



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 4, 2024

Day 64

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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

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Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
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)
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Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP)
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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),
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Official Opposition House Leader
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Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
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(UC)
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
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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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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Yao

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

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Ellingson
Hunter
Ip
Lovely
Rowswell
Sabir
Wright, J.

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Lovely

Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Batten
Boitchenko
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Long
Lunty
Petrovic
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Tejada

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Getson

Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Chapman
Dyck
Eremenko
Lovely
Lunty
Renaud
Shepherd
Sinclair

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper

Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Eggen
Gray
Long
Metz
Rowswell
Sabir
Singh
Yao

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Pitt

Deputy Chair: Mr. Stephan

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

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Yao

Deputy Chair: Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk

Arcand-Paul
Ceci
Cyr
Dach
Gray
Johnson
Stephan
Wiebe

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Sabir

Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowsell

Armstrong-Homeniuk
Cyr
de Jonge
Ellingson
Lunty
McDougall
Renaud
Schmidt

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Rowsell

Deputy Chair: Ms Sweet

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

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 4, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, as it is our custom, we pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since the last time we met.

Mr. Alan William Hyland July 28, 1945, to July 24, 2024

The Speaker: Alan William Hyland served as the Progressive Conservative Member for Cypress from 1975 to 1982 and for Cypress-Redcliff from 1982 to 1993. For five successive terms he served the government of Alberta. He was appointed the deputy whip in 1992.

A farmer, a school bus operator, he was born in Medicine Hat and raised in Bow Island. Mr. Hyland's public service career began with the Bow Island town council in the early 1970s before entering provincial politics. After his years as a member of the Assembly he returned for another 23 years to Bow Island town council as mayor from 1998 to 2010 and councillor from 2010 to 2021. Mr. Hyland described two of his proudest achievements in politics as establishing the Palliser Economic Partnership and his work expanding family and community support services province-wide. Mr. Hyland passed away on June 24, 2024, at the age of 78.

In a moment of silent prayer or reflection I ask that you remember Alan Hyland as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

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

Hon. Members:

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

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker: The Legislative Assembly is grateful to be situated on Treaty 6 territory. This land has been the traditional region of the Métis people of Alberta, the Inuit, and the ancestral territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Iroquois, and Nakota Sioux people. The recognition of our history on this land is an act of reconciliation, and we honour those who we walk with. We also

acknowledge that the province of Alberta exists within treaties 4, 7, 8, and 10 as well as the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul's Fifth Anniversary of Election

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we get any further into the daily Routine, I wanted to take a moment and recognize a special occasion today. It is the fifth anniversary of service for the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul in this Chamber. The member and I were both elected together for the first time in May of 2015. Accounting for a short break in service he has served over five years in the Assembly as of June 17, 2024. As of today the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul has served 1,968 days in the Assembly. The hon. member has served this Assembly for five years with dignity, courage, and strength, and I invite him now to come and be recognized for his five years of service.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, as we celebrate the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul's fifth anniversary today, it's my honour to introduce members of his family joining us in the Speaker's gallery. He is joined by his loving wife, Megan, and their youngest daughter, Charlotte. I ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also joining us in the Speaker's gallery today is our anthem singer, Ina Hutchinson, from Lousana in central Alberta, where she and her husband ranch and she takes pride in raising orphaned calves. Mrs. Hutchinson has been singing since her childhood and is currently a member of the Pine Lake Singers. She is joined today by her husband, Don. Some of you may have recognized her as the former constituency assistant to both former members Rod Fox and Ron Orr. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Lastly, hon. members, guests of the Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce members of the public service joining us today in the gallery. They are participating in a full-day public service orientation program which explores the legislative, budgetary, and committee processes, enabling each participant to apply their knowledge to their role in the public service. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for St. Albert I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you the fantastic grade 6 students from Sister Alphonse academy and their teacher Mr. Brass. I got a chance to meet with them earlier this morning at School at the Leg.; they asked some fantastic questions. Please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly grade 9 students of St. Cecilia junior high school, located in the neighbourhood of Glengarry of Edmonton-Decore. I ask these students and their educators to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce two elected representatives of Bangladesh Canada Association of Calgary, President Koiso Chowdhury and General Secretary Shuvro Das. The association was founded in '71 with a view to preserve culture and heritage of Bangladeshi Albertans and provides valuable services to the community. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly executive directors of the graduate students' associations from the U of A, U of C, and Athabasca University.

I would also like to introduce guests from the Electrical Contractors Association of Alberta, President Jason Kuziu and Executive Director Robin Bobocel. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know many members of the opposition were here last week when these guests were here on the steps of the Legislature, but I don't think the government had a chance to meet with them. I'm pleased to introduce three of the executive members for CUPE 3550: Mandy Lamoureux, first Vice-president Janice Kube, and Chief Steward Shelly Lavalle. Please rise and receive our warm welcome.

1:40

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, I rise here to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Rob Rosenfeld from Green Shield Canada. Today we met to discuss their free mental health and well-being pilot for social workers, which will serve up to 1 in 20 Albertans. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's my esteemed privilege and honour to introduce to and through you to all members of the Assembly my good friends and champions of the town of Coaldale: Mayor Jack Van Rijn, councillors Abrey, Beekman, Chapman, Pickering, Reis, and their intrepid town executives. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you three more members from CUPE local 3550: second Vice-president Wafa Soaadi, executive board member Michelle Bilodeau, national representative Carlos Capurro. Thank you so much for all you do. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you I'd like to introduce a tireless advocate for the community she represents in ward 9 in Mackenzie county, always speaking truth to power, doing her best to represent everyone up in the far reaches of northern Alberta, Eileen Morris. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you a great advocate for southern Alberta highway 3 and

economic development, Mr. Bill Chapman. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Sherwood Park to you and through you to the members of the Assembly it's my pleasure to introduce Jennifer Johnston and Yolanda Knister. Both are fierce advocates fighting for trans rights here in Alberta. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

Ms Hayter: I rise to introduce to you and through you the Alberta Union of Public Employees Pay Equity Committee. I appreciate all the advocacy you have done to advance and advocate for pay equity legislation. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Dr. Elmeligi: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you my good friend and colleague Stephen Legault, who is leading Alberta's energy transition program for Environmental Defence Canada. I was on the road this morning when I got the notification, but he's still great and deserves a round of applause. Please stand and be welcomed into the House.

The Speaker: I might just take a brief moment to note that if there is any other member of the Assembly who is close to a five-year anniversary that hasn't yet sent me a note, if you could please go ahead and send me one, I would appreciate that a great deal. We will be doing a larger recognition of a whole bunch of members who are crossing their fifth anniversary in only a short period of time.

Members' Statements

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

United Conservative Party Annual General Meeting

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend our United Conservative Party hosted nearly 6,000 members at our annual general meeting in Red Deer, making it the largest political convention in Canadian history. In the buildup to the AGM media, insiders, talking heads, and the public all wanted to weigh in about what might happen and what level of support the Premier would receive. We also heard from members of the opposition, whose acting Government House Leader went on TV and referenced the 86 per cent that their absentee leader, Naheed Nenshi, received in his leadership race and proclaimed, quote: I don't think that the Premier is going to be able to match that. Well, she was right. The Premier didn't match 86 per cent; she blew right past it, receiving 91.5 per cent support.

But, Mr. Speaker, this number, as impressive as it is, isn't just about our party; it is about our province. The support we saw this weekend reflects a united conservative movement and a clear indication of strong leadership. As the Premier emphasized in her remarks, we are committed to upholding the values that make Alberta a beacon of hope, freedom, and prosperity. We are committed to improving our health care system, enhancing public safety, creating good-paying jobs, and making life more affordable for families across our province.

Mr. Speaker, 91.5 per cent is just the beginning, and we will not stop here. Albertans can clearly see that having a Liberal lead the socialist NDP party is not in their best interests. The left in Alberta and across Canada is terrified of our United Conservative movement. We have the momentum, and with Albertans on our side we will ensure our province's prosperity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Murray Sinclair

Member Arcand-Paul: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Murray Sinclair, who passed away this morning at the age of 73. We lost a giant today; someone who stood for justice, truth, and reconciliation his entire life; someone who made Canada a better, stronger place through his work and advocacy.

As a student he advocated for Indigenous communities and businesses. He fought for Indigenous tenants in provincial housing. He became a lawyer and a judge, the first Indigenous judge appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba, showcasing the belief in and love of justice that would make up so much of his life. As a judge he fought against systemic racism in the justice system and he fought for the protection of children. During his career he was awarded a prestigious designation as Indigenous peoples' counsel by the Indigenous Bar Association.

In 2009 he was asked to chair the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a position he once declined because he knew the emotional toll it would take as chair. As chair he was part of the interviewing of over 6,000 people, hosting seven national events, and making 94 calls to action to reform government and society. After the report was completed, he retired from the bench and planned to withdraw from public life only to be asked by Indigenous leaders to allow them to nominate him for the Canadian Senate, to which he was appointed in 2016 and served until his retirement in 2021.

The thoughts of our entire caucus are with Murray Sinclair's family, his wife, his five children, and his three grandchildren, who are mourning the loss of this great man who did so much to make Canada a fairer, kinder, and more just place.

Mr. Speaker, thank you to Murray Sinclair for all that he did. We all in this place have a job to ensure we both honour the legacy and build upon it. Nanaskamon. [some applause]

Trade with the United States

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Albertans I want to wish our American neighbours to the south the best of luck as they head to the polls tomorrow. Elections are a fundamental part of democracy, and we know a core strength of any nation lies in its peoples' ability to exercise their right to shape their future.

I'm also pleased to say that our Premier, fresh from receiving a resounding 91.5 per cent support from the United Conservatives, is in an even stronger position to build cross-border partnerships. The relationship between Alberta and the United States is built on shared values, mutual interests, and a long history of friendship. To be sure, at least half of my constituents either have family from the States or winter down there.

From energy, agriculture, family vacations, and sometimes hard-fought hockey Stanley Cups, even though most of their best players come from Canada, of course, our ties run deep. Over the years Alberta has proudly supplied American markets with essential resources, helping to fuel industry, create jobs, and power homes and businesses all across this great continent. Our province is strong

and resilient. Regardless of tomorrow's result, the United Conservatives will continue getting Alberta's products to market efficiently and sustainably because a strong Alberta means a strong partner for the United States.

With that, we look forward to continuing our collaboration with the United States, working together to build a prosperous, secure, and sustainable future for all. We look forward to many more years of partnerships and prosperity. Thank you, and once again, good luck to our American cousins as they participate in a very exciting election.

1:50

Women's Income Equality

Ms Hayter: Mr. Speaker, recently I had the opportunity to sit and watch some television. I watched Cindy excitedly begin a new career as an aide in a seniors' home, the gleam of joy in her eyes as she embarked on this respectable career. Later in the show, though, you realize that she's living in a tent on the streets. This broke my heart, and it's been a warning I've heard when talking to organizations about the work women do and the wages that they make.

In typical roles women's wages are not living wages. They work caring jobs that are not valued or well paid. Women hold more minimum wage positions than men. Women are predominantly employed in education, health care, and nonprofit service work. I have been told that women here in Alberta who are working full-time in caring roles are struggling to make ends meet. We are in an affordability crisis; our grocery bills, our electricity bills, our vehicle insurance are all going up. But, Mr. Speaker, do you know what isn't going up? Our wages. Our wages are not going up, especially minimum wage. Equal pay for equal work of equal value was recognized as a fundamental right in Canada in the mid-1980s.

Last week I had the opportunity to meet with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees pay equity committee to discuss pay equity. I appreciate all the advocacy that they have done to advance and advocate for this type of legislation. It is disappointing to hear that none of the UCP ministers were willing to sit down with the AUPE committee. They are here in the gallery, though, right now, and I'm hopeful that any of these ministers will meet with them today. It is a missed opportunity to learn more about equitable compensation practices and current inequalities.

In 2024 the AUPE is still struggling for legislation for pay equity here in Alberta and continues without end in sight. We need to have compensation for women's wages to fairly ensure equal pay for equal work.

Oral Question Period

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

Vaccination Policies

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, it's time for the Premier to start governing for Albertans, not just for her political party. It's critically important to promote public immunization, especially during respiratory virus season. Last year Alberta saw a significant increase in the number of influenza cases. A simple thing that the Premier can do, which I don't think I've seen her do so far, is promote public health by taking a photo of getting a flu and COVID shot. When is the Premier getting her flu and COVID shots, and will she personally promote getting vaccinated this fall?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know the Leader of the Opposition wanted to moonlight as my family doctor. These are the kinds of decisions that people make when they consult their family doctor to determine what's best for them, but we have a \$415,000 advertising campaign so people know that it's respiratory virus season, they know where they can get their influenza, COVID, and RSV shots. For the first year we are making RSV available at no charge to those who are most vulnerable, over the age of 75. We encourage people to talk to their family doctor and make the decision that's right for them.

