Albertans for timely and effective health care and the importance of addressing the difficulty of attracting doctors and nurses to my riding of Lesser Slave Lake and northern Alberta as a whole and further given the growing challenge of not just attracting these workers to take up residency but also to have them stay, raise their families, and help our small communities prosper, could the same minister please explain to this House what steps our government is taking to help recruit and retain health care workers who are currently in postsecondary education?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Postsecondary institutions are now offering nursing education programs in rural communities so that students can learn in the same community where they live. AHS has also developed a paid rural practicum program for final-year nursing students and is hiring second- and third-year undergraduate nursing students as a pipeline to practice. Also, our government is working to attract more nurses from across Canada and internationally as AHS conducts targeted recruitment of internationally educated nurses into the workforce, especially in rural and remote areas of the province. We won't forget rural Alberta.

**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.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee I'm happy to table the committee's report recommending the appointment of Gordon McClure as Chief Electoral Officer commencing on November 18, 2024. On behalf of my colleagues of the committee I'd like to thank everyone who participated, who put in their resumé's, who allowed us to interview them; express big appreciation to the team over at executive search and our clerk, Jody Rempel, who often worked extra hours to keep us on the rails, and all those kind of items. Yeah; I really appreciate that. I would love to table this. For anyone interested, copies of the report are also available online.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide oral notice of Government Motion 49, sponsored by myself, which reads as follows.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee sessional paper SP-534/2023-24 and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Gordon McClure be appointed as Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta effective November 18, 2024.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

#### Bill 25

#### Early Learning and Child Care Amendment Act, 2024

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of my colleague the hon. Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade to introduce Bill 25, the Early Learning and Child Care Amendment Act, 2024.

The proposed amendments build upon the trust Alberta families place in our child care system by improving safety for their children. Through this legislation Alberta's government will hold child care operators accountable if they do not prioritize the safety and well-being of children in their care. This ranges from administrative penalties to swift action to close a program or cancel

a licence when children are at risk. The amendments will also improve public disclosure for parents through public posting of all stop orders, including unlicensed providers, and enabling disclosure of early childhood educator certificate status. Mr. Speaker, parents expect high-quality child care that keeps their children safe, and Bill 25 will help do exactly that.

With that, I move first reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

#### Bill 28

#### Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2024

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 28, the Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2024.

Alberta is proposing an update to its laws to address legal slaughter and the sale of uninspected meat by increasing maximum fines to \$100,000 for each offence under the law. Time to investigate and lay charges is being extended from one year following the date the offence occurred to two years after the offence comes to the attention of an inspector, to allow more time for complex cases. To pass Bill 28 will increase penalties for those who break the law and create dangerous and unhealthy conditions for Albertans. The proposed act will ensure that Albertans are confident in their food supply and have access to safe, high-quality meat.

I'm pleased to move first reading of Bill 28, the Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2024.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

### 2:50 Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Wright:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to submit the five requisite copies of two articles, one being the *National Post* article I referenced in my question on the reality veterans faced with homelessness and an article showcasing the great work being done by our FASS team with the Alberta sheriffs.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

**Dr. Metz:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table the requisite five copies of a sample of 16 communications from over 250 messages that my office received from constituents and faith groups protesting antitrans legislation.

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

**Ms Chapman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a resource from the American Academy of Pediatrics speaking to the value of comprehensive sex education in decreasing domestic and intimate partner violence.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of *The Lived Experiences of Trans & Non-binary Youth in Alberta*, a qualitative research report written by Dr. Kristopher Wells, Dr. Teresa Hardy, and Dr. Emilie Maine, and I would urge all members, especially those across the aisle, to read this report.

Thank you.



**Ms Hayter:** I rise to table the requisite five copies of a letter from Reverend Tracy Robertson, a minister from the United Church in my Calgary-Edgemont riding, to the Premier stating that gender-affirming care equals health care, period.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Cooper, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, pursuant to the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act Public Interest Commissioner of Alberta annual report, 2023-24.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there were no points of order today, and that brings us to Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

#### Bill 24

#### Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to join us in the debate? The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Madam Speaker, as we navigate the nuances of our modern society, we must reflect on the foundational principles that govern our rights and freedoms. In our ever-changing world we must recognize that some of these rights, originally addressed when the Bill of Rights was created back in 1972, may no longer fully address the complexities of modern life. As society evolves, so must our understanding of our rights. As we confront new challenges characteristic of modern society, the need to revisit and amend this bill has never been more present. We cannot ignore the shifts that impact our communities both locally and globally. Our foundational rights must evolve to protect all citizens. This is not a government obligation but a moral imperative. Our considered amendments address these contemporary changes to strengthen our democracy and ensure that every voice in our province is heard and valued.

We are connected like never before. Every member in this Chamber carries a cellphone, which connects them to everyone in their respective constituencies. These devices serve as a powerful tool for expression by giving us platforms to express ideas and engage in real-time discussions from anywhere in the world with anyone in the world. Technology empowers us, but it also requires us to be vigilant in protecting our rights. The rapid evolution of communication technology has transformed how we interact and share ideas. It's opened up new avenues for conversation, debate, and understanding.

Because of this instant connectivity, it is imperative that we recognize the need for protections that ensure every voice is heard and respected in both the digital and public forums without the expense of our fundamental rights. Madam Speaker, in a day where digital communication dominates our interactions, protecting freedom of expression has become even more critical. It fosters a culture of inclusivity and respect for diverse viewpoints. Every

individual must feel that their contributions are significant in shaping our communities.

When the Alberta Bill of Rights was first enacted in 1972, the landscape of communication was vastly different. We relied on limited channels, with many voices going unheard. We did not have the ability to make a phone call or send a message wherever we wanted. I'm sure many members, like myself, wouldn't mind that some days, if people couldn't get ahold of us till Monday. But today the rise of the Internet and social media has transformed how we share ideas and engage with one another. It has created an environment where voices can be amplified or silenced with unprecedented speed. This creates a dual responsibility to engage positively and to protect our rights in every sphere.

It is this shift that brings up the necessity of amending our Bill of Rights to explicitly protect freedom of expression in this new digital age. We now have the capability to reach anyone in just a few minutes. This immediately demands protections that allow for free expression without fear of suppression. Our government reinforces the principle that freedom of expression is essential not only for personal autonomy but also for the health of our democracy. Protecting this freedom in all its forms, including the online sphere, will empower all Albertans to engage meaningfully in social conversations, further strengthening our strong and diverse collective voice.

This is important to my constituency of Lesser Slave Lake, Madam Speaker. We often feel ignored and underresourced by Ottawa and the big cities in Alberta. It's important not to ignore people. My constituency embodies the diverse voices that contribute to our collective identity. Every perspective matters even when we don't agree with them, and it adds richness to our community fabric. Some of the challenges that my constituents face range from economic development to environmental concerns, that are only a few examples of challenges with different opinions surrounding them, with emphasis on the need for open communication. They cannot be resolved without input from all community members.

Like most regions around the province, my constituency consists of entrepreneurs, families, farmers, industries, and everything in between. If constituents do not feel empowered to express their views without fear of backlash, censorship, major contemporary challenges like these would go unsolved. This empowerment is essential for fostering trust within our communities and, further, to our governments.

Every person, no matter where they came from or what they do, has the right to feel secure in expressing their thoughts and opinions, knowing that our contributions are respected, valued, and protected in our democratic process. This foundational right is essential for a thriving community and a thriving country. Ensuring strong protections for the freedom of expression means that all community members can share their stories, advocate for their needs, and participate in meaningful conversations about the issues that matter most to them. Madam Speaker, none of us would be here in this Chamber if not for the voices of these Albertans. Their trust in us compels us to act, Madam Speaker.

**The Chair:** Madam Chair.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Yeah. Sorry.

This is why it's so important that we prioritize their safety and freedom. By ensuring that our rights are relevant and robust, we can uphold the principles of equality, freedom, and justice for all Albertans. We seek to not only uphold the foundational tenets of democracy but also empower individuals to contribute

meaningfully to the public discourse. This empowerment will invigorate our democratic process and enrich our communities.

I'm proud to be a part of a government that recognizes and upholds the safety and security of all Albertans. Our proposed amendments to the Alberta Bill of Rights not only do this, but they also represent a crucial opportunity to safeguard and enhance our freedoms. Albertans deserve the assurance that their opinions matter. They deserve to feel welcome in open discussion without fear of reprisal. This is not a legislative goal; it is a commitment to our collective future. Our government is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion and respect where diverse perspectives contribute to our collective decision-making. The strength of our democracy lies in our ability to listen, again, especially when we don't agree with each other. We're working towards ensuring that every voice in Alberta is not only heard but celebrated.

Thank you.

3:00

**The Chair:** Are there others to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 24. The Member for Lesser Slave Lake mentioned that the Bill of Rights may not address the complexities of our society since this was drafted in 1972. The good news is that since then we've had a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that is enshrined in our Constitution and that protects our freedom of expression and guarantees that right as a constitutional right available to every Canadian, to every Albertan.

That document, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, also includes many other rights that define what Canada as a society is, that kind of bind all of us together as Canadians. That includes our legal rights. That includes our democratic rights. That includes our right to bodily autonomy, our right to be treated equally, our right and protection from state overreach, unreasonable search, seizure, and those kinds of things.

But while we are amending the Bill of Rights and adding some protections, there are a few things that we can add to this Bill of Rights that will really make a difference. With that, I have an amendment that I will move, and I have the requisite number of copies. I will take one and provide the rest.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1. Hon. member, you may proceed.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you. The Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall to move that Bill 24, Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024, be amended in section 4 by adding the following immediately after clause (b):

- (b.1) by adding the following immediately after subsection (1):
  - (1.1) For the purpose of subsection (1)(a.1), the right to the enjoyment of property includes the right of an individual not to be restricted or prohibited from installing or using a solar energy system that is attached to the individual's property and designed to convert sunlight into electrical energy or solar thermal energy.

I will explain what this amendment is doing, and I will also explain what the purpose of this amendment is. As we understand property, we understand it as a bundle of rights. Madam Chair, you can tell where I'm going with this. Back in the day, when I went to law school, property law class was in first year, and one of my professors, Professor Nigel Bankes, was teaching property law class. He was one of the finest profs that I ever had the privilege of learning from. He was a constitutional law, water law, Indigenous law, property law, resource law prof. When he started explaining

what property is, how in common law jurisdictions we kind of define property, one of the things that I still remember was that we see property as a bundle of rights.

What that means is that when you are an owner of the property, you have certain rights that are attached to that property. Those rights include the right to possession of the property. When you are the owner, you have the right to possess the property. Second was that as owner you have the right to control the property. That comes with the ownership of the property; that's the property owner's right, to control the property. Then was the right to exclusion. Since you are the owner, you can exclude others from that property. Then was the right to enjoyment of the property, that you can use that property, enjoy that property, enjoy that possession, control, and exclusion. That's your right as owner of the property. And then you have the right to dispossession as well, that as owner you can dispose of the property. So all these rights attach to the property when you're an owner of the property.

Since the Bill of Rights was making some changes, I thought that clarifying that as property owners you have the right to possession, to control, to exclusion, to enjoyment, and to dispossession of that property would clarify a few things. And there is a background for why we thought that this is an important clarification and why it's important that we add that to the Bill of Rights.

There are some provisions in the bill as drafted which repeat, for the most part, what's already in the Expropriation Act, because the Expropriation Act sets out the procedure for expropriation. It also has a whole section on how compensation is determined. So in that sense, there is not much new in the provisions that are included.