Ms Gray: Almost a million Albertans don't have a family doctor, Mr. Speaker, and the Premier should know that our hospitals are bursting at the seams. Our doctors certainly know. The ERs are overcrowded because, of course, the hospitals are full of patients who can't get a bed. It's why prevention of the spread of these seasonal infections is so important, so people do not need to be hospitalized in the first place. Since the Premier won't properly staff our hospitals, hasn't built more beds, will she at least promote common-sense advice, try to combat vaccine hesitancy? She is a public figure. Will she get her vaccines?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, the overall budget we're running is \$425,000, and I'm not sure why it is that the members opposite, when they were in power, actually reduced the advertising budget for immunization campaigns down below \$100,000 per year. Not very responsible, so we now have it at \$425,000 so people know they can go to their family doctor. They can go to their pharmacist as well because we are so proud to be the leading province when it comes to allowing pharmacists to practise in their full scope of medicine. So go to a family doctor, go to your pharmacist, or go to an AHS clinic.

Ms Gray: My question, Mr. Speaker, is: as the Premier of this province, will the Premier be going to her family doctor, to a pharmacist, getting a vaccine, and promoting that to all Albertans? It seems like the best the UCP government can do is to tell people that vaccines are available, but they can't even get these vaccines to doctors' offices. They failed to sign the contract for the delivery truck, and in their master reorganization of health care that she promised would solve all problems, she hasn't found a place for public health to report to. Will she get her shot? Will she promote vaccines?

The Speaker: I might just remind the Leader of the Official Opposition that question period is to be used to ask questions about government policy. I didn't hear much of a question specifically about government policy in such a question, but if the Premier wants to answer, she's welcome to do so.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In case anybody does not know, and I think the vast, vast, vast – probably all Albertans know that immunizations are always available in the fall. We have got COVID, influenza, and RSV at no charge for those over age 75. Currently immunizations are available at approximately 1,600 community pharmacies and about 150 Alberta Health Services public health clinics across the province. That's where over 97 per cent of Albertans access vaccines, at one of these locations. I encourage people to talk to their medical professionals and make the decision that's right for them.

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

Transgender Youth Policy

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, government should never punch down on its most vulnerable citizens, but this government's antitrans bills attack the human rights of trans Albertans. On Saturday thousands of Albertans rallied to denounce this legislation. As our leader, Naheed Nenshi, said, quote: I hope it was worth it for the Premier to turn her back on Albertans and even on her former self, when she used to defend gender- and sexually diverse people. End quote. Why does this Premier ignore the pleas of Albertans to stop this hurtful, transphobic agenda as they strip freedoms and make the province less safe?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've always cared deeply about LGBTQ-plus youth and adults, and we support them through a variety of programs. You know, it was just in the Assembly last week that we talked about the maturity of youth's brains, and I recall the deputy leader from Edmonton-Whitemud saying that "the reality is that in terms of brain development [for] young people: actually, their brains aren't fully developed until up to age 25." The members opposite agree that children have a maturity level that needs to be reached before they make adult decisions. This is one of those things that's an adult decision.

Ms Gray: The members of the Official Opposition agree that politicians should not be making these decisions, and the Premier is ignoring all expert advice. The Alberta Medical Association said, quote: these changes actually impinge on the rights of parents to make medical decisions for their children, whom they know best. End quote. The Canadian Medical Association said, "Canadians have a right to make personal choices about their health with the support of their families." The Canadian Paediatric Society agrees. Why is the Premier removing the rights of parents to make the decisions they and their doctors say are best for their children?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only person who should make a choice about their fertility is the person themselves when they become of an age to be able to make that choice. In fact, the Member for Calgary-Beddington seemed to agree. Last week when she was talking about the maturity of youth, she said:

Our brains aren't finished developing until our mid to late 20s, and the part of the brain that's still cooking in those final years is the prefrontal cortex. That's a really key piece of the brain, right? That's the part that's responsible for planning, for prioritizing, for making good decisions . . . How do you balance any, like, short-term rewards you might find with whatever long-term future goals that you have?

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, Albertans do not want politicians to make their medical decisions for them, especially one that obviously doesn't trust parents and children and their doctors to work together to figure out what makes the most sense for them. In the nine months since the Premier laid out her plans for this toxic legislation, she's failed to consult with anyone except those who already agree with her. Curling Canada and Curling Alberta were not consulted. Boxing Canada says that no one called them, and Canada Soccer says that this plan is exclusionary and void of facts. When the media asked the Premier who exactly they consulted, she refused to say. Why did she fail to consult with the impacted organizations and experts?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We got a bit of an expert view last week in the Legislature when we were hearing about the maturity of youth and making decisions. In fact, the MLA for Calgary-Acadia also agreed. She said:

We know that brain development continues well into the 20s . . .

It remains that the young person's brain continues to develop critical areas during this period. For example, the area of the brain responsible for decision-making, impulse control, and the ability to reason is very slowly maturing during this time.

Mr. Speaker, we all agree on this side of the House and on that side of the House. Kids have to be kids, and they make adult decisions as adults. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

2:00

Affordability Measures

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and her Finance minister bragged all weekend about how they think things are affordable. They should tell that to a family in Grande Prairie paying \$4,000 a year on car insurance and \$7 a pound for beefsteak or a family in Lethbridge paying \$170 a month in electricity even on a five-year fixed plan. Families are getting eaten alive by the high prices of utilities and insurance, but this government does nothing to help them. As families struggle with the high cost of living, why is the Premier so out of touch with the realities being lived by Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know we have to do something about insurance. We've looked across the country, and we've seen that there are a variety of factors that are causing us to have some of the highest insurance rates in the country. The Minister of Finance has gone and done a broad-based public consultation, and he'll have more to say about our options very, very soon.

Our Minister of Affordability and Utilities has done a pretty spectacular job of making sure that we bring electricity rates down, that we don't allow excessive fees to be charged by municipalities, that we have a rate of last resort that is going to be stable for those who need it, and he's going to be doing more work on making sure that this market works for everyone.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has referenced it. We know that the Finance minister commissioned a report on how to fix car insurance prices, but it seems like this government has been distracted by jet streams and vote tabulators. The report came out in April, and it shows that Albertans are paying hundreds, sometimes thousands of dollars more in car insurance than our neighbours in B.C., Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. We are looking for action to save Albertans hundreds of dollars a year. When is this government going to bring forward real change, real results so that Albertans don't have to continue to pay exorbitant prices?

The Speaker: The Premier has the call.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We want to be thoughtful about this. In fact, 16,000 Albertans filled out the survey, and we are in the process of analyzing the feedback. We have looked at other jurisdictions to be able to get some guidance on this, and unfortunately there aren't very many easy answers. The minister is digesting what he has heard, and he will have more to say on that in the coming weeks.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think things would be very different here in Alberta if the Premier was focused on the high cost of living instead of taking high-end gift seats to skyboxes. On that note, the great Canadian tradition of the Grey Cup weekend is coming up soon. Unfortunately, neither of our Alberta teams have made the CFL playoffs, but we know that this Premier and cabinet don't mind taking free tickets to expensive box seats from their lobbyist friends. Will the Premier commit to every Albertan that neither she nor any member of her cabinet nor any of her political staff will be taking free seats or trips to the Grey Cup game in Vancouver?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish that one of our great teams was in the Grey Cup. I root for both the Elks as well as the Stampeders. It's nice when they play each other because my team always wins in any case.

As the member opposite knows, these rules, reporting what the MLA does to the Ethics Commissioner – there are rules in place about how high a ticket must be, when it needs to be reported, and I expect every single MLA in this Legislature, including the ones across the aisle, to make sure that they follow the rules.

Community Safety

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, every Albertan deserves to feel safe and welcome in their community, but under this government they don't. A new report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that in the last year the number of Alberta businesses directly affected by crime and safety has doubled. They're calling for action on issues contributing to crime, including affordable housing, mental health, and addiction, all responsibilities of this provincial government. But after five years of the UCP Alberta's business owners, their employees, their customers feel less safe. To the Premier: why is her government continuing to fail them? When will this government step up?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I think we all know that after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government we are less safe in Canada because of the policies supported by Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh. Bill C-75 has wreaked havoc not only in Alberta but also throughout Canada. The one thing the Liberal-NDP government has done is unite all provinces across this great nation to say no to Justin Trudeau and no to the NDP.

Mr. Shepherd: The CFIB report doesn't mention Bill C-75, but it does say that 83 per cent of small-business owners want this government to prioritize action on poverty reduction, affordable housing, and mental health issues, but they have done the opposite. Under the UCP we have higher unemployment, higher costs, lowest wage growth in Canada. They've cut dollars for affordable housing while repeatedly refusing to partner on building much-needed supportive housing, and after five years of rhetoric and promises their road to recovery is still largely under construction. When will this government get their priorities in line with small-business owners and start investing in proven solutions for our communities to build safety with the urgency it deserves?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, 85 per cent of our vulnerable people on the streets – this member is the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre – are afflicted with mental health and addictions issues. That's why we have embarked on the recovery-oriented system of care, something that's not only recognized right here in Alberta, with the exception of the NDP, but is recognized across Canada and internationally. It

is known as the Alberta model. If the NDP had their way, they would keep people in pain and suffering throughout this province. We're not going to go down that path. We're going to help people to make sure they get off the streets and onto a path to recovery.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, their recovery communities are still under construction. We do not have the capacity after five years of this government. CFIB reports that 83 per cent of small-business owners don't feel "their tax dollars are being used effectively to improve community safety" with this government. They're right. For five years the UCP have neglected their core responsibilities. They have dragged their feet in favour of political pet projects and picking fights. That's forcing others to fill in the gap. Police have less capacity to focus on crime, and business owners and their staff are dealing with increased stress and crime. Will they take the CFIB's advice, do their job . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, what the member is saying is simply just not accurate. Quite frankly, we are less safe in Canada because of the NDP-Liberal alliance. We are doing what we can. We put 50 police officers on the streets of Calgary, put 50 police officers on the streets of Edmonton. We are augmenting and supporting all police services throughout this province. We're making sure that we have electronic monitoring because we know – we know – that if the NDP had their way, no one would be in custody. We are trying to protect small businesses. We are trying to make sure that people have the adequate resources to keep Albertans safe, and we're going to continue to do that.

School Construction

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's schools are bursting at the seams. This government seems to suggest that no one could have seen this crisis coming. They feigned ignorance, but as far back as their 2019 budget school boards and school trustees, including me, have repeatedly asked for new schools to keep up with growing demand. Since then the student population has grown by 57,000, yet the government slashed per-student funding and slow walked school construction. This is a crisis of their own making. To the Premier: I'm glad you're finally listening, but why did it take so long?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, we are incredibly proud of our initiative to build almost 100 new schools in our fastest growing communities, including several in the member's riding, which our government is happy to take credit for. We're building a new school in Glenriding Heights, a new 7 to 12, a K to 6 as well; a new school in River's Edge; and a new school in Edgemont as well. I believe all of those are in the member's riding. I know the member will thank the government on behalf of his constituents for our aggressive work to get all these new schools built. We understand the need to build schools, and we are working aggressively to get it done.

Mr. Ip: Given that we welcome the announcement but this government likes to announce things with zero follow-through and given that they have repeatedly fumbled critical projects like the Calgary green line or the south Edmonton hospital, if this government's abysmal track record is any indication, there's a good chance they will fumble building schools, too. To the minister: how can Albertans trust the government to deliver schools on time as promised without it turning into another UCP boondoggle?

2:10

Mr. Nicolaides: I'm happy to see that our plan has the support of members opposite, and I can quote their leader as well, who called it a generational investment. I'm really happy to hear that the NDP supports what the United Conservative government is doing, supports our plans and efforts to build more schools, and supports our approach to education. Mr. Speaker, we will ensure that these schools get built, and we will ensure that students and families have access to the latest facilities right in their own community. This is a priority for our government, and we will get the job done.

Mr. Ip: Given that Alberta is already experiencing a severe shortage of skilled trades workers, this government's sudden promise to build 90 schools seems more like wishful thinking than a plan. Construction leaders have warned that labour shortages will make it extremely difficult to deliver these projects on time or on budget. Judging by the UCP's pathetic track record on major projects like the south Edmonton hospital, which was promised, delayed, and ultimately cancelled, what is the plan to address the labour shortage, or is this another empty promise from the UCP?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP was in office, they never had to deal with these kinds of challenges because when they were in office – and let's take a look at their track record for a moment. What did they do? They jacked up taxes on businesses. They created investor uncertainty. They drove oil and gas companies out of the province. Businesses closed. They even went so far as to tell people to leave Alberta and go find jobs in other provinces. They experienced significant population decline. We have reversed the trend, and Alberta is back and booming under our government.

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

Federal Oil and Gas Emissions Cap

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the federal government announced their most recent attack on Alberta's provincial jurisdiction, the oil and gas sector, and the prosperity of every single Albertan. The federal emissions cap aims to cut emissions from oil and gas by 35 per cent. While Minister Guilbeault and the federal Liberals claim these regulations will only reduce emissions and not production, we in Alberta know this is not the case. To the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas: could you please tell this House about the negative impact these regulations will have on every single Albertan?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to that member for the important question, as I know those of us on this side of the House care about the future of our province and this major industry. This cap will result in 1 million barrels cut per day by 2030, 2 million barrels by 2035. This cap means up to 150,000 jobs lost, \$14 billion a year cut to the economy, lost royalties, and a cost to every household across the country of an average of \$419 a month. These aren't our numbers; this is independent analysis. This is not a cap on emissions. It's a cap on prosperity, and it needs to absolutely be scrapped.