But this amendment is an important one, and it's important because of the context that we are in right now. For instance, recently we have heard from many municipalities, including the city of Edmonton, that they own certain properties, they possess them, they have control over them, and they are entitled to make use of them and enjoy them, but the government of Alberta owes them a lot of taxes. The government used their property but didn't pay for that use, so there are outstanding taxes. They are concerned about that, and they want government to step up and pay their share. That's their right as property owners, and clearly their right is interfered with by the government.

There are so many landowners in rural Alberta, which the other side often claims to represent, who are deeply concerned about outstanding taxes by primarily the oil and gas industry across this province. In that case, Madam Chair, what happened: again, those Albertans own those lands, they have title to those lands, and they're entitled to enjoyment of that land. They may have given up some competing uses for those lands to give it to the oil and gas industry so that they can extract natural resources. Sure, they did use their lands, extracted those resources but, again, didn't pay for the use of their lands. Therefore, there are millions of dollars in outstanding taxes that those industry players owe to rural Alberta.

3:10

For the last four years, I believe, this issue has come up at every rural municipalities convention. This issue comes up when you meet with municipalities, rural Albertans at these AM conventions, Rural Municipalities of Alberta conventions. There have been certain resolutions that have been passed at these events urging government to take action, and Municipal Affairs ministers have tried a couple of times, without addressing the issue, to fix that. Clearly, that didn't get fixed. What those landowners are saying is that those operators who owe them taxes: the government should come up with a regulatory mechanism where their license to operate on their land can be tied with them paying their fair share of taxes.

But the government so far is siding with those operators at the expense of rural Albertans and completely ignoring them.

Then last year, I believe, the government all of a sudden told many rural Albertans that they will not be able to put up solar panels on their lands. I'm not debating the merit of that particular policy. What I am arguing here is: why does the government think, since they advocate and kind of pretend to be the champion of property rights, that they can unilaterally go to rural Alberta and tell those farmers, tell those landowners, what they can do with their land? If they truly respect people's property rights, then government should not interfere in any manner whatsoever with people's right to control their properties, people's right to enjoyment of their properties, people's right to be able to do what they see fit on their properties.

Government should not be telling them, Madam Chair, whether they can grow wheat or canola on their farms. That would be inappropriate. That would be for some farmer to decide what they want to grow on their lands because that's their property. Just like that, those landowners should be able to do whatever they see fit, including, if they choose to do so, having a solar energy system on their property and benefit from that, enjoy their property, be able to control what they can do with their property, be able to exclude government intervention on property rights.

If the government truly cares about people's property rights, and if it's not just virtue signalling ahead of the UCP's AGM on November 2, then the government should be open to this very reasonable amendment. All it's saying is: let people decide what they want to do with their properties. That's all this amendment is about. But we do know that this bill of rights amendment act is not about Albertans' rights. It's not about their property rights. Otherwise, there are many things that the government could do. If we look at what's going on in our communities, and if we talk to Albertans, I think they will talk to you about their right to access timely health care.

Last Sunday I had a town hall in my riding just to hear from my constituents about their priorities, about their issues, about their concerns and seek input and ideas from them about this session, and, Madam Chair, not once this Bill of Rights came up. People talked about the cost-of-living crisis. People talked about how their insurance has doubled, quadrupled. People talked about how an 18-year-old driving a Honda Civic is paying four times more in Alberta in comparison to the neighboring province of British Columbia. That's what they were talking about. They were talking about the cost of their utilities, how they have gone through the roof in the last five years.

In particular, in the northeast area we were hit with another major hailstorm just last month, in August, and again not a single UCP MLA showed up in those areas. To Premier Jason Kenney's credit, in the 2020 hailstorm he at least showed up two weeks late, but this time nobody even showed up. Again, they are not asking government to act as their insurer. All they're asking this government: to be transparent. Tell us how many claims have been opened, how many have been dealt with, how many will have to wait through the winter again, just like 2020, to get their damaged roof fixed.

Those are the kinds of priorities that Albertans at my town hall shared with me and my colleagues. They talked about education. In particular, in the northeast area we do not have enough schools. It's the fastest growing area in the city of Calgary. Redstone has been asking for a school for the last five years, and still we just have some money: okay; do some drawing.

**Ms Hoffman:** Promises.

**Mr. Sabir:** Nothing more than that.

Kids every day are being bused for over an hour to different schools, because CBE identified some overflow schools, and guess what? Not a single school is in the northeast quadrant. They're all in different northwest, southwest quadrants. So they have to be bused one hour every day on one side to get to the school. Certainly, their learning outcomes, their education are being compromised, and they deserve to have quality education. They deserve to have schools in their neighbourhoods. Getting quality education is their right, and that right is being compromised under this government's watch.

They do talk about community safety, how drugs and guns have proliferated in our communities, and instead of addressing that, government has completely ignored all the social determinants of crime and justice. Alberta is spending less money on a per capita basis on education, per-student funding basis, in the entire country.

Those are the kinds of things that are a priority for Albertans. But, again, with this amendment at least it will give some assurance to those who are owed taxes, to those who want to make use of their lands to their benefit that they have the right to do so, and this government will not interfere with their right to enjoyment of their property.

**3:20**

With that, I urge each and every one of you to stand up for Albertans' rights and vote in favour of this amendment and not just have a bill that only helps the Premier's aspiration to stay as the leader of the United Conservative Party. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there are others to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question unless the Minister of Affordability and Utilities would like to speak?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Just briefly, to respond to the member's amendment proposal. I think it's overly prescriptive for one. Within the Bill of Rights amendments we're already expanding property rights that government be required to compensate individuals or businesses if government takes ownership of the property or if a law deprives the individual or business of all reasonable uses of their property. Beyond that, they already retain this right, so being this prescriptive is not necessary, in my opinion. The government also has a responsibility to make sure that land has the greatest opportunity to be used for as many beneficial ways as possible throughout the future, particularly, in my opinion, if the growth of food is one of them. Should a government allow the sterilization of food production land and restrict it forever for that production capability, over time you could see food costs rise.

That land in competition with electricity: I think there's a very narrow line there that we need to be very, very careful of. I think the proposal is actually a very dangerous approach to be this prescriptive. Homeowners can put solar installations on their property, on their buildings, their land. The only thing that we have done is to make sure that we consider an agricultural-first approach to make sure that we do not sterilize that land and cause further food prices to rise. This is an affordability measure as well as a sustainability measure to make sure that land is available for food production in Alberta for generations to come.

With that in mind, I don't think this is necessary, and I ask all members in this House to vote down this amendment.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:22 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Arcand-Paul	Goehring	Pancholi
Brar	Haji	Renaud
Ceci	Hayter	Sabir
Chapman	Hoffman	Sigurdson, L.
Dach	Kasawski	Sweet
Eremenko	Metz	Tejada

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For – 18 Against – 46

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on Bill 24 in Committee of the Whole. Looking for members wishing to speak. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

3:40

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise in this place to speak to Bill 24, the Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024, definitely something that the Premier and other members of her cabinet and now caucus have been virtue signalling for quite some time.

I will say that a lot of people, when I talk to them in my riding and across the province – I've been spending a lot of time in places like Lethbridge recently, for example. When they talk about things they'd like to have a right to, it's usually things like the right to a doctor. I had a health care town hall recently in Lethbridge, and I'd say the number one reason why people came was to tell us that they didn't have a family doctor. About 20,000 people in Lethbridge currently don't have a doctor. I know my colleague from Lesser Slave Lake just spoke recently. That's pretty much the whole east side of his riding, that many people without a doctor in our fourth-largest city in this province.

A number of women came specifically to talk about the lack of access to women's health care in Lethbridge. In the summer, for example, there were massive obstetrics waits. Women couldn't access things like regular reproductive health care services related to their pregnancies. When I was door-knocking, I came to the door of somebody who admitted they'd never voted NDP before, and they were in their third trimester and still hadn't had access to see an obstetrician. They just got it scheduled. The good news was that it was their fourth pregnancy, so they kind of had a good idea of what they were doing. But imagine being a first-time pregnant person not being able to access obstetric services.

Another woman who came to our town hall talked about the fact that she needed regular screening for abnormal cells, and she was

having incredible difficulty finding a way to access that. She was at the point where she was going to go to the emergency room because she couldn't get a family doctor or a women's health specialist to be able to give her a proper internal exam and screen her for things like cancer.

This is a dire situation, and this is the fourth-largest city in our province, again, Madam Chair. I'm talking about one end of female reproductive health there, of course, when I talk about women accessing supports who would like to have a healthy, full-term pregnancy and be able to hopefully bring a child into their community in their community being told that it's totally appropriate for them to drive, you know, three, four hours to be able to access maternal care in places like Calgary. And that's just not okay.

With that in mind, there were also a number of women who talked about other types of reproductive health; specifically, wanting to access abortion services in the city and how difficult that has been for them. So with that in mind, Madam Chair, while we're talking about the Bill of Rights – certainly, they would like to be able to exercise their right to access abortion services – I have an amendment that I'd like to table.

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

Hon. member, you may proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. I'm moving on behalf of my colleague the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall and the Deputy Official Opposition House Leader that Bill 24, the Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024, be amended in section 4(b)(iv) in the proposed section 1(1) by renumbering clause (j) as clause (k) and by adding the following immediately before clause (k), which will be known as (j): "the right of the individual to access comprehensive reproductive healthcare."

We'll see how the debate goes on this in the remainder of the time we have devoted to it today, Madam Chair. But I will say that I have a little bit of déjà vu in that I rose on the other side of the House to talk about reproductive health care, specifically the right to people needing to access it without harassment, without intimidation. In this Chamber and under a former leader but still the United Conservative caucus, members all fled the Chamber a total of 13 times during that debate. So I certainly hope that we don't see that today, as there were many, many votes at that time around women's reproductive health that members just were – I won't assume motives, but I will say that not a single member stayed to debate or be on the record when it came to this matter in the past. We have a chance to say where people stand on it today, and I certainly hope that they stand with women and anyone who needs to access reproductive health care throughout the province. It's comprehensive reproductive health care. I want to be very clear, Madam Chair.

When I trained to be a teacher, one of the courses I took because I was, you know, a woman in my 20s – I was nervous that I was going to get stuck teaching sex ed, and I thought: "Oh, this is going to be a stressful time. Let's get as much education as I can to be prepared for it." The University of Alberta offered a course specifically on teaching comprehensive sexual health education. I want to be very clear that on the education side when it is comprehensive, when it is bias free, when it is based on science and evidence, and when you bring in experts to talk about it, the research shows that students have their first sexual encounter later on in life because they have information. They have evidence. They know that there's no pressure and there's also no mystery around it. When you're open and honest with people and you give them the information, they traditionally reduce that first encounter to a later point in life.

I will assert that many conversations I've had with women, especially here in the province of Alberta, around their right to bodily autonomy – and the right to be able to make a choice about accessing abortion services has been top of mind for many, including women who are even postmenopausal. They often say: you know, I don't want the government getting between me and any decision I'm making. Some people say that it's a decision that shouldn't be made with anyone other than you and your doctor. I'll say that it's a decision that shouldn't be made by anyone other than you with the support of, of course, the health professionals that you need.

For anyone who's worried that this isn't something that people take the time to think through, I want to assure you that I've toured, and I'd be happy to arrange a tour for anyone interested. In Edmonton we have Women's Health Options. It's in Edmonton-Glenora, and it is the only dedicated abortion facility here in the city of Edmonton. In Calgary there's one hospital, and there's one facility as well there in Kensington, I believe. Occasionally, in some communities you will be able to acquire this service, but it is something that is still difficult even with Mifegymiso, the early-term abortion medication that people can have prescribed to them. There are many, many people who find it difficult to access that.