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

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for that answer. Given that the federal government claims these regulations will drive investment and job creation through the development of emission reduction technology and further given that Alberta is already a world leader in the development of such technology, to the same minister: could you please tell this House how Alberta drives investment into emissions reduction technology and why a punishing cap is completely unnecessary?

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

Ms Schulz: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy and proud to stand up in this House every single day to talk about Alberta's record when it comes to our exceptional oil and gas industry and our record on emissions reduction. Our total emissions in Alberta are down all while our production is increasing to meet global demand for safe, reliable, affordable energy. Per-barrel emissions in the oil sands are down 23 per cent. On methane we not only hit our goal of a 45 per cent reduction three years ahead of schedule; we surpassed it, and we did that by saving industry \$600 million than if we had followed the federal government's path.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again through you to the minister for that answer. Given that Albertans and Canadians need to be informed on just how destructive such a cap would be and further given that federal ministers referred to the Scrap the Cap campaign as misinformation and even accused our Premier of being fine with watching the planet burn, to the Minister of Energy and Minerals: how important is the Scrap the Cap campaign to ensuring Albertans and Canadians are informed on just how punishing this cap will be?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, no one has done more for oil and gas innovation than Alberta has. No one has done more. We lead the world on CCS. We lead the world on emission reduction. We lead the world on reducing methane emissions. Guilbeault and Trudeau say that industry can make up for this by somehow removing methane emissions even further. We're already world leading. That's like saying: let them eat cake. Gas prices are so low. We can't afford them anymore. They can't afford these expensive things at a time like this. Work with us, not against us. Scrap the Cap.

Family Physicians

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, 378 days ago the Health minister sat down with the then president of the Alberta Medical Association. They agreed to develop a new funding model expeditiously. They really needed to focus on family medicine. Since then many doctors have closed their doors. They've retired early, moved to other provinces, or given up their profession altogether. More than 20,000 people in Lethbridge, our fourth-largest city, don't have a family doctor, and nearly a million Albertans province-wide don't have one. Two more doctors in Lethbridge announced that they are now closing their practices as well. Almost 1 million Albertans. Will the Premier admit that we're in a family medicine crisis?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of September 30, 2024, there are 12,126 physicians registered in Alberta. When I first started, just over a year ago, there were only 10,500, just shy

of 10,600 physicians, of which there has been an increase of 4.7 per cent just in one year alone in family medicine. So we have an increase of 262 family physicians. We agree there are some hot spots, and we're continuing to work on it.

Ms Hoffman: Given that more Albertans are without a family doctor today than they were a year ago, Mr. Speaker, and given that 81 per cent of Alberta doctors report that the health care system is getting worse and given that the Premier promised doctors in the spring that a negotiated deal that had already been reached would be signed in the coming weeks, given that the most recent representatives for many doctors told me that they're shutting down their practices and others told me that they themselves don't have family doctors, will the Premier tell her minister to stop dithering, get back to the table, and sign the deal that she promised would be signed 174 days ago?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, again, the members opposite continue to provide fear to the general public. We continue to work with the Alberta Medical Association. I met with them just over a week ago. The Premier and I met with them just last week. We continue to make great progress. I'm looking forward to bringing forward the new deal. Again, this deal happens to happen in between a negotiated contract. We negotiated a contract with the AMA back in 2022, and above that we are now doing something for family physicians. We're going to continue to work for Albertans.

Ms Hoffman: Given that over a year ago the minister acknowledged that the system was broken and that she needed to work quickly to fix it, given that 174 days ago the Premier acknowledged that an agreement had been reached and would be signed very soon in the weeks to come, she said, is it any wonder that labour groups like our partners here from CUPE 3550 don't have faith in this government to follow through on things they've agreed to? When they, in fact, acknowledged that there was a crisis a year ago and the minister won't acknowledge it today and 174 days ago said they'd sign a contract they already agreed to, no wonder people are losing faith in this government. Why should we have any faith that they'll be there to follow through?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite continues to provide, as I said, fear out there. We're working to solve real issues. I find it ironic that the member opposite wants to discuss our record when she has her own record to speak for. Under her leadership as the Health minister wait times for cataracts, hip replacement, knee replacements all rose by 30 per cent. Thirty per cent. Why doesn't she speak to why they left it in such a mess? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Municipal Funding and Tax Collection

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, the government has the responsibility to pay taxes to municipalities on provincial properties. Edmonton alone is owed \$90 million. When the Premier was asked this weekend, she simply said: we would take the request for payment into account. Albertans deserve a government that supports municipalities rather than one that bullies them. Will the minister answer today why this government refuses to pay its taxes in full on provincial properties?

2:20

Mr. McIver: Well, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we have another member from across that doesn't know what the rules are. In fact, that member and all members over there should know that governments in Canada don't pay taxes to other orders of government. That's how it is in Canada constitutionally. So when the member across does his homework, I'll be happy to hear a question.

Mr. Haji: Given that we are joined in this House today by members of Rural Municipalities of Alberta and given that small municipalities know all too well just how difficult it is to manage tight budgets and given that the oil and gas industry owes significant amounts of money to small, mid-sized municipalities in unpaid property taxes, will the minister explain the timelines for ensuring these municipalities get the money they are owed both from the province and from the industry?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, as members and municipalities, particularly rural ones, across Alberta know, we've made quite a bit of effort with them. We've put in place a rule where the municipalities can sue the board members of the oil companies. We put in directives through my colleague the minister of energy to make it harder for energy companies that haven't paid their taxes to transfer wells. Yet the problem persists, not with the majority of the energy industry but a small percentage of foreign-owned companies, and we will not stop until we get it done.

Mr. Haji: Given that the minister calls it small, given that in 2022 there were \$268 million owed in property taxes to rural municipalities by all oil and gas companies and given that the solution to this problem is quite simple – the government needs to start paying its full share of property taxes, and the AER needs to prohibit companies with outstanding liens on property taxes from operating until their debts are settled – will the minister take action?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, most companies pay their taxes. In fact, if you look at the amount that has been unpaid over the last few years, it's very minuscule compared to the big picture and how much tax revenue municipalities have received. But I have been clear. As minister of energy I have told municipalities directly that if they have an issue with a particular company, write to me to let me know that that company is not paying their taxes, that they're not performing as they should, and we will take steps to end that situation, but I have not received one letter yet, as far as I'm aware. So, please, if they want to work with us, we're there to work with them, but we need to work together.

Electric Power Prices

Mr. Dyck: Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's economy is the strongest in the country and will remain so under this government. The NDP-Trudeau carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything, including fuel, food, and home heating. This is unacceptable during Alberta's cold winters. No one should have to choose between heating and eating. Albertans are looking for real relief from the current spending inflation crisis brought on by the NDP-Trudeau coalition and their carbon tax. Could the Minister of Affordability and Utilities please outline what our government is doing to help ease electrical bills for Albertans?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that great question. Our UCP government is modernizing our electricity

system to be affordable, reliable, and sustainable for generations to come. We're working to tackle every part of the system from generation and transmission to distribution and other fees on bills. This includes new changes for local access fees, which will save Calgarians over \$30 million on their bills this coming year, and improvements to the rate of last resort.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government has retooled the electrical system that the NDP destroyed during their government by ripping up contracts worth billions of dollars, putting the payout of the broken contracts onto the Albertan taxpayers and causing rates to go up, and given that electrical rates were slashed in half by new market rules under our United Conservative government this past August, could the Minister of Affordability and Utilities please explain what this government has done to accomplish these new market rules and how these changes are making life more affordable for Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's electricity system has undergone significant changes since it was first designed three decades ago. The NDP didn't account for how renewables would impact the system when they recklessly rushed the coal phase-out, leaving Albertans to pay billions of dollars in making our grid and power prices as volatile as the weather. While our government is working to restore balance in the system, we have implemented temporary rules that have resulted in Alberta's electricity prices going down by 36 per cent per year over year according to the latest CPI data.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our utilities are becoming more affordable and dependable and given that our government is looking into innovative solutions to further protect the sustainability of Albertans' electrical grid, including proactive distribution planning, energy storage options, on-site generation, along with the world's cleanest natural gas, could the Minister of Affordability and Utilities please explain to this House how we are protecting Albertans from future electrical brownouts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. As I've mentioned, we're making changes to make the power grid more affordable and reliable. We're restructuring Alberta's electricity market to be a day-ahead market, which means power commitments will be locked in to meet demand 24 hours ahead of time. While we're working on the long-term detailed design, we've implemented the temporary supply cushion regulation, which ensures that the grid operator can bring the baseload power online that is needed when it's needed.

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

Education Funding

Member Kayande: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I spent last week on the phone with many of my constituents regarding school overcrowding. For families across Calgary-Elbow in Altadore, Mount Royal, Windsor Park, and Elboya school boundaries are changing, and families are looking at friend groups being broken apart. It's not the Calgary board of education's fault; it's the fault of this government, that placed Alberta Is Calling billboards across

the country and then failed to provide the most basic requirement of a growing population, school funding. Why has the minister let school overcrowding get to this point?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, when the NDP was in office, they didn't have these issues because they drove people out of the province. They increased taxes on businesses, they drove out oil and gas investment, they actively told Albertans to leave the province and go somewhere else, and we saw population decline and decrease and decrease. Our United Conservative government has worked hard over the last five years to restart the Alberta economy, restart the Alberta advantage, and make Alberta a place of opportunity again, and we're proud of our work there.

Member Kayande: Mr. Speaker, given that I'm actually asking on behalf of my constituents for what they can do now, given that there are 17,000 new kids and there's only one school under construction in Calgary in the public system and given that Alberta has the lowest per-student funding in the country – that's right; the very lowest, absolute bottom-of-the-barrel and highly reluctant funding for our kids and our future – what does this minister have to say to my constituents who have kids without the school support that they need in order to thrive?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, I would say that our government is investing in education. Just this past July we invested \$125 million in additional operating funding to make sure that our school boards have the funding that they need.

But the member stated something that's incorrect, so I want to correct the record. He said we're building one new school in Calgary. That's not true. There's construction ongoing for the modernization of the Diefenbaker high school. There's construction under way for a new school in Nolan Hill. There's construction under way for an Evanston middle school, construction under way for new schools in south Calgary and in other corners of the city.

Member Kayande: Mr. Speaker, given that one of my constituents told me, and I quote, "I believe in public schools, but I'm going to have to do what's best for my family," and it looks like he's going to stretch his budget and spend \$15,000 per kid to send them to private school and given that this is clearly part of this government's plan to entrench a two-tier education system, one where kids who can afford private tuition can get a high-quality education while everyone else suffers through the lowest per-student funding in Canada, can the minister explain why this government cares so little about public education?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, the Calgary board of education is requesting the following projects in their year 1 list: two schools in Cornerstone, one in Mahogany, one in Redstone, two in Sage Hill, one in Sherwood, one in Cityscape, one in Cornerstone, Walden, Livingston, Nolan Hill, Aspen Woods. Those are their year 1 priority projects. I don't believe any of those projects are in the member's riding. If the member believes that additional schools are needed in his community, I would encourage him to advocate with the Calgary board of education to ensure that those projects get put on the list. Their year 2 priorities are as follows: Saddle Ridge and Mahogany. Also not in the member's riding. I would encourage him to talk with the Calgary board of education.

2:30

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

Road Construction in Chestermere-Strathmore

Ms de Jonge: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This summer while door-knocking in my constituency, I had the pleasure of meeting many new residents who had recently moved from across Alberta and beyond. Chestermere is quickly becoming one of Alberta's fastest growing communities, with a year-over-year growth rate of 9 per cent. Langdon is also significantly expanding, with proposed developments that could double its size. Residents in these communities face daily commutes to Calgary via Glenmore Trail, making the expansion and improvement of this corridor a top priority for my neighbours. Can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors share the steps being taken to support Chestermere-Strathmore residents in enhancing and expanding Glenmore Trail?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore: you're a fierce advocate for projects in your riding. I'm actually happy here to say that the government will commit engineering funding for Rainbow Road and Glenmore. The local traffic and industrial traffic in that area of the province is immense. As we've been monitoring the traffic counts in that area, it does need improvement. As the province we are investing in the 64,000 lane kilometres that we have in this project and so many others across the province because we are proud to build out this province, especially in rural Alberta.

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

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the intersection of Glenmore Trail and range road 283, otherwise known as Rainbow Road, as the minister mentioned, is a critical junction for local residents who share the road with numerous semis and large industrial vehicles from nearby developments and given the increased frequency of traffic collisions at this location, significant safety concerns have emerged among my neighbours. They're calling for action to enhance safety and efficiency in this area. Could the same minister please explain how our government plans to make the much-needed substantive improvements to that particular intersection?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Traffic safety is a top priority for Transportation and Economic Corridors. We always constantly look at roadways and intersections that do need improvements. That can be expensive or inexpensive. It ranges from signage to turning lanes to re-engineering to make sure that traffic in these certain areas of the province is safe for commuters as well as businesses, but we're working on this. Unlike the no-show, Nenshi, the NDP leader who doesn't show up to work, it seems like, we're actually on the job trying to make life better for Albertans.