If you're slightly later in your pregnancy and need to have an abortion for any reason and you live in a rural or remote community, being able to get to Edmonton or Calgary – because it's not even available in many communities that have regional hospitals. We would not expect somebody to travel to Edmonton or Calgary for getting a cast or for getting a screening for things like prostate cancer. We would expect that we would have those services available throughout the province and that there wouldn't be any stigma or judgment attached to it. We would make sure that we reduce the amount of time people had to spend on the highway, that we found ways for them to access these services and the right care by the right provider. And, of course, the right place is as close to home as possible.

In this amendment I'm simply going to the same section that already talks about the notwithstanding clause, and it refers to "the right of the individual with capacity not to be subjected to, or coerced into receiving, a vaccine without the consent of that individual." The government is very keen to talk about other types of health services, and I want to be very clear that there is no evidence that anyone has ever been "subjected to, or coerced into receiving, a vaccine without the consent of that individual" here in the province. So this is an area that the government is being proactive in wanting to be able to make legislation and say to somebody: if this ever becomes an issue in the future, we're going to make sure it doesn't become one.

So even if you think that the right to an individual's access to comprehensive reproductive health care is already present in the province of Alberta, and I will argue that I don't believe it is, but even if you believe that it is, and you think that it's not necessary, certainly this section is also then not necessary. I doubt that anyone will be here proposing that it be removed because they put it in because they wanted to be proactive. They wanted to be able to anticipate that if a situation one day does arise where this is ever questioned, let's be very clear in stating this explicitly.

**3:50**

So I am calling on all members here to do the same thing. Make sure that you tell your wives, your daughters, members of your community, your constituents. About half of us have anatomy that this would be important for, us on the women's side. And it actually doesn't even say women. It says the right of the individual to access comprehensive reproductive health care. So you can assert through

that that that would include men needing to access reproductive health care services as well. Maybe men in the province of Alberta are afraid that their right to be able to have a vasectomy one day might be taken away. I certainly hope that that's not the case. I hope that everyone feels that every person in this province who wants to access some type of reproductive health care service should have that protected and that that should be a right for them to be able to protect that.

So we will have a chance at some point here to ring the bells and see where people stand on this issue. I will also say that we are getting very close to – we've had many elections recently. We had the B.C. NDP recently re-elected as a majority government in the province to our west. The province to our east just saw a massive increase in the number of NDP seats in that province. Congratulations to the Saskatchewan Party on their re-election, but certainly a significant change in the popular vote and in the tide and appetite in that province.

A large proportion of those people who are expressing their intention to change the way they were voting said health care was their number one reason, that they were deeply concerned about the health care services that were available in Saskatchewan. So another big shift there and a health vote. And then of course in New Brunswick just, I guess two weeks ago now, there was also an election where Conservatives ran on fear and it was rejected in that province and a different party was elected.

Then next week is the U.S. election. It's hard to believe it's here, yet it seems like it's been so long that we've been talking about this. One of the biggest things that is being questioned there is again around access to reproductive health care, because one of the candidates who's running for president very proudly put people who are anti-choice on the Supreme Court and was able to ram through legislation that and court decisions that have brought a woman's right to choose back decades in terms of legal status.

If you were a political voyeur in other jurisdictions, like I am, you probably saw some of the people during the DNC roll call talk about why they were there to nominate their candidate. I remember one of them talking about how, when she found out she was pregnant, she was so excited to be pregnant. I think it was her third child that she was expecting. She was very keen to be able to go full term, but there were significant medical complications. The fetus wasn't viable and if she stayed pregnant long term, it would impact her reproductive health beyond that. And she really did want to have more children. That's why she was so excited to be pregnant at that time, she really wanted to have more children. So being able to access an abortion so that she could preserve her reproductive health and the ability to have children beyond that was a priority for her. She had to leave her home state. She had to leave her home state and her children behind to be able to go access this service.

So even if there are people in this space who don't believe in a woman's right to choose, surely you believe that those children shouldn't have to be without their mother and shouldn't have to travel to a neighbouring jurisdiction. Surely you believe that somebody who wants to be able to preserve their opportunity to genetically reproduce themselves and parent and that they have that opportunity should be able to do so. That's certainly some of the argument that's being used in other proposed legislation that's going to be expected later this term in this place. So it is deeply concerning to many, many voters in North America and I would say around the world what's going to happen.

Another example around women's reproductive health. The war in Ukraine continues to rage on, and when women were evacuated from Ukraine and went to Poland to seek asylum, some of those women were pregnant, and some of them were pregnant through rape at the hands of their invaders. When they went to Poland,

which had recently outlawed abortion services, they were reported to be forced to go full term with a pregnancy that they did not consent to, that was the consequence of an unjust war, and not have access to that reproductive health, and it was retraumatizing for many of those women. These were some of the stories that were reported already over a year ago.

This is, I think, a very important, timely amendment, and I'm grateful to my colleague, the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, for bringing it forward so that we can have this conversation in this place. We can hopefully – I do encourage all members to read this. It's a very clear amendment, but I think it will bring a lot of peace of mind to people that you represent, people that I represent.

I imagine some of the things that are in this bill, that I think my colleagues very clearly demonstrated aren't necessary because they're enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – but it's important. I understand. You're saying that it's important to you to put other things in here so people are clear on where their current government and where their representatives here in the province of Alberta stand on issues. If you apply that same logic that you were giving to why you were bringing this bill forward in the very first place, I know that this will bring peace of mind to many Albertans who wonder.

Again, the last time the UCP had a chance to really identify where they stood on women's reproductive health, they vacated – I was going to say fled – this Chamber 13 times while the bells were ringing, and it was quite a sight, Madam Chair. Instead there's an opportunity today to be very clear, to be very demonstrative of where we stand on comprehensive reproductive health care for all Albertans through the inclusion of this amendment.

I know that members on the other side have already spoken to bodily autonomy in this Chamber in relation to this bill, so this is a chance to see when members say bodily autonomy, does that extend to bodily autonomy for somebody who needs to access reproductive health care services, or is it just about the already existing bodily autonomy around being able to choose whether or not to have a vaccine?

This is a test of where we stand as a jurisdiction within this country. Again, I will note that provinces to our west and to our east and further to our east have very recently demonstrated that health care is incredibly important to them, that being able to access timely care and to have your right to be able to receive that without being penalized with a bill or being told that you might be doing something that's in breach of the law is, I think, paramount for this government and all of us as legislators in this place to really clearly state where we stand on this issue.

People left the Chamber 13 times in the past. Let's hope it isn't 14. Let's hope that we can come together. It would be amazing to be able to pass an amendment unanimously on what the government has brought forward as their first, their top priority, bill. If this was an opportunity for all of us to be able to say that there's something in this bill that we all agree on, I think that would be welcomed by the folks that each and every one of us represent in this province because there aren't always days where we agree on something. It would be nice if there were more of them.

I know that my colleagues on this side of the House believe in the right of the individual to access comprehensive reproductive health care. It's a very inclusive statement and something that is fundamental to the health care that each and every one of us should be able to access. I think that the people of Lethbridge who have raised this as a specific concern would have their mind a little bit at rest because it is definitely a topic that has been brought up there regularly.

4:00

Imagine being somebody who needs to access reproductive health care and you need to leave your home and travel down the highway multiple hours to another city, leaving your family behind, taking more risk on the highway. And that's today. The fear is that if we don't pass this amendment and put into law the access to reproductive health care, it could mean more than travelling a few hours down the highway; it could mean travelling many hours to another province.

So let's, please, take this opportunity to come together to vote with confidence, giving that confidence to everyone we represent, around our commitment in the Alberta Legislature to protecting comprehensive reproductive health care.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Dr. Metz:** Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to speak to this amendment. I feel that it is a very important amendment that we pay attention to because we believe in rights, and it's very important that we think about: what are some of the really key rights that Albertans are really interested in making sure that they have? One of them is the right to reproductive health care. Reproductive health care is really a fundamental right, and it should be protected in an act, ensuring that all Albertans can access the medical care that they need. This is what we are asking you to speak to and help Albertans with. We believe in this right to reproductive health care. It will enshrine the protection of reproductive health care access in provincial law. It's truly crucial given recent uncertainties about where this field is going and access challenges, and it will ensure health care decisions remain between the patient and the physician.

This amendment provides an opportunity for this government to confirm that they do indeed believe in the rights of individuals and not just individuals that may have vaccine hesitancy for whatever reason that is. This government can now confirm to Albertans that they do not intend to erode access to reproductive health care. Indeed, this amendment provides the opportunity for this government to assure that reproductive health care is accessible throughout Alberta and specifically that when health care is delivered, perhaps by a religious-based provider such as Covenant Health, the government will make sure that clear processes are in place to ensure that all women have full access to medically appropriate care.

As recently as September of this year the Minister of Health stated on radio that, quote: there is no anticipated change to access to women's reproductive health care. So it seems appropriate that that be included in this bill, and thus we've come forward with this amendment. Individuals have the right to decide if they wish to be vaccinated, but individuals also should be protected from governments and ideologically based institutions who can make reproductive health care decisions for them simply by limiting access to care. This amendment assures that this bill includes protection for everyone so they actually will have access to the care that they need, so that they can make their own reproductive health care decisions.

So what does this mean for Albertans? It means that reproductive health care must include a full range of options as determined appropriate by the medical community. This means that the following – not only these things – need to be made available: contraception, medical and surgical abortion, access to gynecologic assessment and surgery, and access to appropriate medical care to support pregnancy and childbirth. I'm not going to talk about

contraception today because my colleagues have already given a lot of ideas on how that can be made widely available to people.

But maybe we could use a few facts about abortion. There is, in fact, no Canadian abortion law, but there is a law stating that the lack of access to abortion violates section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in Canada provinces and territories must offer abortion per the Canadian Health Act. Amending this would be very difficult. To change the Canadian Health Act, all provinces and territories would have to agree, and that would be virtually impossible.

However, restricting access does occur, and it can be done quite purposefully in order to limit abortion. We now have the opportunity to make it widely available by offering a guarantee in this act. It's important for Albertans to know that restricting abortion really only restricts access to safe abortion, because there are not fewer abortions when access is restricted; maternal and infant mortality rise along with morbidity of pregnant women. This amendment can reassure women that this is actually the intention of this government whereas declining this amendment could send an opposite message.

At this point in time surgical abortion is only available in Calgary and Edmonton, yet it is a procedure that could be done in smaller centres. AHS funds two privately run full-time clinics, women's options in Edmonton and the Kensington Clinic in Calgary, and AHS also supports a part-time clinic at the Peter Lougheed hospital in Calgary. Both of the full-time clinics offer medical and procedural abortions, and both require in-person care.

Rural Albertans do not have equitable access. While members of the NDP caucus care about Albertans, this amendment offers the opportunity for UCP members to show that they also care about their rural women and all those who love them. In-person visits require time off work, child care arrangements, and sometimes long travel and an overnight hotel. Of course, we see this with many other areas where access to the health care system is required. Neither of the AHS-supported clinics offer abortion prior to six weeks, and often the wait puts them out of the window when they could access medical abortion.

There are two private clinics that offer virtual abortion, so this can be a way women can access abortion, where it's harder to get to these clinics in Calgary and Edmonton, and it is also known to be safer, cheaper, and much more convenient for patients. We know, however, that access is limited in part because these clinics and the ability for remuneration of staff is underserved in Alberta. Alberta is the only place where there is no fee code for abortion counselling and services. Both of the private clinics offer medical abortion in keeping with World Health Organization guidelines for virtual telemedicine care. They are patient centred, and of course consultation can be done as soon as the patient determines that they need the consult. Patients can often access the medication for a self-managed home medical abortion virtually at the two private clinics. These are virtual and work around the schedule of the patients. Private clinics report that 98.6 per cent of their patients are over the age of 18, and those that are not are accompanied by a parent. If the individual under 18 does not have an adult, alternative arrangements are made and they are not really dealt with by these clinics.

Alberta Health supported 3,800 Albertans to obtain the medication for medical abortion during the fiscal year ending 2021. The majority were for medical therapeutic abortions, but some were for ongoing miscarriages. This would suggest the medical rate of about 27 per cent. In other places this is up to about two-thirds, so we are definitely lagging in the safest, cheapest, best process for Albertans, and it's most helpful for those that are in rural Alberta. Improving access will reduce the cost throughout the province.

#### 4:10

Along with the problems of access, there is a physician that was practising in rural Alberta who left because she was being physically threatened by the husband of a patient after she had prescribed the medication. Patients also experience marginalization in small towns – and I've heard from many of them – and this may be when they go to pick up their medication. Pharmacists in Alberta are allowed to conscientiously object to dispense the medication but without having to arrange an alternative dispenser, and this seems to be common because I've heard from many women.

A little bit more: no anaesthesia is required. There's no surgical procedure. Consultation can be totally done by telehealth, and follow-up is also provided to these women by telehealth so that they can take the medications in their own home. It can start as soon as there is a positive pregnancy test, but follow-up is required and is part of the process.

It is imperative that the option for medical abortion be communicated with women by any health care provider that they encounter who identifies that they're pregnant if this is possibly what the woman may be looking for. The latest data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information estimates that anywhere between 25 and 40 per cent may now be inching up there in terms of medical abortions versus others. But we know that the lowest access is still often where it's perhaps needed the most, in many of the rural areas.

Now, other things that we need to consider in terms of reproductive needs are obstetrical care. You do not know when you are pregnant whether you're going to need urgent intervention at that moment of delivery, and there is no time for transport when the situation just arises and it was unknown. That is the thing about obstetrics, that it's either going along smoothly, people are happy, you're delivering babies, having a great time looking after happy people, and then all of a sudden in a moment there needs to be an intervention. We have to assure that reproductive health care includes access to obstetrical care. Women need prenatal care that determines the health of themselves and their baby, and they need to have access to care during deliveries.

This is very, very often not available to many rural areas, and I note that in Lethbridge, which is a major centre in Alberta, this has been a huge issue such that women that may or may not need access to an obstetrician are sometimes having to live in another community during the final weeks of their pregnancy just for their own safety and the safety of their baby.

I can say that my own daughter during her second pregnancy, so not even the first one – everything was going fine, then suddenly she needed to have an emergency C-section. Had she been somewhere else, we do not know whether the baby would have survived had that not been available. This can happen to anyone, even the healthiest amongst us.

I know that it isn't only something women care about. Everyone who loves these women and their children needs to, you know, raise their voice and say that this is a part of reproductive health care that we have a right to and that we need to have available.

There are a few more things that I'd like to say about access to gynecologic surgery. Women's surgery, such as a hysterectomy for example, is often thought of as elective. As we know, these days elective is the longest wait-list that anyone could ever have. We're seeing that the operating rooms that would be functioning are frequently shut down at the last minute in many of our hospitals in order to shift the limited number of anaesthesiologists out to chartered surgical facilities, not necessarily based on the greatest need or who's really been waiting long. I mean, we need the knees and hips done, too, but the decision is more and more based on a

guarantee in a contract that there's going to be staffing there rather than the fact that oftentimes the ORs are going to sit empty for other people also waiting a very long time. Unfortunately, one of the areas that is delayed and delayed and delayed is the woman who needs that hysterectomy because: "Can't you wait? You've already waited three years, four years. Why not wait five years?" This is one of the issues that we really need to get on with.

We also need to recognize that there are some systemic reasons why we have a big shortage of obstetricians and gynecologists. They are paid less than similar surgical specialties. The fee codes for a procedure that is anatomically a similar thing in a man pays less for the procedure on a woman. The procedure on a woman is often a lot more complex, yet there's a lower code for this. This definitely impacts recruitment and retention.

We also have seen that the on-call stipends are often not even paid to physicians working in obstetrics and gynecology. One place where this was very clear was in Red Deer, where there was a group of physicians doing the same call, night call, onerous call, then working the next day. They were not getting the stipend whereas their colleagues in other surgical specialties were. While there has been a little bit of change in that, this needs to be fixed and made fair.

Another area where we're systemically causing challenges for women's health and reproductive health is that the footprint of space allocation within our hospitals is more and more squeezing out gynecology wards. This is having a big impact on wait times and access to care as well as working conditions and, therefore, the idea that someone might want to even go work there. I would say that these are all truly important problems.

Thinking about some of the issues that women face – waiting, for example, for a hysterectomy – endometriosis is not talked about much. This is a condition where the lining of the uterus ends up depositing outside of the uterus. This could be in the vagina. This could be on the fallopian tubes. This could be on the bowel. In a woman this can cause bowel obstructions, can certainly cause urinary dysfunction, and it often causes an enormous amount of menstrual pain because that uterine tissue also cycles and bleeds, perhaps inside the abdomen, and causes pain. We are making these women wait years for diagnosis, years to get the surgery that they need.

How about uterine prolapse? This is a fairly common problem. This is where the uterus actually falls out of the abdomen into the vagina and causes great distress, pain, discomfort, urinary problems. Yet it's on a wait-list and not considered to be important.

I am really hoping that we will truly consider this amendment for reproductive health care and looking after all of the care of reproductive organs. The right to access reproductive health care services does need to be enshrined. The amendments to this bill do bring a contrast to what the government is presenting as the symbolic rights. We need to address the real, practical concerns affecting Albertans every day. Each amendment we're bringing really needs to understand or highlight the threat that these barriers face in our population and the effect that not putting them in there will have on our families rather than only considering amendments or rights of people that might have a special interest. I'm for rights, but include them all.

4:20

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Minister of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 24, the Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024, and to this amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-

McCall and spoken to by the members from Edmonton-Glenora and Calgary-Varsity. One of the things that the Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act introduces is an unequivocal right for Albertans to be free of medically coercive treatments or procedures when it involves those with capacity to make these decisions. The purpose of this particular amendment is to ensure that Albertans are never forced to submit to decisions by government that compel them into medical procedures that they do not want. I support this bill and the bodily autonomy amendments introduced in the bill proper because it makes sense.

We know that the NDP leader, for example, threatened to go door to door and force people to take vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Imagine that. The NDP opposition members support forcing people and subjecting them to medical procedures and treatments against their will and have said that they'd go as far as to knock on Albertans' doors and force them to do this.

We know that the NDP, even as early as today, have criticized this government's decision to protect free speech. They've criticized the right to protest, the right to freedom of expression, and many other rights already valued by Albertans. This amendment before you and before this Assembly is nothing more than typical NDP fearmongering and misinformation.

The jurisprudence in this country has long established the rules around reproductive rights, and this government respects the well-established law in this area. First, women's reproductive rights aren't being threatened or minimized by this bill. As I mentioned before, this bill actually improves the supports around bodily autonomy, where everyone gets to make informed medical decisions for themselves, which is exactly what we're doing here.

I've heard the Member for Edmonton-Glenora speak at great length about promoting a woman's right to make decisions about her body without interference from others, so I'd expect that member to support the bill before this Assembly as it already does exactly what the NDP member spoke at great length about. The Supreme Court of Canada has said:

The right to "liberty" contained in s. 7 guarantees to every individual a degree of personal autonomy over important decisions intimately affecting his or her private life. Liberty in a free and democratic society does not require the state to approve such decisions but it does require the state to respect them.

A woman's decision to decide on major reproductive health decisions falls within this class of protected decisions.

The Member for Calgary-Varsity spoke about abortion at great length. Most of what was said was another attempt to create fear and division rather than focus on the facts and the law. Once again, the jurisprudence in this area is well established and is consistent with our government's position. The Supreme Court said:

A woman's decision to terminate her pregnancy falls within this class of protected decisions. It is one that will have profound psychological, economic and social consequences for her. It is a decision that deeply reflects the way the woman thinks about herself and her relationship to others and to society at large. It is not just a medical decision; it is a profound social and ethical one as well.

Madam Chair, we respect the law in this area, the well-established conventions, and we will continue to support women's decision to make these decisions independent of government intervention and certainly not on the advice of the NDP.

Instead of focusing on fear tactics, the NDP should stop crying wolf and focus on the components of the bill that protect bodily autonomy, informed consent, and the privacy and sanctity of individual health decisions. Supporting women should include supporting section 7 in the bill proper, which affords all Albertans the protection against forced medical procedures.



It is for these reasons that this amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall makes no sense, is nearly 40 years too late, and should be voted down by this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak in Committee of the Whole on Bill 24 and to speak in support of the amendment put forward by my colleague the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. I appreciate him and my colleagues the members for Edmonton-Glenora and Calgary-Varsity for bringing forward their thoughtful suggestions.

I find it deeply disturbing, Madam Chair, that the members on the government's side and particularly a minister of the Crown fundamentally misunderstand the difference between access to, which is what this amendment talks about – it talks about providing access to comprehensive reproductive health care rather than a prohibition that exists in law already that says you cannot prevent a woman from accessing reproductive health care. But, then again, we see a lot of that misunderstanding of the law and the difference between what's already protected by the law and by other laws in this country and what we see in Bill 24.

I stand in support of this amendment because if we're going to talk about health care – my goodness, Madam Chair, we would love it if the government would actually bring forward some thoughtful things on health care. That's why we brought forward this amendment, to at least try to make something meaningful come out of this Bill 24 mess.

Frankly, I don't know who the members on the opposite side have been talking to, but it certainly doesn't seem to be Albertans. I know we've been talking to many, many Albertans, in their constituencies, might I add, Madam Chair, and we know the top priorities of Albertans across this province from corner to corner. They know it. They see the same information we do. They see the same polls. They see the same reports. They get the same e-mails, the same messages. The top priorities of Albertans are health care, health care, health care and cost of living and affordability. Then, if you're a teacher, a parent, or an education worker – trust me – education is up there as well.

Those are the things that people are talking about, Albertans are talking about, but it is not, Madam Chair, what the government is talking about. The government and their top priority going into a time when we are seeing record high unemployment in this province – we're still seeing higher than average inflation in this province. We're still seeing the lowest wage growth in this province compared to anywhere else in the country. At a time when almost 1 million Albertans do not have access to a family doctor, what this government brings forward as their priority is a bill that, frankly, doesn't do much of anything.

Now, that's going to be really awkward for them to say to their base and to the people who the Premier is concerned about as she goes into her leadership review. Let's be honest. That's their priority. That's the Premier's priority. It's her own job, as we've seen. That's why she's brought forward this bill, because she wants to make sure that she can keep her job, not that she can actually take care of Albertans as is her responsibility as the Premier of Alberta.

I actually heard somebody say, Madam Chair – and it rings really true – that the Premier currently believes she's the Premier of her party when she's really supposed to be acting as the Premier of Alberta. She's only thinking about what's going to keep her job in place. So, of course, that's why this is coming forward. I know that there is a vast gap in the rhetoric between what the government and the Premier is saying that these magical changes to the Bill of

Rights will actually do and what their actual legal effect is. Frankly, on the two pieces that I know that have been very, very important to this Premier, on both property rights and the provisions in the proposed bill that talk about firearms, those actually are just restatements of the law. There's actually nothing new there.

**4:30**

So while perhaps the Premier is obsessed with trying to make some sort of priority out of firearms, I can tell you that for the almost 3 million Albertans who live in the two major cities, that is really not a top priority for them at all. In fact, they're concerned about safety. They're concerned about public safety. Again, putting an emphasis on firearms is really an interesting choice when there are so many communities across this province right now who are concerned about public safety.