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

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the significant population growth to the east of Calgary, which has placed considerable strain on our road infrastructure with highway 1 and 17th Avenue serving as essential connections between these communities and Calgary, it is crucial that we address this issue. What actions are the Minister of Transportation and Economic

Corridors taking to support the urgent and growing need for road improvements in the Chestermere-Strathmore constituency?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, within the provincial road network we will be looking at improvements, but 17th Ave is within the city of Calgary, so it would be best to ask them.

But an interesting Calgary transportation project, if I may, is the green line, something that Nenshi, when he was the mayor of Calgary 10 years ago, promised 46 kilometres of, and then it didn't get built. You'd be surprised. Within two years it was the NDP government and Nenshi as mayor that actually cut it in half. Here we are 10 years later. Zero kilometres have been built. On this side of the House, the United Conservatives, we love building projects. When it comes to the NDP, it doesn't seem like they can get anything accomplished.

Supports for Youth Transitioning out of Care

Member Batten: Last week on Monday the Minister of Children and Family Services acknowledged the challenges faced by young people. Goodness. Today the Premier acknowledged the same by repeating facts I provided that are evidence based. There is hope. Now, children transitioning out of care are youth who have survived trauma, disruptive upheaval with none of the community supports that many of us grew up with, yet the minister and the Premier refuse to financially support these young people to have the same success as their peers. Will the Minister of Children and Family Services or the Premier admit that this government just doesn't want to spend money on vulnerable youth?

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

Mr. Turton: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. We are investing in our most vulnerable and complex youth. That's why we've made, actually, some of the largest historic investments in kinship care and foster care providers throughout the entire province. These fantastic individuals are pouring one-on-one attention into some of our most vulnerable children that we have throughout the entire province. I am proud of the track record that our government has of looking after these amazing children. Just a week out of foster and kinship care appreciation month I would hope that the members opposite would show a little bit more appreciation for our amazing kinship and foster caregivers.

Member Batten: Given that this government continues to underfund our nonprofits who provide that amazing service and given that Albertans are currently living through an affordability crisis and given that the rising costs of basic necessities like food and rent are forcing young people to rely on their families for financial support well into their 20s if not their 30s, why does the minister have a double standard for youth transitioning out of care and believe that they don't deserve the support that, and I quote, fosters dependency?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Turton: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. We have some of the top programs in the country for supporting some of these amazing young adults coming out of foster care. These soft supports provide opportunities to pursue education, opportunities to live independently. We are going to continuously and unabashedly

invest in our young adults to make sure that they can live on their own, live healthy and productive lives, unlike the members opposite, who continuously want to put our young individuals down and ensure that they live a lifetime of bondage and support of the government.

Member Batten: Well, given that that was an interesting answer, given that youth transitioning out of care are the legal responsibility of the government of Alberta until they turn 18 and given that in 2023 the OCYA reported that 16 youth died shortly after leaving care, continuing the upward trend of record deaths, why won't this UCP government admit that they're abandoning their responsibilities to these young people? When will the minister admit that this system is not working?

Mr. Turton: Mr. Speaker, we have put actual investments into our TAP programs of over \$3 million from 2022 to 2023. We know this is actually making a tangible difference in the lives of these young adults. We're proud of our track record when it comes to looking after many of our most vulnerable and complex children. We know that we can always do more, but the investments that we made up to this point we know are making a tangible difference in the lives of Albertans throughout the province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington has a question to ask.

Numeracy and Literacy Assessments

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first month of a new school year is a wonderful time, a time for teachers and students to set classroom routines, develop relationships, and foster a sense of classroom community. Instead of focusing on that work, this year K to 3 teachers were asked to spend weeks sweating over multiple standardized assessments. To the minister: what supports were provided to teachers so that they could do that important relationship-building work while simultaneously spending hour upon hour delivering these new assessments?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, as the member noted, we've rolled out new screeners in literacy and numeracy for students in grades 1 to 3 and this January in kindergarten. This work is essential because for every child to succeed, we need to ensure that they have the foundations right. These screeners give us immense insights into the potential of student opportunities and furthermore allow teachers and school divisions to identify students who may need additional support. This is important work, and we have to get it right from the beginning.

Ms Chapman: Given that teachers are constantly assessing kids to determine learning needs and literacy, numeracy, and every other subject area and skill set they teach and given that teachers are professionals and experts at determining both individual and collective classroom learning needs, why isn't this government listening to teachers and providing resources to address the needs they know are there instead of wasting time with more standardized testing?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, these aren't standardized tests, and to characterize them as such is a misrepresentation. You cannot fail these; they don't count towards your student's grade. They are screeners used to evaluate a student's ability and understanding when it comes to literacy and numeracy. This is valuable information for our educators and other partners so that they can better support students. It's precisely the reason why Dyslexia

Canada has commended the government of Alberta for our work in this area. We will make sure that all students have the right foundations they need to succeed.

Ms Chapman: Given that teachers were provided with less than a month to administer and enter the data from dozens of assessments all while still keeping a classroom running and given that a month has now passed since this government received the results of those assessments or screeners, to the minister: will our classrooms get the additional resources needed to address identified learning needs rolling out to schools this week, or will the minister need to ask for an extension?

2:40

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDP – when they were in office, they were focused on making sure that they turn students into, quote, agents of change. That was taken directly from the social studies curriculum that those members were trying to impose on Alberta's students. In contrast, our government is focused on making sure that every student has the right foundations that they need to succeed. We will make sure that they succeed in literacy and numeracy, which all experts know are the foundations to a strong academic future.

Jasper Wildfire Recovery

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, while some residents of Jasper have returned home following the devastating wildfire that destroyed or damaged around 30 per cent of structures in the town, many other residents are still anxiously waiting. Through this disaster countless families and individuals are searching for safe and stable housing during this challenging time. Our government's commitment of \$112 million towards interim housing for displaced residents is a vital step in supporting the community's recovery. This investment demonstrates the government's dedication to the residents and also highlights the importance of a swift response. Could the minister provide details on how our government is supporting residents with Jasper's interim housing?

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

Mr. Nixon: Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, thank you to the member, who has worked tirelessly for his community since the tragedy took place, the fire in Jasper, and his tremendous impact on the people that live there that he represents. One thing that the member has taught us and asked us to do as well as the community of Jasper is to recognize that things like trailers and other aspects that we've used in other emergencies will not work long term for Jasper. They need us to be able to bring in quality housing that would allow families to live in those homes while they rebuild and make sure they continue to operate in Jasper and make sure that crown jewel that we have up there in the mountains will continue to be here for generations to come. That's why we're investing \$122 million to accomplish that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that while it is encouraging to hear that work on these interim housing units has already begun, concerns remain regarding the eligibility criteria for residents and given that many families are anxious about securing housing during this rebuilding period and given that the government would like to see this interim housing transition to permanent housing to address Jasper's long-standing housing issue, could the

same minister clarify whether the government intends to keep the interim housing on-site permanently after its use in order to address the ongoing housing shortage?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just returned from Jasper this morning, where I was checking up on our projects, making sure that they're moving. Happy to report they're moving at a rapid rate to be able to make sure that we can house Jasperites shortly inside that community while the community is rebuilt. One of the things that the Premier challenged us to do is to find an interim solution but also something that we could leave as a long-term legacy in Jasper. Through you to the member, yes, this housing will be used for interim purposes for those who have lost their homes. Our intention is to keep it there in a permanent way to be able to make sure that Jasper can continue to do its great work for another generation to come.

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, given that Jasper is not only a breathtaking destination but also a vital economic hub for our province, with tourism serving as a cornerstone of the local economy, given that the recent wildfires have posed significant challenges by impacting local businesses and the livelihoods of residents who rely on tourism and given that as we work towards recovery, it is imperative that we focus on revitalizing this industry to support the community and restore its economic landscape, could the Minister of Tourism and Sport outline any plans the government may be implementing to support the recovery and growth of the tourism industry in Jasper?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Tourism and Sport, the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I get to the question, I would like to take a quick moment to commend that Member for West Yellowhead for his tremendous leadership. Since this tragedy that member has been a tireless advocate for the community as you work towards recovery, liaising between businesses and the town council and Parks Canada. Our government recognizes the importance of Jasper both as a community and a contributor to our province but also as a premier tourism destination. That is why we're committing \$2.5 million to help recovery with Tourism Jasper so they can salvage the fall and winter seasons and prepare for the summer next year.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the bell that concludes Oral Question Period did not ring today, but the time for Oral Question Period has now concluded. In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose has a statement to make.

Lung Cancer Awareness Month

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month, and I'm happy to speak on behalf of Right2Survive in this House today. Right2Survive is a coalition of the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network, Lung Cancer Canada, and Lung Health Foundation, which have come together to promote lung cancer screening programs in Canada.

Lung cancer is one of the most diagnosed cancers across the country and one of the leading causes of cancer deaths in Alberta. Lung cancer has devastating effects on the lives of Albertans, our families, and our communities. This is why it's so important to highlight the crucial value that early detection and access to lung cancer screening have on patient outcomes and survival rates.

I want to acknowledge the work that this government has already done to promote survivorship. Just last month the Minister of Health announced an investment of \$1.5 million for a mobile lung screening program to increase access to these services for rural communities and underserved populations across this province. As part of Alberta's Budget 2024 our government is expanding our health care system capacity by hiring more health care professionals, including oncologists, at all cancer centres.

These investments are tremendous, but at this moment I want to thank Right2Survive for their incredible work and advocacy. A reception will be hosted by Right2Survive in the Queen Elizabeth II Building on November 19. I hope my colleagues will join me there to learn about and show support for their work.

As the number of new cases continues to grow, we need to prepare Alberta's cancer system for the future. Access to cancer screening services ensures that patients are diagnosed in a timely manner and helps Alberta lung cancer patients become Alberta lung cancer survivors. I'm proud to be a part of a government which is committed to providing high-quality health care services for all Albertans, no matter where they live in the province. This month please visit right2survive.ca to find out if you're at risk and see a doctor about lung screening near you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Darrel Janz

Member Batten: Mr. Speaker, we have lost a great Calgarian. For over 60 years Calgarians watched, listened, and trusted Darrel Janz with the news of our city. From 1973 to 2010 Darrel hosted the CTV evening news in Calgary, but even after leaving the anchor's desk, Darrel spent his time profiling and interviewing Albertans who made contributions to Alberta and Calgary.

Born in the small town of Main Centre, Saskatchewan, Darrel started his broadcasting career at CFAM Radio in Altona, Manitoba, and then worked in Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Montreal, and London before returning to Calgary, where he spent the rest of his life. Darrel gave back to the next generation by teaching broadcast journalism at SAIT for 11 years and at Mount Royal University for 15. He loved teaching, loved his students, and kept in touch with those he had taught.

The tributes are pouring in for this remarkable man who gave so much to Calgary. For so many Darrel Janz was the face of Calgary, an almost legendary figure; for many more it is impossible to imagine the anchor's desk without Darrel in it. Our caucus offers our thoughts to the family and friends of Darrel Janz. We thank him for giving so much to Alberta's communities, for telling Calgary's stories, and for making Calgary the world-class city it is.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 30

Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 30, the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

Alberta's government is committed to making life better for Albertans, and my ministry works hard to cut red tape and simplify complicated processes for Albertans. Bill 30 is a win on both fronts.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 30, the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

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

2:50

Bill 32

Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2)

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 32, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2). This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

This legislation includes several changes designed to move forward on some mandate items and would allow us to more effectively meet the needs of Albertans. The Financial Statutes Amendment Act proposes the following changes: introducing alternative finance mortgages – if passed, we would be the first jurisdiction in Canada to make legislative changes so Alberta-regulated financial institutions could offer alternative finance mortgage products – increasing social benefits and tax system parameters by 2 per cent for 2025, implementing a new legislative framework that would improve consistency and flexibility as the government continues to respond to inflationary pressures, implementing the electric vehicle tax we announced in Budget 2024, easing the financial burden on families affected by the loss of a child and changes that would ensure they receive the Alberta child and family benefit for an extra six months after their child has passed, and, lastly, some minor technical tax amendments. Mr. Speaker, these changes move the dial further in a positive direction so that we can create positive and sustainable changes across government programs.

I'm pleased to move first reading of Bill 32, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2). Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a first time]

Bill 209

Reconciliation Implementation Act

Member Arcand-Paul: Mr. Speaker, I rise and request leave to introduce Bill 209, the Reconciliation Implementation Act.

Before I begin, I'd like to honour the late Senator Murray Sinclair, to whom this country owes a great debt of gratitude for writing our path forward in Indigenous relations not only in reconciliation but also as a country.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from Indigenous nations across this beautiful province, and they want action on reconciliation in this province. This bill will do just that. This legislation creates a

framework for the work of reconciliation and commits this House, through the Minister of Indigenous Relations, to work with Indigenous nations to implement the TRC calls to action. It also marks a departure from common-law duties to consult while providing the province a helpful framework that is rooted in the unique relationship the province has with First Nations and Métis communities through treaty and the legislative frameworks respectively. This legislation is timely and will demonstrate to Indigenous peoples in Alberta that this government is truly committed to reconciliation.