But, frankly, regardless, Madam Chair, the provision that's put in this Bill of Rights amendment act doesn't change anything about the law around firearms. You still have the right to purchase them, and it has to be done in accordance with the law. Nothing new there. When it comes to property rights, the fact that you can't have your property taken away from you without due process and compensation: that's also already the law. So there's really nothing new here on that either. But I'm sure that's not going to be what the Premier is going to be telling her base. She's going to tell them that she's doing something magical there, but she's not.

Now, let's get to health care because, like I say, we are pretty desperate in this province to have a Premier that's going to talk about health care. Now, frankly, we've never had forced vaccination in this province or in this country, and frankly we should always be concerned. We would all be concerned if there was forced vaccination. Being told that you're not allowed to go to a restaurant of your choice because you didn't get a vaccination is not forced vaccination. And, by the way, the language in here doesn't change that either. Coercion means threat of physical harm or restraint. Being told you can't go to the movies is not actually a threat of physical harm. Trust me, I would also be concerned if we had forced vaccination in this country, but we never have and we never will. If we did, we should all be outraged, but that's not actually what we had in this province.

And speaking of misinformation and fearmongering, as the UCP government ministers have talked about, that's precisely what they're doing. They're saying something that was never true and has never been true. So, frankly, once again, great, although I'll be interested to see, Madam Chair, from a legal perspective, how this is going to interact with the rights of persons, particularly, let's say, those in continuing care homes or those who have vulnerable medical fragility, who have immunocompromises. Those folks will probably have their security of the person challenged by any enforcement of a provision that says no vaccination requirements can be allowed.

Now, I do note, Madam Chair, again – and I think this might be of interest to the base for the Premier and the government on the other side – that, you know, there is the Bill of Rights as it's currently drafted, and of course the way it exists, even before these amendments, it only applies to government actions. So even though they've been telling their base over and over again that they won't have any more vaccine mandates, this Bill of Rights doesn't prevent that because it doesn't apply to private employers. So we know that, in fact, many private employers would still be able to put in a vaccine mandate if they so choose. I wonder if the UCP's base is aware of that slight hiccup in their demands from their Premier.

What I will also add, Madam Chair, is that this is an opportunity for government to show who they are when they demonstrate, when they bring forward government legislation. What they're showing

Albertans is that they don't care about their priorities, because their priorities are all about affordability, health care, jobs, the economy, education. That's what they care about, none of this.

I'd like to actually share a quote that I heard. I was recently in Lethbridge, Madam Chair – I think quite a few people have been lately – and I had an interesting conversation with a senior in a seniors' residence. Trust me, I don't think this guy was typically, you know, necessarily an NDP supporter although certainly, after the conversation we had, I believe he is now. But the quote that he said, which I think is perfectly apt for what this government is doing with this bill and everything they're doing: these people just keep trying to fix things that aren't broken and breaking things that aren't.

That is exactly what we see with this. That is what the focus is from this government, trying to break things that aren't broken, like public education, like public health care. They're certainly being strained from underfunding and undersupport, but they certainly are good systems that Albertans care about deeply and want to see an enforcement in. That's what they care about. But they are trying to fix things that aren't broken. What does this fix, this Bill of Rights? What does it fix? Well, legally speaking, it has very little impact at all, but it certainly is not fixing any of the things that they care about.

Now I want to talk about health care, Madam Chair, because that's actually what Albertans in my constituency and around this province care about deeply. I feel like I have to share the story that – it actually made the news. I'm going to share the story of one of my constituents who passed away just earlier this summer, Steve Wong, and his wife, CiCi Nguyen. I'm actually meeting with her this week. She was pretty open about the failures of the health care system to support her husband. Her husband was 41 years old and diagnosed with cancer. Three young children – three young boys, actually; a set of twins and an older boy – and he was diagnosed with cancer. In the over three months that he lived, from his diagnosis to the day he died, he never saw a cancer doctor. He never saw a cancer doctor because they just didn't get around to it because there was no doctor available in the time that he had left to live.

What she said – I want to quote CiCi because I want to use her words. She said: "I feel frustrated, angry that a system that I thought was supposed to save us is letting him fall through the cracks. I just don't understand why a cancer patient is not assigned a cancer doctor, right?" She said: "Everyone has been very kind. I'm not mad at the health care professionals themselves but the system. We understand it's not cured or curable, but we want him to have a fighting chance to have time with his three kids. We're facts kind of people. I see the facts and Steve sees them, and we understand, but there's always a presence of hope, especially when you're dealing with somebody you love. It's just hard-wired into your brain that you can't lose them."

Steve Wong passed away without ever seeing a cancer doctor. That should be what this government is focused on. You know, and part of the discussion, Madam Chair, is that this is not a secret to the members on the other side. This is not a secret to the Minister of Health. It's not a secret to the Premier that there are profound challenges in our health care system. In fact, a report that was presented to Alberta Health Services from Cancer Care Alberta shows that that gap between the time when there's a cancer referral and cancer treatment in the province continues to grow. It said that waits for oncology and treatment have surged over the past seven years while the number of new cancer patients has also increased.

The report, Madam Chair, speaks to four factors that have affected Alberta's capacity for cancer treatment: complexity of chronic care, workforce and manpower resources, capital infrastructure, and equipment. Let's go to that workforce and

capital infrastructure, because this is a government that cancelled the south Edmonton hospital. This is a government that has gone almost a year without signing an agreement with family doctors. Meanwhile a million Albertans do not have access to a family doctor. Who knows what the holdup is in signing that? Meanwhile doctors are moving. They're closing up shop, they're retiring, they're reducing their hours, and they're moving to other provinces.

Earlier this year myself and many of my colleagues met with medical students from the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary, many of whom were thinking about going into family medicine, and they all said that they didn't want to practise family medicine here in Alberta. So this should be a priority – this should be a priority – signing a deal, finding out why we can't get more care for cancer patients, making sure that we treat people with some decency. Even if they know that their prognosis is dire, they deserve to have access to cancer care.

Let's talk a little bit about another priority, Madam Chair, for Albertans, affordability. I recently visited Edmonton's Food Bank. I did a volunteer shift there, and the CEO, the executive director of Edmonton's Food Bank, said that what's astonishing is the number of Edmontonians who are coming to the food bank where two adults in the household have jobs.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. I just want to remind you that we're on the amendment.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** If you could speak to the amendment. Thank you.

**Ms Pancholi:** Yes. This amendment is about health care, and I'm trying to highlight the actual priorities that Albertans have, and this is something they care about. They care about affordability. They care about access to health care, and of course this provision, this amendment, is about access to reproductive health care.

Also, let's talk about the fact that in Lethbridge – how many Lethbridgians, as I learned they're called, don't have access to an ob-gyn, have to travel two hours to go to see a gynecologist, to see an OB. As well, Madam Chair, while I was in Lethbridge, every single Lethbridgian that I talked to told me that their family doctor wasn't actually in Lethbridge, that they had to travel and do virtual care. That's why this amendment is an effort to try to bring back this government to focus on priorities of Albertans.

But I do want to talk a little bit more about affordability because that's what Albertans want their government and their elected officials to be talking about. They want to talk about the fact that even in my constituency, Madam Chair – and I will acknowledge that my constituency tends to be a little bit higher income overall, not that there are not huge pockets of need in my constituency. More and more I hear people who are saying: "You know what? I grew up in this province. I've been here most of my life. I'm raising my kids here, and this is the first time I've actually worried that my kids won't be able to buy a house, something I never thought I would expect in a province that's known to be as wealthy and as opportunity driven." When I tell them that my kids are still in elementary school, those Albertans, my constituents, tell me: "Good luck to you. Good luck to you with your children, because I don't know if they're ever going to be able to afford something in this province to buy."

**4:40**

Madam Chair, while we're talking more about priorities – because that's what this amendment is about. It's about the priorities of Albertans. We're trying to take something that doesn't address anything that Albertans care about and trying to find a way

to make it relevant to them. That's what this amendment is about. It's about saying: let's make sure we have better access to things; let's make sure that we have better access to education, to EAs.

You know, once again, Madam Chair, I also was in Lethbridge, and I got to talk to a principal there, and this is directly related to access to health care. He was telling me about – actually, sorry. It was a teacher who was telling me that she teaches grades 1 and 2, and out of her 24 students in her grade 1-2 class, for nine of them she submitted a full form to get occupational therapists. It takes two hours to fill out a form to get a request for an OT. She submitted that . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt again, but to follow up on my last caution to your remarks on the amendment, which you are to be speaking to and are not, I just remind you to come back again, or perhaps it's time to go to the next speaker.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I said, I fully support this amendment to expand access to reproductive health care because expanding access to things is very important. Expanding access to all kinds of health care is very important, including things like occupational therapists and SLPs and all the other kinds of health care that Albertans need. This is an attempt to try to show that the government should be focused on providing greater access to care, not restricting it.

The bill is clearly focused on trying to find ways to restrict people's care and the quality of their care. For example, Madam Chair, when they're talking about withholding – you know, being able to say that nobody can be required to take a vaccine, which, by the way, again, I'll go back to the fact that nobody in Alberta has ever been forced to take a vaccine. But if we were to acknowledge that that actually has an impact on people's health and it puts a greater strain on our health care system when we have more people out there who are – actually, we're seeing the re-emergence of certain health care issues such as measles. I think we had one of our first measles cases in a long time here in Alberta. When we say things about preventing access to things like vaccines, we're actually restricting access to health care.

This amendment is actually telling Albertans that the priorities of the opposition on this side of the House, Madam Chair, is to expand access to health care. We want to talk about health care, real health care, making sure that people can have a doctor, can get contraception, can get access to abortions, do all those. Instead, this government is focused on what they won't let Albertans do. They actually won't let – we're anticipating that another one of their priorities is actually interfering in people's rights by saying that a parent and a child cannot make decisions about a child's medical treatment with their own doctor. We want to expand choice. That's what this is about. And if members on the other side were actually serious about actually protecting choice, they would do the same thing. They would actually support the idea of this amendment saying "the right of the individual to access comprehensive reproductive healthcare" is a good thing.

In fact, it's quite troubling, Madam Chair, to hear the minister for the status of women argue against access to comprehensive reproductive health care. Really shocking. But I guess it's not that shocking because we know these are things that would make a difference in Albertans' lives, and that is not what this government is focused on. They are focused on bringing forward a bill that does nothing to actually help the people in Lethbridge, in Edmonton, in Calgary, and all the communities that all of our MLAs represent, who care about affordability, who care about health care. That is not what this bill is focused on. We continue to see that this

government's priorities are completely out of whack with Albertans.

So I thank the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall for bringing forward an amendment that would at least make some difference in improving access to Albertans' health care. I encourage all members of the Assembly to take a moment, try to make something good or useful come out of this bill, because, frankly, the rest of it is pretty useless, have a chance to do something a little bit productive in your first week back in the legislative session, representing all of our constituents. You have an opportunity to actually make a difference. I encourage the members on all sides of the Assembly, but particularly on the government side, to do something out of the ordinary for them and for once try to make a positive impact on Albertans' lives.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join this debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Edgemont.

**Ms Hayter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall for this much-needed amendment to Bill 24, "the right of the individual to access comprehensive reproductive healthcare." I'm sure it's not going to be a surprise to the people here that, you know, this is something near and dear to my heart that I like to talk about. I appreciate, actually, the conversation that you guys have said that we go door to door. It wasn't to, you know, tell people to take their vaccinations or their flu shots, but it was to actually go and listen to what Albertans want. It was to go and hear from Albertans and talk to them and listen to their concerns. One of their concerns I actually do hear at the doors is that Alberta women need to have the right to access reproductive health care. This amendment would ease concerns of Alberta women who are worried about this government infringing on their rights.