I'm proud to introduce the Reconciliation Implementation Act, and I hereby move first reading of Bill 209, the Reconciliation Implementation Act. [Remarks in Cree]

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table five copies of a letter I wrote and published in the *Calgary Herald* correcting a previous story that wrongly conflated safe supply with supervised consumption sites.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I have countless e-mails that I could be tabling, but today I would like to table a very important letter that I would love all members of this House to read. It is entitled Alberta Mental Health Professionals Statement Condemning the Alberta Government's Anti-2SLGBTQIA+ Policy Proposals, in which countless professionals from across this province join over 6,000 Canadians and mental health professionals who stand in solidarity with the statement that firmly asserts that 2SLGBTQ rights are human rights.

Thank you.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table five copies of correspondence I received today from a constituent, Anne Landry, wherein she reviews the significant affordability challenges Albertans are experiencing based on proof points and reports from the House of Commons HUMA Committee, the Calgary Chamber of commerce, the city of Calgary economic outlook, and Food Banks Canada.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Ellingson: Yep. Mr. Speaker, I stand today in solidarity with our trans community and allies and table another letter from a constituent to the Premier just spelling out, with their transgender child who is now 27 and happily married to their high school sweetheart, that denying gender-affirming care creates a situation where children do not feel supported and they feel unsafe.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings?

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table five requisite copies of a letter from my constituent Zaydee Cervantes, who is advocating for fair and decent wages for educational assistants and all education

support staff, who do the most important work of supporting Alberta's most vulnerable children.

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. Ms Schulz, Minister of Environment and Protected Areas, pursuant to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act environmental protection security fund annual report April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there were no points of order today. A gold star for everyone.

That brings us to Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a request for unanimous consent that is to set aside the other business of the day to proceed immediately to government business.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Motions

Committee Membership

50. Mr. Schow moved:
- Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
- (a) on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, that Mr. Dyck replace Hon. Mr. Hunter;
 - (b) on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, that Ms Lovely replace Mr. Long, and that Mr. Lundy replace Hon. Mr. Hunter;
 - (c) on the Standing Committee on Private Bills, that Mrs. Johnson replace Mrs. Petrovic;
 - (d) on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, that Mr. Cyr replace Ms Lovely, and that Mr. Ellingson replace Mr. Haji;
 - (e) on the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services, that Dr. Metz be appointed;
 - (f) on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities, that Mr. Haji replace Dr. Metz;
 - (g) on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, that Ms Sweet replace Hon. Mr. Schmidt as deputy chair, and that Member Calahoo Stonehouse replace Hon. Mr. Schmidt.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18. Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate or provide additional questions or comments?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate.

Mr. Schow: Waived.

[Government Motion 50 carried]

Written Questions

Supportive Living Accommodation Investigations

Q4. Ms Sigurdson asked that the following question be accepted. How many audits or investigations were undertaken by the Ministry of Health during the period from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, in respect of a complaint made under the Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act?

[Debate adjourned October 28: Member Arcand-Paul speaking]

The Speaker: Are there others wishing to join in the debate to Written Question 4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and offer some comments on Written Question 4, submitted by my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview. Her request is a simple one, that the government should very easily be able to answer, and that is: "How many audits or investigations were undertaken by the Ministry of Health during the period from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, in respect of a complaint made under the Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act?"

3:00

Now, when my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview submitted that question and spoke to it the other day, she highlighted, quite rightly, a number of the concerns that her constituents have expressed regarding the state of seniors' care in this province, and that's something that I have continued to hear from my constituents as well.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The riding of Edmonton-Gold Bar has a high proportion of seniors, much higher than the average urban riding and certainly among the highest in the entire province, and I hear from seniors living in those accommodations as well as their friends and family who worry about the care or, in many cases, the lack of care that they're receiving in these facilities. You know, we continue to hear stories about health care aides and other care staff who are not able to meet with their patients on a timely basis. We hear stories about people who are going without eating for long periods of time. We hear stories about people who are going without having a bath or a shower for long periods of time. We hear stories about people who are going without having their clothes changed, their beds changed. Those basic services that Albertans rightly expect are not being provided in many cases.

You know, Madam Speaker, I think it's fair to say that the average Albertan expects that there will be reasonable care provided for them when the time comes. They've worked hard all of their lives; they've paid their taxes; they've saved adequately, hopefully; and now that they've become sick and unable to care for themselves, they rely upon the people that the government has assigned the responsibility to care for them. In a shockingly high number of cases we know that seniors are not getting the care that they deserve, and it's this government's responsibility to make sure that the people that they entrust to provide that care are doing the job.

That's what's driving this question. One of the key tools that government has to ensure that people who are providing care to our seniors is to conduct investigations and audits so that the government has an idea of how well the associations that are providing care for seniors are doing. So you would think, Madam Speaker, that if the government were doing a good job of holding continuing care providers to the responsibilities that we put upon them, they would be more than happy to reveal the number of

investigations and audits that were undertaken by the Ministry of Health. But, in fact, we saw the Minister of Health rise and respond to this question by informing the House that she wasn't going to provide the information that my friend from Edmonton-Riverview requested.

I had a chance to review the Minister of Health's remarks, and while she really avoided talking about the specific reasons that she didn't want to release the investigations or audits that were conducted by her ministry in calendar year 2023, she seemed to imply that there was really no problem with the state of seniors' care in this province because the government is increasing the number of hours, allegedly, that providers are being funded for, neglecting to mention the fact that any requirements for a standard number of hours provided by legislation and regulation have been completely scrapped by this government. And then she suggested, quite to my concern, Madam Speaker, that somehow we were calling into question the ability of the care providers themselves to do their jobs, that by asking how many investigations and audits were undertaken by the Ministry of Health in calendar year 2023, we were suggesting that the people who work hard in these facilities to care for their patients were not doing a good job.

It's quite a shame, Madam Speaker, that we continue to see a government, rather than take accountability for its responsibilities and be transparent with the people of Alberta about whether or not they're doing a good job holding continuing care providers to account – she stands up and just throws dirt in our eyes and accuses the opposition of not caring about seniors. It's an odd response.

You would think that a minister who was allegedly proud of the work that her government was doing to support continuing care would be more than happy to release this data. What better way could Albertans know that the government is doing a good job of holding continuing care providers to account than by being fully transparent about the number of investigations and audits that were conducted in 2023 and then telling us the results of those investigations and audits?

If the vast majority of continuing care providers are passing their investigations and their audits with flying colours, then that's valuable information that the people of Alberta need to know. Then the response to the problems that we see with continuing care providers lies not within the work that the continuing care providers are doing but in the standards to which they're held. However, if we see that a number of investigations and audits show that continuing care providers are continually failing to meet the standards of care and are not meeting the government's expectations for care, then that is the justification for a different response, that we need to do more to enforce the standards of care and make sure that continuing care providers are living up to the expectations that the people of Alberta have put upon them.

By avoiding to answer the question at all, my constituents who see problems with their loved ones in continuing care are left without any solution whatsoever. We don't know what the proper response is to the problems that we're seeing in continuing care. Is it better standards, or is it better enforcement? This government just refuses to answer the question whatsoever.

Now, just to add a little bit to the confusion, the Minister of Health responded by saying that the Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act is no longer in place, that now we're moving to the Continuing Care Act, which will be the responsibility of the Seniors, Community and Social Services ministry and not her ministry, Madam Speaker. That further complicates the issue of getting accountability and transparency from this government on this issue.

Now the next time members from our caucus or the members of the public go to seek transparency and accountability for the state

of continuing care in this province, the Minister of Health can rightly say: “Well, it’s not my responsibility anymore. Go and talk to the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.” Then when people go to talk to the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, the ministers say: “Well, this is just our new responsibility. What was going on before was the responsibility of the Minister of Health.” So we get this situation where they’re pointing fingers at each other and ultimately nobody is held responsible and constituents, like mine, who have concerns about the state of continuing care are left in the lurch. There’s nobody willing on the government side to take responsibility for the situations that we see many of our seniors in in continuing care facilities.

We know that this is a persistent pattern of avoiding accountability when it comes to this government. We’ve seen this switcheroo trick pulled by the government on many other occasions, Madam Speaker. We just saw it at Public Accounts last week when Children and Family Services was there to answer questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others who wish to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise to speak to Written Question 4. For so many Albertans supportive living facilities are critical to their quality of life. Unfortunately, not all Albertans are supported in the way that they deserve in over 186 long-term facilities in Alberta and others like it, so the written question before us – how many audits or investigations were undertaken by the Ministry of Health during the period from January 2023 to December 31, 2023, in respect of a complaint made under the Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act? – is actually a relatively straightforward one.

3:10

This is an important question for a number of reasons, and I want to follow up on some of the points that my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar has made as well. It’s an important question because the oversight and accountability from a systems perspective is vital to ensuring the safety of Albertans in such facilities, frankly, the homes for thousands of Albertans. But safety and standard of care – I just want to remind this House – is simply the minimum standard. I am sure that members of this House would agree that that’s just what it is. It’s the minimum, but I guess that it also begs the question: would it be good enough for your loved one or your parent or someone that you care about in a supportive living facility? Is it good enough?

The point I’m trying to make, Madam Speaker, is that every Albertan deserves a life of dignity. The discussion we’re having today is simply on the enforcement of minimum standards, but I think all of us in this House for our own loved ones would aspire to a greater standard of care to ensure that our parents and loved ones would be able to live a life that is fulfilling. Certainly, as members of this House we would want that for every single Albertan. Whether in old age or for those who need full-time supports because of life-changing circumstances, every Albertan should be able to live a good quality of life, a life of dignity and fulfillment.

That’s why this question and the corresponding actions and commitments from this government are important. We have all made a commitment as members of this House to be accountable to our voters and to Albertans. The number of audits conducted by this government will be a telling measure of how responsive the current government is. Our responsibility here, of course, is to ask questions and to ensure that the government is transparent about the actions it’s taking to address these issues. Audits and investigations

are crucial tools in this process. They bring to light the difficult but necessary truths about what’s happening in supportive living accommodations across Alberta, and without them, we are blind to the gaps, the oversights, and outright failures within the system.

Albertans have a right to know: is this government holding facilities accountable? Again, as I mentioned, these facilities are home to thousands of Albertans who are living there because they have encountered some life-changing circumstances. However, accountability isn’t just about knowing how many audits or investigations have been conducted. It’s also about what these audits reveal and the actions the government takes as a result.

Might I remind members of this House that a recent report from the Auditor General highlighted this very issue, urging the need for stricter oversight and consistent standards across facilities. All of us, Albertans, need to know whether the recommendations in that report are being implemented or ignored. Frankly, the answer to this question takes a step towards addressing some of those recommendations.

But let’s be clear. Safety should be the minimum standard, not the ultimate goal. The real objective here must be to ensure that every resident in these facilities lives a life of dignity and fulfillment, as I previously mentioned. Every Albertan deserves a standard of care that provides not just for their basic needs but allows them to live fully and with respect.

Back to the question to the minister, then, which she has simply not answered. It’s a fairly simple question. In some ways this government is asking Albertans to trust them, but let me just point out that trust is not enough. Let’s look at our current state of health care, for example. There is no question that our system is in crisis. Wait times are through the roof. Over 800,000 Albertans do not have access to a family doctor. A constituent recently shared with me that he had to wait over 18 months for a hip replacement despite being in excruciating pain, and another constituent shared that she had to wait over six weeks for cancer surgery despite being told that the size of her tumour would have doubled by then. Madam Speaker, this government is failing Albertans on health care, and it is disappointing that this government is not able to adequately answer such a simple question that we’ve put forward.

The current health care system is under tremendous strain and pressure, and Albertans are paying for it. According to the Alberta Medical Association those Albertans without a family doctor are likely to face chronic conditions that are impossible to manage, and new issues, including cancers, may go unnoticed until they are past the point of effective treatment. Many Albertans, especially those who do not have access to a family doctor: that’s certainly a risk that they face.

One particularly distressing example that I want to mention – and I think it highlights the importance of accountability here and the importance of these audits – is the citation at the Carewest Colonel Belcher facility in Calgary. This facility was once an example for high-quality care for veterans, but some folks, families and advocates, are concerned that it is unsafe. We’ve heard of police being called to the facility multiple times to handle incidents, a clear signal that the environment is not what it needs to be. Mixing residents with vastly different care requirements has created an atmosphere where everyone’s safety is compromised, and this is simply unacceptable. This is one example, Madam Speaker, of why audits are so important and why these tools of accountability and why having this information available for Albertans and certainly for this side of the House so that we can have a discussion in this Chamber is incredibly important.

Let me share a personal story. I had a former colleague who had her mother at a long-term care facility, and during one visit she, unfortunately, found her mother in her own soiled bed, and she had

been there for hours. The facility was short-staffed. The staff were without question overworked. Whatever the reason, I think we would all agree in this House that that particular situation was and is unacceptable – imagine if it were our own mother or grandmother – but unfortunately it happens more often than it should.

The Minister of Health seems to be reticent to share numbers and cases, but as I've mentioned, trust alone isn't enough. We have a responsibility in this House to ensure that all actions done by this government see the light of day, and Albertans deserve to know that continuing care providers are providing adequate care. I guess my question to the minister is: what is the government and what is her ministry hiding? We must ensure that the standards of care are being provided. It's a simple – simple – request, and as my . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that would like to join the debate on Written Question 4?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:20 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Kayande
Batten	Elmeligi	Loyola
Boparai	Haji	Metz
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hoffman	Schmidt
Deol	Ip	Shepherd
Eggen	Irwin	

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For – 17 Against – 45

[Written Question 4 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Continuing Care Health Services Standards Compliance

Q5. Ms Hoffman asked on behalf of Ms Sigurdson that the following question be accepted.

How many audits or investigations were conducted under the nursing homes general regulation, the co-ordinated home care program regulation, or any ministerial directive made under the Regional Health Authorities Act in respect of

compliance by an operator with the continuing care health services standards, as amended July 16, 2018, during the period from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023?

Ms Hoffman: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to, for everyone's refreshment, read the question into the record one more time and then happily join in on debate in helping all members of this Assembly understand why this is such an important and valid written question.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We're requesting information as to what follows:

How many audits or investigations were conducted under the nursing homes general regulation, the co-ordinated home care program regulation, or any ministerial directive made under the Regional Health Authorities Act in respect of compliance by an operator with the continuing care [health] services standards, as amended July 16, 2018, during the period from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023?

Just to reiterate the intention of this motion of this written question for everyone's awareness, Madam Speaker, we're looking at one calendar year, so not a huge amount of time but the most recent calendar year that's been completed, and we're simply asking for transparency to ensure that we have all of the proper information about the types of investigations that were conducted under the various forms of legislation that currently govern those who are living in long-term care, specifically the nursing homes general regulation and the co-ordinated home care program regulation.

It's incredibly important that we be able to know what's happening in these facilities. One of the reasons why my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Riverview has brought this forward is because we know that when we were living through the most extreme time in COVID, when there were daily updates, there were a number of fatalities among folks who were living in congregated living sites, specifically those with comorbidities living in long-term care or DSL level 4 or 4D. Those were incredibly high, Madam Speaker, and it was heartbreaking to hear daily updates on the types of folks who were passing away, the number of people who were being moved from continuing care into hospital and into acute-care situations but also into ICU situations where they needed to be intubated.

It's important for us all to remember that we are here as part of a representative democracy, for any grade 6 students who are here watching. We are here as their representatives, as everyone's representatives, to make sure that when we are providing services, we're doing so in the public interest. To be able to do so with full transparency around the number of investigations and information about those investigations for one calendar year, I believe, Madam Speaker, is responsible and the right thing to do in our form of democracy in an open and transparent way.

3:40

I'm going to reflect on that same time when we brought in the continuing care health service standards as amended; we refer to July 16, 2018. I was the minister at that time, and I will say that there were a number of concerns brought forward to my attention and, I'm sure, to ministers before and ministers after around what is happening in continuing care sites. Many of us know and have direct contact with somebody who is living there, but all of us, I think, fear that at some point we might not be able to live independently and we might need more support as well. Knowing exactly what's happening, what type of investigations are happening, what the results of those are, I think is the right thing for

all of us so that we can ensure that we are providing adequate staffing, that we are providing proper oversight and proper support for folks who are living there and folks who are working there.

Earlier today we had a number of AUPE members here in this Assembly observing the proceedings, and I often meet with AUPE members, steelworkers, other health care providers that are in either unionized or non-unionized sites, and the number one thing that they say to me is how hard they're working and how tired they are. I was at a rally not that long ago where AUPE members were talking about how – they showed me their phones and the notifications that they were getting for picking up a site because they were short-staffed. And they said that before they agree to take on one of those calls, they look to see how short-staffed they're going to be.

It is very common that if there's one person who's going to be down, for there to be at least two people who are down. That, of course, is very difficult for anyone working in that situation, let alone if you're working an overtime shift; you're already tired, and you're doing your best. But they said that if there are two vacancies, they often don't take the shift because they know the moral injury that they will suffer as a consequence of the fact that they aren't able to provide the level of care that folks need because of how short-staffed they are and how overwhelmed the system is.

It's important for us to have access to these investigations, because we know that these are everyday stories. But we also know that there are times where staff or family members raise an alarm. Very rarely is it actually a resident, because often folks who are living in congregated care need somebody else to do that work on their behalf. Being able to see the investigations and being able to identify what government is doing to be proactive in preventing things from getting worse, making sure that things get better – I, again, will say that when I was minister, I had regular updates on investigations to my office, and when we found some that were not easily able to be remedied, it was important that we took more action.

There was one facility in Hinton, Madam Speaker, where we brought it back in under the public system so that we could increase the staffing, increase the accountability, and make sure that we were living up to our obligations as people who were part of this representative democracy contracting to various providers to provide services.

There were also times where public facilities didn't meet the standard of quality care. What I would do as the then minister was have officials come in and give me regular updates about what they were doing to make sure that the people who were living there had the care that they needed and what we were doing to make sure that we were funding and monitoring that in an ongoing way to provide that assurance to everyone.

Asking for this through this Assembly. We are simply looking for how many audits or investigations were conducted under those various pieces of legislation and the type of compliance that was directed afterwards. I think that that's fair. We're not even asking specifically for named facilities or specific details about the types of breaches, but I think it is important for us all to have confidence that government is doing their due diligence in providing audits in both an ongoing and a targeted way – you need care 365 and a quarter days of the year, on the leap year days; you don't just need care the day that a scheduled audit happens – so having that information about the number of audits, the types of audits, and the various pieces of legislation that they apply to.

We also made a change around that same time, I believe in 2018 – it might have been 2017 – around bringing forward in continuing care centres a resident and family advisory council. Part of it is because not everything needs to be dealt with through a formal audit. Often

you can have dialogue with residents and with their family members and identify things that could make care in the facility to a higher standard. It wasn't intended to talk about medical care; it was intended to talk about quality-of-life care.

One example I can say, as somebody whose grandmother lived in a long-term care facility for a few years towards the end of her life – and it was a big one. It was here in downtown Edmonton, a Covenant Health facility, the General, and there were a number of different types of care provided in the one building. There was one family member who would often come to these at that time voluntary committees who said that, you know, his mom was part of the Chinese floor, and the kanji wasn't up to her standards. Having a formal process to be able to talk about these quality-of-life things, I think, is incredibly important. But it's also important that the medical side be accounted for, open, and transparent.

I'm grateful that we have the less formal structures through things like the resident and family advisory councils now, but I do think it's important that we have greater transparency around investigations and the type of compliance issues that were identified, particularly when it comes to staffing and making sure that we have the right people providing the right care for the people that we all love and that we all represent.

I am very grateful to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Riverview for bringing this forward and her past experience, of course, as the minister of seniors and housing. She knows how important it is that we have these frequent audits, and she knows the value of reporting it publicly so that we can all make sure that we're doing our best job as legislators in this place to provide the resources necessary for everyone to live a dignified and safe life, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that would like to join this debate on Written Question 5? The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The nursing homes general regulation is no longer in effect in Alberta as it has been replaced by the Continuing Care Act and its regulations effective as of April 1, 2024, but we did bring in the act previously in 2023; therefore, we reject the premise of your question. Currently the ministry can inspect operators and providers who fall under the jurisdiction of the act at any time, including unannounced visits to determine compliance to the act.

Alberta Health employs a variety of enforcement tools to address a situation prior to it potentially getting worse, and we'll continue to do that, Madam Speaker. This might involve having a conversation with the operator about the accommodation standards and various ways in which compliance can be achieved in their particular setting, offering consultation to prospective applicants and initial site visits, attending a resident and family council to see how administration is listening to suggestions for improvement and concerns – and that's something that we brought in; we want the family to be more involved in their continuing care facilities with their loved ones – or issuing immediate actions during inspections when issues are observed.

Regular inspections are conducted to make sure operators are following accommodation standards and care standards if an operator is providing publicly funded care. Most of these inspections are unannounced, and the results are shared publicly at <https://standardsandlicensing.alberta.ca>, just so everybody is clear, because I have heard some misinformation on where the website is. This promotes both transparency and accountability, Madam

Speaker. Of course, the members opposite and anyone in the public are encouraged to go there and have a look at that information.

There are also other significant reporting requirements, including that the minister requires reporting from operators in advance of any planned changes to services or settings, and reporting is required as soon as possible after an incident that did or could negatively impact the health, safety, or well-being of residents or clients. This is mandatory, Madam Speaker. Alberta Health accepts complaints of an accommodation's noncompliance with the supportive living accommodation licensing standards, and current information about licensing status, compliance to accommodation and care standards, and complaints can be found at Alberta Health's continuing care public reporting website. Again, all of this information is public. It can be looked at. It's there for everyone who wants to have a look at it.

3:50

When noncompliances to the standards are identified, Alberta Health works diligently with operators to address issues within specified timelines to ensure that every resident receives quality care and services that keep them safe and healthy. Complaints with respect to anything under the act, regulations, or standards can be directed to the ministry, and the ministry has full authority to follow up, inspect, or take action in response to a complaint. The act and regulations also establish a range of enforcement mechanisms in the event an operator or provider is deemed in contravention of the legislative framework and/or a client resident's health, well-being, or safety is at risk.

Again, Madam Speaker, all of that information is provided. There are the proper checks and balances in place, and we will always make sure that we ensure that the health and safety of our most vulnerable are looked after. For the members opposite to imply otherwise is simply incorrect. Again, all the information is public, easily accessible, and I look forward to sharing more as time goes on.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in regard to Question 5, which was put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. I find it disappointing that the minister might suggest that in any way providing information about how many audits or investigations under the nursing homes general regulation or the co-ordinated home care program regulations or any ministerial directive made is somehow suggesting that the fine women and men who provide care across our province are doing anything but trying their very best to look after very vulnerable Albertans. In fact, what we are asking for here is for the minister to do her job, to provide that oversight, to ensure that we have the information, the data that's available so that you can make adjustments, so that you can continue that high quality of care that we strive to have in each of our continuing care homes and nursing homes across the province.

That's what the job of the minister is, and if she doesn't want to provide that information publicly, then she's not doing her job, Madam Speaker, quite frankly. If you don't have the data in order to figure out where maybe we can make changes to care and so forth, then you're simply undermining the good work that people do at nursing homes and continuing care facilities across this province. That's the problem. That information would be very useful. In fact, it would be more useful than ever now because, again, as the minister pointed out, the Continuing Care Act came into effect on April 1, 2024, so you are shifting a lot of the care and

responsibility here to another ministry and another minister, as this government is doing in many parts of our health care system, turning things upside down and moving it every which way – right? – into different components. Now is the time to look back and say: "This is what I'm giving you. This is what's happened between January 1, 2023, to December 2023. Now, in 2024, we're passing you the torch, and you can use that information and make the improvements and adjustments as needed."

The absence of that information being passed on and being made public is simply, again, a shirking of responsibility by this minister – right? – for no apparent reason save to reject the premise of the question. I mean, good grief, how haughty and misrepresentational is that? You know, not looking at this in any serious way. When we ask questions, we are doing it in order to improve the system. That's what the Member for Edmonton-Riverview is doing. That's what we're doing here this afternoon, right? It's not an inquisition. It is an information-gathering opportunity, simple as that.

If you try to politicize it or somehow, you know, look down your nose at that process, you're looking down your nose at the people who are doing that job in these facilities around the province. You're not judging them; they look at this information, too, and make sure that they know where they can make adjustments. These are very large facilities. Often operators operate in many different facilities all around the province, in different parts of the city at least. So they know, and then they're happy to make adjustments, right? It's not as though they're running anything in secrecy. Quite the opposite. It's this provincial government that is running things in secrecy by withholding this information when they should be sharing it for all Albertans to be able to use. Yeah. I find it disappointing. I find it disturbing, certainly.

I have several facilities in my constituency that do a great job; there's no two ways about it. They had perhaps the most difficult circumstances in a generation or several generations with the pandemic, having to deal with the pandemic at the same time as running these facilities. What a great chance to look at maybe what happened during the pandemic, immediately afterwards with 2023, look at those two pieces together with the data that must be there somewhere – right? – and figure out a better way to move forward in the future. The province is growing fast, and our seniors population is growing just as quickly or even more quickly. What better time than the present to make adjustments through using data and the scientific method to make sure that we're looking after those seniors in the best way possible?

I know that the facilities I have in my constituency are constantly making adjustments, and it's not an easy job to do. They don't look at audits or investigations as some kind of police action somehow compromising their ability to do their job. Quite the opposite. They look at audits as a way to make sure that they are doing their job and that they can demonstrate it. An audit can show something good, too. It's not a punitive thing. You can go and do an audit or an investigation and say: "You know what? That facility is doing a great job under the circumstances, even though they might be compromised through underfunding, through poor quality programs on a provincial level. Look at them holding it together and doing a great job for Alberta's seniors."