Earlier this afternoon I spoke about Women's History Month. I am grateful for Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams, who became the first women elected to provincial office. They helped to win equality rights for all of us, and they blazed a trail for a generation of strong Alberta women, for all of us. I wonder what they would be thinking, though, if they were sitting here right now in the Chamber in these seats, wondering what was going on.

Recently I sat down with Netflix. I had a bit of a break. I was watching a movie called *Call Jane*. It's about a suburban housewife in the 1960s who's dealing with a life-threatening pregnancy and subsequently joins the Jane Collective. It's an underground network of abortion activists. The Jane Collective was an actual organization in the U.S.A., and at the end of the movie, in 1973, they disbanded their efforts as they were redundant as the Supreme Court made this decision in *Roe versus Wade*. The year stands out for me as I was born in 1974. So, give or take a few years, it was 50 years ago that women in the United States finally had access to legal abortion.

It's embarrassing to kind of say that in Canada it did take us a bit longer to get there. On January 28, 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down Canada's abortion law as unconstitutional. The law was found to violate section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it infringed upon a woman's right for life, liberty, and security of person. Canada became one of the small number of countries without a law restricting abortion. Abortion is now treated like any other medical procedure and is governed by the province and done by your medical regulations. I know that we are all watching what is happening in the United States, and we see the UCP government operating in a similar manner. There are moments when I know people wonder: which one of our rights is going to be attacked next?

I appreciate all of the women who have served in this room and worked so hard to gain so many rights for us and all the current rights that we have. I know right now that all of us here are ready to stand for Albertans to have all of our rights.

Yesterday the MLA for Grande Prairie got up and said, you know, “We also have the responsibility to push back against policies that undermine western values, Albertan values.” Yeah. I a hundred per cent agree with this sentiment. We need to push back. I know I will. I know my colleagues will. We will push back. We will support the amendment for rights to access reproductive health care. The member continued to say that “values are built on the very foundation of what we are talking about today in the Bill of Rights . . . freedom, particularly . . . is very important concerning health care. I firmly believe that the government should not be dictating the personal [health] decisions we make.” Again, I completely agree: Albertans should have the choice for their personal health care decisions and access to it.

At the beginning of the month Canadian women saw the federal pharmacare plan become reality. Women and gender-diverse folks across Canada will now have access to contraception when they need it, except here in Alberta. Rural women, urban women, all the women in Alberta do not have access to this essential, smart plan. Seventy-four per cent of Albertans support universal contraception. Yet the government continues to tell women to rely on private insurance that they don’t have.

We are currently in an affordability crisis. Madam Chair, we’re having to choose where we spend our funds. Do we buy groceries? Do we pay our bills? Do we pay our rent? Or do we purchase needed universal prescription contraception? During this affordability crisis some women can’t even afford to have a child. This is concerning. Kids are really expensive. I think every single person, you know, in this Chamber can agree: our kids are expensive.

4:50

Many women’s wages are not living wages when we look at typical women’s roles. A lot of jobs by women are caring jobs. They are not valued. They are not paid well. It’s making it even harder within this affordability crisis. When I meet with shelters and hear, you know, the wages of the workers and when I talk with EAs, they just want to be valued and they just want a living wage so that they can afford the groceries, the rent, and the universal prescription contraception because the Alberta government is refusing the pharmacare plan.

Busy moms, busy women, we don’t have two hours to drive to Calgary to access reproductive health care. Also, I can’t imagine – I did the drive to Lethbridge. I can’t imagine doing that while I was in labour, and I don’t think anybody in here would want to drive with a woman in labour for two hours.

I have women’s stakeholders reaching out to me and asking in meetings: do you think the UCP government will roll back our reproductive health care? I’m always at a loss for words as I don’t know. By accepting this amendment, the government could show Albertan women that we have no cause to worry during these uncertain times.

The Alberta NDP believes that reproductive health care is a fundamental right and must be protected by law, ensuring that all Albertans can access the health care they need. I truly hope that when, you know, it is called for a vote, every single member rises in support of this amendment and in support of reproductive health care for all women and all people in Alberta.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate on amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise in support of the amendment. I want to highlight why I am in support of this amendment as presented thanks to the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. Bill 24 states that individuals with capacity cannot be forced or coerced into receiving medical care. Section 4(i) indicates that includes vaccines. I wanted to stop on this point because the importance of health promotion and public health in the context of vaccination is so critical.

[Mr. Sinclair in the chair]

Alberta has never had mandatory vaccinations. In fact, in 2021 this same government amended the health laws to ensure that there are no mandatory vaccinations in this province. The question is: why do we need to table this bill as new legislation? Is it something that we need to address now?

When I say that, what it means is: where do our priorities lie? All elected officials here: we do represent Albertans in different parts of the province. Last night I was in my riding with 165 residents, and we were discussing priorities and what things are at the top of their minds. Earlier in the month I was in a room of 400 people in Brooks, represented in this House by the Premier. I was in Lethbridge, and I have been engaging people there.

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

The consensus that I’m hearing from people is that they are worried about the rise in unemployment. This province has the highest unemployment rate outside of the Maritimes. They’re worried about the rising prices of electricity. They are worried about the rising prices of their groceries. They’re really concerned about the rising cost of their insurance. They’re concerned about growing class sizes. They’re concerned about the growing number of frustrated health workers that they have to go and seek services from. They really are worried about the growing wait-list for services, whether it is housing, whether it is new Canadians who are seeking English as a second language, all other social infrastructure that this province offers to its citizens. We are supposed to be discussing that. We should be seated here and having a conversation about the day-to-day implications that Albertans face.

Madam Chair, Bill 24 speaks to vaccines, and I wanted to highlight my lived experience of that. I was born in a country where vaccination was very, very low. Many of those who were born the same year that I was born were not able to celebrate their first birthday. Mothers died because of lack of reproductive health care. So those are some very important aspects for me.

I will draw to your attention that Canada is a country that prides itself on health promotion. In fact, the international Charter for Health Promotion was enacted in Ottawa. Canadian public health workers pride themselves that they hosted the only charter that exists when it comes to health promotion. I want to draw your attention to how, apart from the Charter rights, the health promotion charter speaks to the issues that are being talked about when it comes to individual freedom around vaccination. The health promotion charter draws on explicit values, and it states that individuals are treated with dignity and that their innate self-worth, intelligence, and capacity of choice are respected. This is within our systems. It is nothing that is new, that needs new legislation to be put in place.

In the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion individual liberties are respected, but priority is given to the common good when conflict arises. Participation is supported in policy decision-making. I am drawing this to your attention because we are seeing a trend. Despite having a long-standing reputation for robust immunization programs, the national uptake for a routine vaccine

such as the MMR vaccine has fallen below critical thresholds for herd immunity nowadays.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. I just want to remind you that we're on amendment A2.

**Mr. Haji:** I'm going to tie it to the amendment.

**The Chair:** Perfect. I can't wait.

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you. Bill 24 speaks about vaccines, and I want to draw to your attention why it is important that we enact this amendment to address that.

**Mr. Getson:** What's the amendment?

**Mr. Haji:** Just listen. Just pay attention. In 2022 the national coverage for two doses of the MMR vaccine for two-year-olds was just 89 per cent in Canada, short of the 95 per cent target needed to prevent outbreaks. Bill 24 doesn't promote that, doesn't bring something to improve keeping the herd immunity and improving that. Therefore, that's why amendments around reproductive health – and if you talk about reproductive health, it includes under five. Immunization is part of reproductive health. It's called maternal and child health, so you cannot separate the two. It's inseparable. For that reason, that is why I am bringing attention to the value and the importance of vaccination, which this bill is going to discourage.

5:00

The gaps of herd immunization and where we are today are even more pronounced in certain provinces where among socioeconomically vulnerable populations, they are affected by . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, and I really appreciate your creativity in trying to be relevant to the amendment, that has something to do with comprehensive reproductive health care. Your remarks are surely fantastic for other portions of this debate, but right now can you speak to the amendment?

**Mr. Haji:** Well, Madam Chair, the amendment speaks to reproductive health, and if you go to reproductive health, it's the maternal and child health system which are interlinked. Therefore, I am supporting this amendment because proper reproductive health will increase the interaction between women and the health care system, which is linked to child mortality and child immunization. That's why I am bringing back the importance and the value of addressing the issue of misinformation, addressing the issue of antivaccines, and addressing the issue of vaccine uptake. Alberta has historically faced challenges when it comes to lower vaccination coverage compared to other provinces.

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

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

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Schow:** Madam Chair, you have given several warnings to members of the opposition. I don't know why it's so difficult to give a speech on the amendment in this Chamber. It's literally what you get paid to do. Like, it's what we are elected to do . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, please speak through the chair.

**Mr. Schow:** . . . and I ask that you would stay on topic.

**The Chair:** The hon. deputy House leader.

**Mr. Sabir:** Madam Chair, I find the tone and content of the Government House Leader's point of order very disrespectful. It's way over the top. He didn't cite any provision. He could have cited anything from the content of the member's speech, if the member was listening, that this is how this is offside of some provision of the standing orders.

I was listening to the member's speech. The essence of this amendment is about access to health care, and I think the member should have this much latitude to talk about the broader context of why access is important; in this particular case why it's important.

Again, it's not a point of order. It was just straight disrespect thrown at my colleague from that side.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, there's amendment A2 here before us that specifically addresses comprehensive reproductive health care, which has been loosely applied to a number of speeches in this committee here this afternoon. I've given great latitude to many members to speak to the things that they want to speak to in relation to this amendment. We're at this point where perhaps it's time to dispose of the amendment so we can more broadly speak to the bill and have these conversations. But right now I will say that we are on amendment A2.

Hon. member, your remarks are quite a stretch. I'm having a hard time finding them to be relevant to this particular amendment. This will be your third warning. Perhaps if we can't speak to this amendment, we'll move to the next speaker or dispose of this and come back to the main bill. Right now, hon. member, you have the floor.

Sorry. Actually, one more thing. The hon. Government House Leader was not speaking through the chair and will do so next time instead of directly to members.

**Mr. Schow:** I apologize to the chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, you have the floor.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Haji:** Well, we can debate on what is comprehensive reproductive health.

Madam Chair, I did study public health with the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta. I did work in the field. And when it comes to comprehensive reproductive health care, I cannot separate immunization and vaccination from comprehensive reproductive health. Therefore, I conclude that we do prioritize boosting proper vaccination uptake, countering misinformation, improving access to reproductive health, and protecting the health and well-being of citizens.

Therefore, I support the amendment. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A2.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:07 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Arcand-Paul	Goehring	Renaud
Brar	Haji	Sabir
Ceci	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Chapman	Kasawski	Sweet
Dach	Metz	Tejada
Eremenko	Pancholi	

5:10

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For – 17 Against – 46

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Now the time we've all been waiting for, the debate on Bill 24 in Committee of the Whole with no amendments. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my honour to rise in this Chamber and speak to Bill 24, Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024. Yeah. Here we go. This government has proposed the Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, which, as some of my colleagues have said, I'm sure you will recall, appears to be nothing but virtue signalling ahead of the Premier's leadership review. I think we've all had a front-row seat to some of that work, and it has been alarming at best. This piece of legislation falls right in line.

I think I've heard my colleagues say this a number of times far more eloquently than I probably will, but we do know that Albertans are struggling with inflation. They're struggling with the cost of living, and they're really struggling, primarily struggling, with access to appropriate health care and education. The UCP continues to focus on antivaccine positions instead of actually focusing on what Albertans need.

I don't know, Madam Chair. I don't know about the government members; I don't know how they spend their time away from this House, what kinds of things they do to engage with their constituents. I know we all get e-mail, we all get phone calls. I don't know if the government members actually spend time going door to door, going to community events and asking: "What do you think? What is it that you need? In a perfect world what kind of legislation would you like to see? What would make your life better?" Those are some of the questions that we ask regularly. And I promise you that not once on any doorstep, in any of the thousands and thousands of e-mails that I receive, or the phone calls that we get, or the people that we get dropping by, have we ever heard that we need a Bill of Rights right now because we need to protect these

freedoms. That is not something that the constituents in St. Albert are telling me.

What they are telling me, Madam Chair, and what you heard earlier from my colleagues, is that they are desperate for health care, whether it is, you know, getting a horrific cancer diagnosis and then needing to get in quickly to see an oncologist to start to arrange treatment, or God forbid that time has passed and they need to find palliative care or some kind of respite. These are the kinds of things people are struggling with. People are struggling with delays in surgeries because they can't afford to fly somewhere and get it. They're struggling when something like a knee replacement or a hip replacement – although it doesn't sound like a big deal, when these things are pushed back even a month, we're causing all kinds of problems.

People are having to use pain management, and I'm sure most people in this House know that pain management often includes opioids or different medications that are so difficult on our bodies. These are the kinds of things that we're hearing from constituents. They're not talking about "We want to make sure that vaccines aren't mandatory" when we already know that the government of Alberta does not make vaccines mandatory.

Anyway, we know we've got some significant problems in this province, and the things that this Bill of Rights is addressing are certainly not that. You know, let's not pretend. It doesn't matter where you sit in this Chamber; everybody is pretty clear. This is an exercise in partisan politics.

Our province currently has the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada, yet jobs aren't being prioritized. Instead we have the Premier's leadership review. Our health care system is crumbling. It is crumbling. I don't know if any of you have spent any time in emerg or trying to get an X-ray or an MRI or know somebody that's had surgery bumped back, but it is crumbling. The doctors are telling you: it is crumbling. Nurses are telling you . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Can you please speak through the chair?

**Ms Renaud:** Yes, Madam Chair.

Through you: it's crumbling. Our education system requires immediate attention but remains neglected under this current leadership. Completely, this piece of legislation is truly disconnected from the real needs of Albertans.

Now I'll go over some of the change that this amendment to the Alberta Bill of Rights includes. What is sort of interesting is what wasn't included or what was left out, and I think we've already started to get a bit of an understanding of what we think was left out of this legislation. We know that the government members have summarily voted down the amendments because, as usual, they believe they have all the answers to everything, to every question, and they seem to feel like they know exactly what Albertans want, but they're sorely mistaken.

This piece of legislation amends the Alberta Bill of Rights to include the right to make one's own choices over vaccinations and all medical decisions. Well, I think my colleagues have already covered this, why this is really redundant and not necessary other than, you know, to increase the vote total, I guess, for the Premier's leadership review, Madam Chair. All medical decisions outside of vaccinations are subject to the capacity of an individual to make decisions. The right to not be deprived of one's property without due legal process and just compensation: fair enough. The right to legally acquire, keep, and safely use firearms: not even going to touch that. The right to freedom of expression, the importance of family, and the importance of individual freedom even in times of emergencies: now, this is all well and good.

But there are some serious – serious – rights that Albertans have, Madam Chair, and I'm sure you'll know this, that are not enshrined and not protected, one of which is the right to access a barrier-free Alberta, the right to access. Now, the Minister of Municipal Affairs seems to think accessibility legislation is about building codes or building standards or safety codes, as he mentioned earlier, or a design guide. Yeah. That's a teeny, little, minuscule piece of legislation.

But what is not enshrined in the Bill of Rights is that every Albertan, regardless of their ability to navigate, their ability to understand the world, see it, hear it, has the right to have access to all things Alberta. We can't even guarantee them barrier-free access to this place, to this place where we make laws, but you know it's more important to protect people from vaccines that are not mandatory instead of actually looking at some of the work that we should be doing.

Again, this is a government not really focused on the needs of Albertans, Madam Chair. They're focused on their own personal political needs, and that has become crystal clear. If it wasn't clear last year and the year before and the year before and the year before, it's very clear right now.

Let's see. I want to sort of fast-forward a little bit to some of the medical rights. The bill adds the following two rights relating to health care. The first is

the right of the individual with capacity not to be subjected to, or coerced into receiving, medical care, medical treatment or a medical procedure without the consent of that individual, unless that individual is likely to cause substantial harm to that individual or to others.

Well, you know, that says a lot. In this province we have a very real history of subjecting people to medical practices or medical treatment without their consent, particularly if they happen to be disabled.

5:20

So we have a very long history. I'm sure people that are old enough will remember way back I think it was around Ralph Klein time when it came to light. Actually, there's probably still more coming to light, but it came to light at that time that there was mass sterilization of people with disabilities, very often people who were not dependent adults but were, indeed, independent adults at the time that they were warehoused in Michener Centre. So they were placed in an institution like Michener Centre – and, sadly, that is not the only institution in this province – and perhaps they had an appendix burst or something, Madam Chair. I'm sure you remember this story. But maybe their appendix burst. They went in for surgery, and boom: they no longer had a uterus. That happened.

So we do have a history of doing that, but we do not have a history of vaccinating people that don't want to be vaccinated. Again, this is a government stirring up fears and false fears, really fearmongering. They like to accuse us of fearmongering, but I think that's really just projection.

So we do have a history – a long history – of that, but again, this government wants to bring in legislation that does very little except to sort of motivate their base, perhaps. Because, again, what we hear about day in, day out, Madam Chair – I'm sure you know. I'm sure your constituents let you know that their priorities for themselves and their families are absolutely not to protect themselves from future vaccination, nor is it to do the other things that this bill suggests that need to be done. Instead, what they are solely focused on is their family, their well-being, their community, and their needs, and what their needs are is an accessible health care system that is there for them when they need it.

My colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud shared just a tragic story about a young man with, I think, three children, she said, who had a cancer diagnosis, and then three months later he died without actually seeing a doctor. That should never happen in this country. That should never happen in this province, yet it is. We have seniors, we have young people waiting for surgeries that have been put off and put off and put off.

You know, before I actually experienced sort of first-hand in the health care system – I didn't really understand what it was like or what was actually happening, but this summer I did have an opportunity to see things a little bit up close. What I was hearing around me were staff talking, and they were talking about: "Yeah; we just had to go and call and cancel these procedures, and I don't know when they're going to be rebooked." "Oh, why is that?" The one person said, "Well, we had to send some staff because they're short staff for surgeries at the U of A or the Alex, so we have to change things here." This is actually happening, Madam Chair. Surgeries are actually being cancelled and postponed because they're having to move staff around and cancel things because there is insufficient staff.

We know this. People are waiting far too long for surgeries, far too long for treatments, and they can't even find a family doctor. But, hey, let's spend hours and hours discussing and debating a bill that really nobody wants except for partisans over here going into an AGM. Madam Chair, I'm sure you realize that. No need to tell you that, so let's move on.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear.

**Ms Renaud:** You're welcome.

We believe that this creates a bit of a two-tiered approach to medical rights. So the first, around general medical treatment: it establishes the right to consent to or refuse medical treatment for individuals with decision-making capacity, protects against coercion to receive medical treatment, and includes an exemption allowing intervention if someone poses substantial harm to themselves or others. I know I'm going to be followed by a member who actually will have quite a bit to say about this, so I'm going to focus somewhere else.

You know, it is really something that we're seeing legislation like this that talks about coercion around medical treatment in 2024, and it's really only because the Premier is going into her AGM and doesn't want to lose and wants to keep her job, and so this partisan piece of legislation is here to stir up the base and whoever else needs to be stirred up. But, really, this medical coercion or medical rights: this is something that we could have talked about a very, very long time ago.

I'll go back to something that I'm quite familiar with, that people with disabilities, doesn't matter the kind of disability – and I'm not talking about people with a private or public guardian. I'm talking about people that are independent adults that are regularly subjected to – I don't want to say coercion, but pressure to do things that they don't want to do. Whether that is medication, whether that is a placement, whether that is birth control, whether that is hysterectomy, whether that is sterilization, these things are happening because we don't have appropriate access and we don't have appropriate protections.

We don't have a history of mandatory vaccination, but we do have a history of mandatory medical treatments for people with disabilities, whether that is sterilization, whether that sometimes is medical castration. Sometimes it is the abuse of medication, whether that is to calm people or to restrict behaviours. These things are happening all the time, but these are not things we talk about. This government didn't consult widely; they consulted with their

base. We would not have such a narrow piece of legislation had they actually done their job and consulted widely with Albertans.

If we were going to go to the effort to change the Bill of Rights here in Alberta or to enshrine other rights, I think we could have gone a lot farther. But it is clear, Madam Chair, that that is not the intent of this piece of legislation. The intent of this piece of legislation, as I said, is to stir up the base, and going into a leadership review, this Premier doesn't want to lose her job, so that's why we have this. It is sad. It is cynical. It is sad that we are using such precious legislative time. We don't have that much. We have fewer and fewer sitting days all the time. Seems to be a government that doesn't like to spend much time here, this government with this small legislative agenda and window.

When I think about the enormous needs that Albertans continue to tell us about, in terms of needing a better job – they are underemployed. They are unemployed. Their classrooms are bursting at the seams. They don't have EAs. They'll sometimes have a class of 30 children, and maybe five of those have complex needs and they don't have an EA or they have one EA. But you know what? This government doesn't count class sizes anymore, so we can't talk about that.

We are hearing from our people every day and your people, too, that what they need is improved access to health care, Madam Chair. That's exactly what they're looking for. So if we're going to amend the Alberta Bill of Rights, I would suggest that we talk to Albertans about what the rights are that you want us to amend, that you want us to look at, that you want us to strengthen, not just look at one side. We're looking at a partisan base for this government. We are not looking at all Albertans, because if we canvassed all Albertans, I'm pretty sure that this would not be their top priority. Once again, this piece of legislation is an example of a government that is so completely out of touch with Albertans that they are failing to hear what it is they want amended in their Bill of Rights. It's not this. It is not this.

We had two very good amendments that were killed earlier today, and those amendments were done thoughtfully because we want to find a way to actually enshrine some of the rights that we hear from our constituents that they want enshrined and protected, and I'll tell you: access to the services that we talked about is important. They were summarily voted down because somehow this government thinks that preventing mandatory vaccination, that doesn't actually happen, is more important than enshrining the rights or further protecting the rights that Albertans actually want protected.

We know what their top priorities are. We're very, very clear about that, and I would venture, I guess, Madam Chair, to say that the people opposite and yourself are actually very aware as well. That is health care, that is education, that is a good job, and that is affordability. Those are the priorities. It's not about mandatory vaccination, not at all. I'm not even going to talk about the guns.

That is not what the majority of Albertans are focused on, and it's incredibly cynical that this government is so out of touch and believes they have all the answers that this is the piece of legislation that we're debating here. When I think about all of the difficulty facing Albertans, that this is the piece of legislation that we're spending hours debating – could you give me a time check, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Two minutes, 20 seconds.

**Ms Renaud:** Two minutes, 20 seconds. Okay. Well, I will wrap up right away, I'm sure to your pleasure.

Let me talk a little . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. It's very improper to bring the chair into your debate. It's not the first time in your remarks.

**Ms Renaud:** I will not do that.

5:30

We know that in terms of the implementation and scope of this piece of legislation, in terms of expanded jurisdiction this bill's authority will extend to all government actions at provincial and municipal levels, public institutions performing government functions, including hospitals, universities, school boards, and other entities performing government activities.