There are a number of questions here this afternoon that have a similar theme, and all of them are to do with very basic information that should see the light of day. We know that the Continuing Care Act moves this area of responsibility from one ministry to another, and we want to watch that very carefully because a lot of people in Alberta are saying that each of these moves to dismantle Alberta Health Services into I believe five different pieces, something like that, is simply a cover to forward the motive of more private health care here in the province of Alberta. Lots of people are saying that,

right? So prove us wrong. Say: “No, we’re not doing that at all. We are going to improve things. We’re going to work on the audits and the investigations that we had before. We’re going to make the system better, and we’re going to build a public system that’s strong for now and for the future.” That’s what Albertans want to hear. They want that confidence. They want that safety and security that that information can help to provide.

At a very basic level, not just in health care but in each of these ministries, the basic premise is that you provide for the health and the safety and the security of the population that lives here in the province of Alberta. If you’re not demonstrating how you’re doing that through investigations and audits and what the results are of those audits, you’re simply not doing your job. You are somehow suggesting – should we be confident? Well, we don’t know because we don’t have the information, Madam Speaker, and that is a shirking of the responsibility that this government has to the safety and the responsibility of people here in the province of Alberta.

I mean, there’s still a chance to do the right thing. I’ve never seen a question somehow – you know, maybe there’s another similar one in the docket here this afternoon that can provide some illumination that we’re not providing here with Question 5. Maybe there’s another place in which we can simply throw open the books and see: why are we dividing Alberta Health Services up into so many pieces? Are we providing the financing and the money that can actually provide for this very quickly expanding population, which includes a very quickly expanding senior population, too, right? We don’t stay the same age forever, Madam Speaker. I hate to say it, right?

4:00

Ms Hoffman: Tell your face that.

Mr. Eggen: Yes, indeed. I know it well.

You have to plan for the future, right? We saw some glimmer of hope here when the K to 12 Education minister said: oh, look, we have so many new students in our schools; we need to build \$8 billion more of new schools. Well, that demonstrates that somebody looks to the future a little bit over there on the other side. Let’s do the same for health care. Let’s make sure that we’re building for the future, we’re building for a projection of how many seniors we will have 10 or 15 or 20 years down the road, that we’re using these investigations and audits to fine-tune the dispensation of that care and we are showing it all in a responsible, transparent manner for all Albertans to see.

At the end of the day, those are our seniors. They’re our relatives. They’re our neighbours. They will be us someday ourselves, and the money that is put into that is public money after all, too. All of those things add up to provide for transparency, not secrecy. Make sure you cast the light of day onto this information and put everybody’s minds at ease. For the sake of that and for the sake of everyone I do implore the Health minister to release this information. It’s not rocket science, and everyone will benefit as a result.

Thanks a lot.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Our government has long upheld a strong commitment to accountability, especially in critical sectors like health care, where the trust and well-being of our citizens are paramount. Our mission is and will continue to be to provide quality care that Albertans deserve.

The written question put forth by the member opposite leads one to believe accountability is not something this government takes

seriously. That belief is not one grounded in reality, Madam Speaker. Accountability is a core principle, and we take it seriously to honour the trust that Albertans have placed in us. This guiding principle shapes every decision we make, particularly in continuing care.

As the MLA for the Camrose constituency accountability in continuing care is something I value a great deal. Nearly twice the number of seniors call the constituency I represent home when compared to the provincial average. When there are issues in long-term care centres, nursing homes, or other continuing care settings, the residents or their family often bring them to me because a failure of care is a betrayal of trust, and that is something both I and my government colleagues take very seriously.

Our government’s oversight, regular audits, and targeted investigations in the health care sector are critical measures to ensure that resources are allocated effectively, responsibly, and for the direct benefit of Albertans. In 2022 Alberta took significant steps to maintain oversight of continuing care facilities. Under the Public Health Act the co-ordinated home care program regulation requires the regional health authorities to deliver the program in line with high standards. This regulation governs admission, services, client records, and fees in publicly funded health care, including designated supportive living. Standards in these programs demonstrate our commitment to provide high-quality, safe, and respectful care in nursing homes, home care, and other continuing care settings.

The goal of these audits is twofold: first, to ensure that all operators meet the high standards Albertans expect and, second, to prevent the misuse or inefficient allocation of public resources. When we investigate taxpayer dollars in health care, we do so with a clear purpose, to provide essential services, uphold quality care, and support the well-being of Albertans. Routine audits and investigations are key tools used to identify potential gaps, enforce corrective actions where needed, and uphold the standards that Albertans trust.

In Budget 2024 we reinforced our dedication to transforming the continuing care system with a \$1 billion investment over three years. This funding will expand community-based care options, increase workforce capacity, promote choice and innovation, and enhance quality across the continuing care sector. Additionally, Budget 2024 includes funding to gradually increase direct care hours in continuing care homes, helping us provide person-centred care to improve quality of life for Albertans and ease the burden on health care workers.

While Alberta has experienced strong growth, our government is committed to making targeted investments to modernize health care across critical areas. We have committed \$475 million to update Alberta’s primary health care system, with \$200 million over two years to improve access to family physicians and \$15 million to develop a compensation model for nurse practitioners. We have earmarked \$6.6 billion dollars for physician compensation and development, an increase from Budget 2023. Additionally, \$287 million over four years, part of a federal agreement, will go toward mental health and addiction facilities with targeted support for children, youth, adults, and Indigenous communities.

Recognizing the need for more rural health care professionals, \$62.4 million will be invested to establish rural health training centres and expand physician education. The budget also includes \$20 million over the next three years for planning a stand-alone Stollery children’s hospital with \$17 million in new funding. An additional \$35 million will help purchase new emergency medical service vehicles, upgrade the fleet, and acquire essential equipment. To support Albertans facing addiction and mental health care challenges, we are continuing the Alberta recovery model with a

total allocation of \$1.55 billion to ensure access to recovery resources.

Through these investments alongside our commitment to routine audits, we maintain a comprehensive oversight system alignment with our goal to deliver safe, compassionate, and efficient care. Our audits, investigations, and compliance checks identify areas for improvement and create an environment of continuous improvement. When we find issues that require attention, the government takes corrective action, supporting operators to meet these standards and improve services. This proactive stance reflects our values, promoting accountability, reducing waste, and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent on direct improvements to service and care rather than unnecessary overhead. This will ensure that taxpayer money is directed where it's needed most to improve care quality, enhance patient outcomes, and support Alberta's health care workforce.

Our approach to health care oversights also builds public trust. Albertans deserve to know that their government is committed to accountability, actively monitoring care in their communities. Through consistent and transparent audits we demonstrate this commitment, reinforcing Alberta's reputation as a province that prioritizes the well-being of its citizens. We are transparent with our findings and any corrective actions. In fact, they are publicly available online so Albertans can be confident that we hold health care providers accountable.

Madam Speaker, accountability is not only about reinforcing compliance. It's about building trust and upholding the values that make Alberta a great place to live. The people of Alberta are known for their independence, hard work, and community commitment. Our government embodies these values in managing health care, always striving to deliver services efficiently, responsibly, and with respect for those that we serve. Every Albertan who contributes to our health care system deserves to know that we are using their funds wisely and with a deep sense of responsibility.

For those who question whether our government is truly committed to accountability, let our actions speak for themselves. Our system of regular audits and compliance checks is designed to meet the highest standards Albertans expect. This is accountability in action, delivering results, maintaining high standards, and ensuring that every dollar is used to benefit Alberta residents.

In closing, our government's commitment to accountability and health care is a promise to every Albertan. Through audits, investigations, and high standards we ensure that health care in Alberta remains responsive, reliable, and worthy of the trust that Albertans place in it. We are committed to ensuring Alberta's health care system remains accountable and sustainable for future generations. This is our promise to you, and it's one we uphold on a daily basis. It's our mission to deliver the care that Albertans need and deserve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:10

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

Member Batten: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to of course speak about Question 5, asking for a number of audits, investigations conducted in 2023. It had been submitted by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. It's hard to believe this question hasn't actually been answered. Not really sure what's being hidden here. Maybe the government just hasn't bothered looking. Have they not been tracking and paying attention to the needs of our continuing care? Why haven't you produced a number? Are we going to wait for this government to present a bill similar to that of

Bill 25, that they introduced earlier this week, the child care amendment act that literally bounces accountability from ministry to ministry?

The world learned many lessons having moved through the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that airborne viruses are quite serious. We know that thousands upon thousands of Albertans died in the last number of years and will continue to if this government continues to speak out of both sides of their mouths, providing polarizing information and leaving Albertans confused. If the government are as transparent with their findings as claimed by the Member for Camrose, why is it, then, that this government is denying science, ignoring the facts? This is avoiding accountability, Madam Speaker.

Another huge lesson was that it was painfully, harmfully clear that we are not doing enough to ensure the appropriate care or respect for our fellow Albertans in our senior homes and continuing care. Does this government believe those concerns were fixed by fairies, maybe some gnomes? Maybe they think that their thoughts and prayers have improved the system. The Health minister likes to use an expression credited to Albert Einstein, and I quote: insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. End quote. Does that mean that the Health minister will do more than send thoughts and prayers? Will we see transparency and accountability? Ah, it was worth a try.

I've stood in this Chamber before and shared stories of my years practising as a registered nurse, but did you know I was also a nursing instructor? Sure was. I had the honour of helping create professional, accountable, and amazing nurses. Their first clinical placement for those eager new nurses is always inside a seniors' continuing care centre. The reason why it's first is because time spent building connections with seniors allows these students to learn how to speak to patients, which, by the way, is actually really important, especially when working with people in some of the most vulnerable states.

Why do I share this? It's because it's never failed to impress me, the reactions from my students super early in their placement. They have to make sense of what they're seeing and being asked to do relative to what they've learned through their studies. They would start horrified and shocked that so many patients would simply wander around the unit all day, hang out in the same chair, or, even worse, would be confined to their beds. Did you know that for every day a patient is on bedrest, it requires at least a week to regain their strength? A week. A lack of movement or bedrest can cause pressure sores, weakened bones, weak muscles, stiff joints, blood clots, and decreased cognition, all resulting in increased mortality.

The nursing students would always point out that the, and I quote, gold standard care was not happening even though all their schooling had told them otherwise. By the end of their placement nursing students had all incorporated different ways to encourage mobility into their practice and, as a proud instructor here, shared their tips with the unit staff. They noted a problem, brainstormed a solution, and shared that information, which is exactly the type of analytical thought and solution production that is necessary to be a successful nurse.

However, what the nursing students also frequently noted was that there was simply too much to do, too little time, and far too many needs for baseline staffing. Even with the addition of eight eager nursing students there was simply too much to do. What happens when you have too much to do? Well, you have to cut something, Madam Speaker. Sure, a couple of times you can stay late, but you can't do that forever. You're just going to burn out. This is why this question is so important. We need to know how the changes this government is making to public health care – we need

to know if they are providing the necessary and vital care for Albertans.

Madam Speaker, my grandmother passed away almost two years ago. She spent her last few years living in a continuing care centre. This was incredibly scary. It was scary because we knew how underfunded our health care system has been, because we knew how overworked our vital continuing care staff are, and we were in mourning. As my grandmother's dementia increased and her cognition declined, knowing that she was safe and being taken care of and that she wasn't the thing that had to be pushed aside because there's simply too much to do was really important.

This was heartbreaking, Madam Speaker. The staff that worked with my grandmother wanted nothing more than to provide the best care for her and everyone else. Unfortunately, because of decisions this government has made and continues to make, our continuing care and senior centres are simply not being properly audited, inspected, supported, resourced. And because of all that, I would love an actual answer to: how many audits and inspections have occurred in the year 2023?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to respond to and add my comments on the member on the opposite side's question about the number of audits or investigations conducted under the nursing homes general regulation, the co-ordinated home care program regulation, and the relevant ministerial directives under the Regional Health Authorities Act related to compliance with continuing care health services standards in 2023.

First, I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Riverview for the question as it allows our government to reaffirm our commitment to transparency, quality of care, and accountability in Alberta's continuing care system. As the member may know, this information is publicly accessible online and readily available to any member of the public, including members of this Chamber. The website to visit for these updates and publicly available information is standardsandlicensing.alberta.ca.

It is important to state that this government takes noncompliance issues in continuing care very seriously. When a facility falls short of our rigorous standards, Alberta Health closely monitors its operations, ensuring that corrective actions are taken and, if necessary, escalating enforcement measures to protect residents' health, safety, and well-being. To further emphasize our UCP government's commitment towards the quality of continuing care for all Albertans, I'm pleased to note, Madam Speaker, that our government recently expanded Alberta Health's licensing and compliance monitoring branch within the continuing care division. This division, which focuses specifically on compliance and investigation, now has a greater capacity to respond to ongoing or emergent concerns more effectively than ever before.

Our commitment is reflected in our continued investments. For instance, in Budget 2024 we allocated a historic \$1 billion over three years to transfer Alberta's continuing care system. This investment isn't just a number. It reflects real improvements that will be felt by residents, staff, and families across Alberta. These funds are being used to enhance workforce capacity, increase community-based care, expand choice, foster innovation, and crucially improve quality across our continuing care facilities. Furthermore, Budget 2024 included targeted funding to incrementally increase direct hours of care within our continuing care homes.