What is very interesting to me, Madam Chair, is that we are going through all of the trouble to amend the Bill of Rights and address all of these areas that are actually the precise areas that a piece of accessibility legislation would address. Right now we are one of the last provinces, as I said earlier, to have accessibility legislation. I'm not talking about a design guide or a building code or safety standards. I'm talking about legislation that would cover all of the areas that this particular piece of legislation will cover.

So why is it that we can legislate this piece of legislation, the stuff that's in here, but we have to still wait for 1.3 million disabled Albertans to have a piece of accessibility legislation that will guarantee their right to access to all of the places that are covered in this legislation: government access, public institutions, hospitals, universities, all of those things, even this place. But, no, we're going to focus on things that are partisan so that this Premier can get some votes and have a job after her review. It's incredibly sad that this is where we are here in Alberta in 2024.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a privilege to be able to stand in this House today to speak in favour of Bill 24, the Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024. Today I've listened as some of the members opposite have spoken, and actually I'm glad that they were able to get up. I appreciated that. I didn't see them get up yesterday. I imagine that they probably saw that maybe this isn't one of those things that they should just be quiet on and they should actually get up and get their side of the story on. I appreciate that. That's what this is about, the debate.

But I will say, Madam Chair, I was concerned by a few things. First of all, there's a couple of words that were dropped that I thought were interesting. The member that just spoke, from St. Albert, said that this is all about virtue signalling. I believe that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud used the word "useless" in regard to this, what we're doing here. I think even the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, as I listened to her, said that it really doesn't matter.

So, Madam Chair, what I'd like to do now is I'd like to talk about why I believe that it does matter. I have a tie that was given to me by the Montreal Economic Institute when I was red tape reduction minister. When I first took a look at the tie, I was like: I just wonder who that is. I didn't know who was on the tie. But the guy's name was Frédéric Bastiat, and he was someone who really thought it was important to talk about these issues. He wrote a book called *The Law* in the late 1800s. In this book he really kind of debated the issues that a bill like a bill of rights talks about.

You know, Madam Chair, there have been discussions. People have bled for the Bill of Rights, for bills of rights. People have fought to be able to gain their rights. On my wall in my office – in 2015 we celebrated 800 years for the Magna Carta, which was in



1215. That was also an expression by people to be able to provide clarity on how they felt, that there was a right that individuals should have. We have seen in history over many years how individuals have recognized more need for more rights. As society, as communities grow and develop, we have to sometimes take and reassess what those are, and I believe that this was the intent of the Bill of Rights.

There was a, hopefully, once-in-a-lifetime pandemic that happened, and it went across the world, and it affected so many people. There are legislators all over the world that actually are now saying: well, what kind of bill of rights do we need? They have tried to define it. They've tried to understand it, and this is the reason why this was brought forward.

For the members to be so, in my opinion, crass and insensitive to not just the people who actually felt that it was needed to bring this forward but for the hundreds and thousands of years that we have had people who have fought, actually, for and bled for these rights, these individual rights, I think it's completely insensitive.

I don't know whether the members opposite thought about it. I get that they get their talking points and they present based upon those, but I would hope that not just us on this side but all members in this Chamber believe in the importance of the Bill of Rights and that these are – as it says in the preamble, Madam Chair:

Whereas the free and democratic society existing in Alberta is founded on principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God and the rule of law and on principles, fostered by tradition, that honour and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, the dignity and worth of the human person and the position of the family in a society of free people and free institutions.

I actually was thinking about this preamble. I was thinking about something that I've been thinking a lot about, tradition and about fostering tradition and how societies are built on traditions. Traditions actually provide stability in society. I know that there are ebbs and flows in traditions. We don't do the same thing we did hundreds of years ago as societies grow and progress, but traditions also provide that stability, and every society has them. I believe that the traditions that we can be proud of are those rights that were enumerated in the Charter of Rights, the Bill of Rights, and in the Magna Carta and in essays by people like Frédéric Bastiat when he wrote *The Law*. I applaud the writers of this bill in their thoughtful expression of how they wanted to make sure that we had those things really properly enumerated in this.

Now I want to talk a little bit about what happened when the Magna Carta was drafted. It's interesting because when you take a look at the history of that time, at the time King John of England needed taxes. He was in a war with the King of France, for those who remember their history, and he needed to raise taxes. So he raised the taxes without, really, the consent of the people.

**An Hon. Member:** Kind of like a carbon tax.

**Mr. Hunter:** Kind of like a carbon tax, I guess, but we won't go down that rabbit hole.

Now, as the tensions grew with the King of England, the French began to reclaim the territories. They had to figure out how to be able to put this to bed because they couldn't fight within and still be able to fight against the French as well. So a group of barons came together and offered something to the king, King John. That was the Magna Carta.

5:40

That Magna Carta represented what I would say is a start. I know it wasn't the start, but it was a start in terms of western societies being able to actually see and understand what individual rights were. I know that they didn't clearly articulate the kinds of rights

we have today, but that is what happens through the evolution of these types of things. As you come up with a better idea, you try to put it down on paper and then, you know, hopefully, if people are interested in it, that's where it goes. At the time this was revolutionary, this document. I enjoy reading. You know, my forefathers came from Scotland and Ireland, in those areas, and this was a part of what they did to try to be able to actually create those individual rights.

So I don't think we should take it lightly. I don't think we should say that it is virtue signalling or useless or that it really doesn't matter, because it does; it matters to many people. In fact, the reason why we can probably sit here rather than having some king or queen tell us what we should do or shouldn't do is because of those democracies, of those rights that we have to run for office and to represent our people.

The Magna Carta: the translation really is the Great Charter. It was a pivotal moment for democracy, in my opinion. It established that everyone in England was subject to the law, including the highest in nobility. It guaranteed the right to a fair trial, the right to legal protection, and the rights of individuals when accused of a crime. It is a reminder that innumerable rights have been of paramount importance for well over 800 years. This is a very significant piece. The Great Charter is a very important piece, I would believe, and I still believe that it is. It is the start of something that I think really grew from there, where people actually said: "You know what? That is right. We do have those rights."

I want to read just a quick little section of this, of the Magna Carta, or as I said, the Great Charter. It says, "To any man whom we have deprived or dispossessed of lands, castles, liberties, or rights, without the lawful judgment of his equals, we will at once restore these." As you know, this is something that we tried to really get right in the Bill of Rights. It is to make sure that when individuals have land taken away from them, it is compensated and it is done through the rule of law. I think that was important. As you probably remember, Madam Chair, because I think you were elected the same year as I was . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but as I said to someone before, it's very improper to bring the chair into your debate.

**Mr. Hunter:** Well said. Well said.

As a member in this House would remember, back in 2015 this was an important issue. In fact, I would say that it was one of the reasons why it took down a government, because they did not understand the importance of making sure that land rights and the rights of property were taken seriously by the government of the day. Madam Chair, I applaud the work that is being done in this area.

I also want to talk really quickly about something else that is addressed here, and that is the inclusion of "expression" after "freedom of speech." The terms "free speech," "freedom of speech," and "freedom of expression" are used interchangeably in political discourse. However, in a legal sense, the freedom of expression includes any activity of seeking, receiving, and imparting information or ideas, regardless of the medium used.

Now, obviously, in times when you only had a squire or someone that's going to be telling people what they need to hear . . .

**Mr. Schow:** A squire?

**Mr. Hunter:** Whatever it is.

. . . you would need to have lots of – there are not a lot of mediums of bringing that information forward. But in our day we have many mediums where information can be provided. So,

obviously, the need to make sure that we have that word “expression” in there, because it provides us with something that maybe they didn’t have – well, obviously, they didn’t have a hundred years ago all these different mediums. This, Madam Chair, is another example of why this is not virtue signalling, this is not useless, and it does matter to Albertans, because we have to have the clarity on these things as our society continues to grow.

I will close with this. When we discuss these issues, we talk about the Bill of Rights. I appreciate that Alberta does have a Bill of Rights, that we have recognized that the Charter of Rights is a great document, but it doesn’t go far enough in terms of what we felt we needed to enumerate for what Albertans deserve and need. I take my hat off to the late Premier of Alberta in 1972, that was willing to bring forward this document and recognized that we had the right to have more in the Bill of Rights. This is timely. I believe that it is something that is not for a minority of Albertans. I’ve heard also some other members say this on the opposite side. I do believe that this is for all Albertans and that this will be a good thing.

I will finish with this. In the book *The Law* Frédéric Bastiat brings forward a term called “legal plunder,” and this idea of legal plunder – actually, I first heard the term “legal plunder” by Milton Friedman in a speech that he gave. The concept of legal plunder is where – obviously, plunder is where someone takes something they’re not supposed to, and it’s against the law. Legal plunder is where an organization or a government can take something without being properly remunerated for that. I think it’s absolutely critical, no matter what the circumstances are, that if someone has worked hard for their property, for their land, they are properly compensated if it’s taken from them, and it has to be done through the rule of law. Legal plunder, obviously, was an issue back in the 1850s, when Frédéric Bastiat wrote the book *The Law*, and it is still a problem today if we do not address this issue.

Therefore, I am fully in favour of Bill 24, the Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024, and I hope that all members of the Chamber will support this bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There were some interesting comments. I thought that there was at least some attempt to conflate Magna Carta and Bill 24, which was too far a stretch. We do know that our right to freedom of expression is protected constitutionally, and this is nothing more than virtue signalling, as we said, ahead of the Premier’s leadership review.

Many other rights that are talked about here – also, this is not creating any new right. For instance, there is some good advice that if you want to acquire a firearm, you should acquire it legally, and laws to be followed are federal government laws. Other things, like clauses in relation to bodily autonomy, are protected by section 7 of the Charter, again, which is a constitutionally protected right. This piece of legislation, that government made its priority: again, it protects their politics. It doesn’t protect anything to do with Alberta’s rights.

5:50

With that, let’s try – if it’s really about people’s rights, I have another amendment which talks about Albertans’ rights, a very vulnerable group of Albertans. With that, I will move another amendment. I have the requisite copies of the amendment.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A3. Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Sabir:** This amendment – in the interests of time I will just say that what it does is that it protects “the right of the individual to access gender-affirming healthcare.” That, in short, is the amendment.

I have five minutes, so I will be really quick. I won’t go as far back as Magna Carta, but I would refer to an influential legal scholar, Thomas Hobbes, who said that a right correlates with duty and responsibility of all. What that means is that when we recognize a right in law, it has considerable influence on social and political thinking, that influences people’s thinking on what is okay in a society and what is not okay in a society.

This amendment is particularly important in the context which we have seen coming from this government over the last little while. First, in order to whip their base, they chose to attack the most vulnerable in this province, the most vulnerable individuals and youth in this province, and came up with policies – and now that that’s on the Order Paper, that will soon become law – denying them their right to access medical care, medical care that will be decided by the individual with the help of a medical professional and their family. And the government thinks that they know better what to do.

As I said, when government does those kind of things, that sends a signal to the society that it’s okay to discriminate against people based on who they are, it’s okay to deny them their rights, it’s okay to treat them less than human, less than equal, even though they have those rights protected under the Charter. That’s why it’s important that all members of this House support this amendment and send a strong message that we as legislators value everyone’s right to access health care, that we as members of this Legislature value the right of access for individuals to gender-affirming health care. That has been threatened. That has been denied by this government, and the bills that government has on deck will have real consequences. They will normalize hate. They will normalize behaviour that will put individuals’ lives at risk.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) we shall now rise out of committee and report without the question put.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. van Dijken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 24. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried. The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** That is me, Madam Speaker. I wish to move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]

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