This commitment is more than a financial investment. It represents an investment in the lives of our residents and the well-being of the staff who serve them. By increasing direct hours of care, we aim to provide a higher standard of in-person, centred care that will not only improve the quality of life for our residents but also alleviate demands on our health care staff. This support fosters a more compassionate, responsive, and humane environment across Alberta's continuing care homes.

In addition, this year we introduced the Continuing Care Act, which came into effect April 1, 2024. The introduction of the Continuing Care Act this year underscores our government's dedication to reforming and modernizing Alberta's continuing care sector. This new legislation brings consistency in licensing and compliance monitoring, allowing Alberta Health to assume a comprehensive oversight role that spans the spectrum of continuing care.

4:20

The act allows for a modernized, person-centred approach that recognizes dignity, respect, and the unique needs of residents and staff alike. Importantly, the act is designed to adapt to the evolving needs of Albertans, incorporating advancements and emerging best practices into care delivery while ensuring that standards keep pace with the realities of modern health care. The consistency will be invaluable in maintaining high-quality standards across all facilities.

The Continuing Care Act also brings new provisions to safeguard residents by enabling Alberta Health to respond more quickly and decisively to noncompliance, thus reinforcing a culture of safety and respect within all continuing care settings. This is critical to Alberta's continuing care system, where we recognize not only the legal obligation to compliance but also the moral obligation to provide dignified, person-centred care for every resident. By establishing this legislation, we're not only addressing immediate needs but also positioning Alberta as a leader in continuing care standards and oversight, a model that other jurisdictions may look to.

The Continuing Care Act underscores the government's commitment to upholding person-centred care in continuing care settings. This means striving not only for compliance but for quality through a tailored fit and compassionate care that allows Albertans to age with dignity, respect, and comfort. So to answer the member's question, yes, Alberta Health remains diligent in its responsibility to monitor, investigate, and enforce standards within our continuing care system, but beyond compliance numbers we're creating a culture where Albertans in care are valued, respected, and safe every day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate it. The broad question here has to do with transparency and accountability, because if you're not able to provide specific measures to the work that's being done inside of these care facilities, if you're not measuring things, if you're not working at figuring out how to make these services better and you're not producing those documents, you're not providing those documents to the public, then how are we going to know that we're actually improving upon the care?

People have heard me in this House say it before, that hearing an anecdote here or there does not mean it's data but all the more reason why we need the data in order to make the decisions that we need to make because we are getting anecdotes from family

members of people who are in continuing care about how abhorrent the conditions are in some of these facilities. So this is really where we need to have that data and make it accessible to us as a Legislature so that we can then recommend how to improve upon the work that is being done in these continuing care facilities.

This is what I find really troubling, Madam Speaker, that although the – it's almost as if the government wants to just create a smokescreen so that the people who are providing the continuing care within the private framework in which they're doing it can continue doing things to, I would say, the least quality possible because there is no regulation holding them up to a particular standard. Then, on top of that, they're not providing auditing numbers to show how things are actually going within these continuing care facilities.

But what we're talking about here are seniors, people in our community that deserve good-quality care. When you look at the situation that a lot of these seniors are in – and I hear these things first-hand from people who actually work in some of these facilities, constituents of mine who come and tell me of the experiences that they're having, and they tell me that because there's no regulation or no policy, there's a lack of cleanliness, of odour control, nutrition.

[Mr. Cyr in the chair]

My own constituency assistant, before they actually started working in the office of Edmonton-Ellerslie, worked in a continuing care facility, Mr. Speaker, up in Fort McMurray before she actually came down to Edmonton and started working with me. She was telling me that – well, she's told me a number of stories, but one of the things that she often comments about from her experience is that a lot of these seniors, immobile in their beds, are often left sitting in their own excrement or urine. Now, of course, I'm not putting the blame on the workers themselves because they're being completely overworked, which I will get to.

The other horrifying story that she told me is the number of sexual assaults that happen in these continuing care facilities. I find it absolutely horrifying, but this is the reality of what's happening within these continuing care facilities, Mr. Speaker. We should be, all of us, appalled that something like that is happening. You start putting all of these incidents, all of these anecdotal pieces of information together, and you start asking yourself: okay; well, we need an audit process to actually uncover some of the realities behind the anecdotal data that we're actually getting, because, I mean, we have to believe that what these people are telling us is true, then being able to measure and decipher and actually come up with data so that we can best deal with the situation.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

But, unfortunately, we have a government that, rather than delve deeper into these situations and try to come up with a response and try to come up with a way to actually deal with the problems that individuals are facing within these continuing care facilities, just wants to muddy the waters and makes it so that instead of having regulations that would actually make facilities work and provide quality standard of care for a lot of the people that live within these facilities, they'll say: "No, no, no, no. Let's just make it voluntary. Let's just make it voluntary because it's too much red tape." You know what, Madam Speaker? I agree. There are times when there is a lot of red tape, and we need to work to reduce that. We agree with the government on those aspects. But when it comes to the actual care of individuals, that's when those regulations are absolutely necessary.

If this government persists in moving towards privatization of that care, then we have to work with those private interests in order to make sure that the quality of care is there for the people of Alberta that actually deserve it. They deserve that quality. Then, on top of that, we also require regulation and standardization of the number of hours that the people who work in this field actually have to work. A lot of them are incredibly overworked.

4:30

Madam Speaker, the reality is that the majority of the people who work inside of this field are racialized women, so I have to ask myself: does the government just not care about racialized women and the number of hours that they have to work? Why do they keep putting the burden of this private system on top of these people? It's a question that they have to answer. It is a question that they need to answer when it comes to the work within continuing care.

As I was saying, there are a number of issues with lack of cleanliness, of odour control, nutrition, hydration, infection prevention that need to be measured, analyzed, and audits provided on a regular basis so that we know what the conditions of these continuing care facilities are.

There's another aspect of this, Madam Speaker. My assistant, who used to work up in Fort McMurray in a continuing care facility, was saying that there's a prescribed number of meals that are put on a rotation, and then the people who live in these continuing care facilities just kind of rotate through these meals. It's like one after another, like: okay; every Tuesday you're going to be eating carrots and peas with a little bit of mashed potato, and then in the next days – and it just continues over and over and over and over again.

Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, I think that these seniors deserve a lot more than that. They don't deserve to be treated in this way. It's imperative that the government be able to respond, provide information, and have regular audits so that regulations could . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to join in this debate on Written Question 5?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:32 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Kayande
Batten	Haji	Loyola
Boparai	Hoffman	Metz
Deol	Ip	Schmidt
Ellingson	Irwin	Shepherd

Against the motion:

Amery	Johnson	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Schow
Boitchenko	Loewen	Schulz
Bouchard	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Lovely	Sinclair
de Jonge	Lunty	Singh
Dreeshen	McDougall	Stephan
Dyck	McIver	Turton
Ellis	Nally	van Dijken
Fir	Neudorf	Wiebe
Getson	Nicolaides	Williams

Glubish	Nixon	Wilson
Guthrie	Petrovic	Wright, J.
Horner	Pitt	Yao
Hunter	Rowswell	Yaseen
Jean		
Totals:	For – 15	Against – 46

[Written Question 5 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

4:50 Nursing and Personal Services Provision

Q6. Dr. Metz asked on behalf of Ms Sigurdson that the following question be accepted.

How many operators were investigated during the period from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, for failing to provide the minimum average hours of nursing and personal services required under section 14 of the nursing homes operation regulation, Alta. reg. 258/1985?

Dr. Metz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to speak to this question. Now, we're well aware that that act is now replaced by a new act where there are no hours required, but it's really important that we know where we were prior to this change of note, what was happening during 2023, when there was a minimum number of hours, 1.9 hours. Now we've moved to a new system where apparently, according to the minister, providers are required to provide 3.62 hours of care per day but that that is discretionary. This allows flexibility, apparently, to meet the needs of facilities and perhaps patients as well.

We need to improve on the care that's being provided to people, and the only way that we can know if we're getting anywhere is by measuring it. We need to know what is happening. How many institutions were investigated for not providing the required number of hours of care? Now, we understand that those hours are not something within the act anymore, that they are worked out by each institution, but we'd like to know: what is the transparency around what is required for each institution, and how often are they meeting these standards?

Ontario has come through with a minimum of four hours per day of care, which is at least a minimum recommendation for care. What are we doing in Alberta? What do we need to do? At this point in time what are we measuring? Give us this baseline of what was happening during the year 2023. This is not on the website, is not at all findable on the website that talks about regulations and compliance. If this data were available, it would have been much easier for the government to have provided it and we wouldn't need to be here debating at this time. This seems to be a master class in leading us down the route that there is some information somewhere when, in fact, it isn't available.

We need to know: who is doing these inspections, or how many inspections are actually happening? What triggers an investigation, and how often is this happening in each home? Aren't consumers, as we're now thinking of them or we're being told to think of them – shouldn't they know what is going on in the different places that they are looking at to move? How do we hold the operators accountable for not providing the care that they're meant to provide? What happens if there's noncompliance? What happens if there is repeated noncompliance? We cannot improve if we do not know where we're going.

So what happens if people do not get the care that they are deemed to need? Well, one of the things that happens is that they get bedsores. What are bedsores? Bedsores are a wound in the skin

that is there because the person has not moved enough or been moved enough if they're not capable of moving themselves. It causes ischemia, which is the lack of blood flow to that tissue, which injures the tissue. Now, if we are not providing enough care, we're not moving patients enough, and bedsores will be on the rise. We also know that bedsores are increased when there is lack of nutrition. One of the other important parts of care is to feed people, so we need to be providing adequate nutrition and be sure that there's enough staff available to actually get that into the patients that need it.

What about bedsores? What happens when a person gets a bedsore? Well, typically they're going to be hospitalized, or they may die. Bedsores are a frequent cause of sepsis, which is an overwhelming infection that causes tremendous pain, morbidity, and illness. It's estimated that in Canada we spend \$3.9 billion per year just on bedsores, so it's critically important that we know what is happening. We can look at the literature. CIHI has reported that the lack of care has led to bedsores, that bedsores have increased from .13 per 100,000 hospitalizations to .19 per 100,000 hospitalizations. The more we cut back care and don't ensure that care is being provided, this rate is only going to increase.

Certainly, in my role as a physician I saw many of my patients that often had multiple sclerosis that were struggling with bedsores. Immobility, spasticity, many things will cause bedsores, and many of them were cared for in long-term care and did not get the proper care and ended up hospitalized. This causes great human suffering. It causes great cost. It causes great worry. The people that work in the care homes who are unable to provide that care suffer great moral injury, and after a person suffers this injury, they never get back to the way they were before. An injury that leads to a person that is in continuing care needing to be hospitalized, whether that be bedsores, falls, some other condition perhaps due to or contributed to by lack of nutrition – they may get back to long-term care, but they're at a greater level of need than they were before.

So let's find out what is happening. How often are institutions being investigated for not providing the adequate care, and of course what happens when they are investigated? What are the findings, and what happens? Do they change? Do they make a change, or do they just keep doing it again and again and again so that we have the same situation where the providers, the institutions that are providing the care, can simply get away without providing it because nobody is really looking after the needs of the patients?

I think it's wonderful that we have had committees in all of our institutions where the patients and families can speak to what the issues are, and this would be a great opportunity for them to work with the institution to change the situation, but they're probably not even getting the data. I think that they need to know what's happening in their institutions. They can work with them to correct it, but we also need to have regulatory oversight so that we know what is actually happening to those patients and what is happening with the care institutions.

We're asking that this information be shared publicly, that the information be made available so that everyone can see what the rates are, what is happening. As we have heard, we are moving to a different regulation, but we still should be able to know how often the care that's required in whatever act or agreement with an institution is not being provided so that that can be looked at because, you know, the alternative is a very broad sector of outcomes, looking at this from a health research perspective, which would be counting bedsores, looking at hospitalizations, looking at costs, counting falls from patients, and institutions looking at other measures that are due to lack of care, but we aren't going to be able to use that nearly as well to actually make improvements. That can point us to the problem, but it's going to be very difficult at that

level to actually identify which institutions need to up their game and start providing more care to patients.

I hope this question will be taken seriously now or over the next few months. We would really appreciate an answer. Thank you.

5:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, which is very convenient because it also concludes the time allotted for debate on this matter.

Motions Other than Government Motions

Federal Government Policies

515. Mr. Stephan moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to undertake or commission a study to identify and assess

- (a) all revenue from Albertans paid to the federal government compared to revenue from other provinces since 2015;
- (b) all direct and indirect expenditures from the federal government to Albertans compared to such expenditures to other provinces since 2015; and
- (c) the total economic impact on Albertans from federal government policies and actions since 2015.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South has the call.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move Motion 515. The pith and substance of this motion is about truth. Truth is not partisan. When government aligns with lies or untruths, we suffer for it. For example, Trudeau says that his caucus is united. What good does it do to unite to a lie? Not much. Unity cannot be forced; it is produced when men and women seek to align to truth and do what is right. The wonderful thing about truth is that it can be relied upon and trusted unconditionally. Truth never lets us down.

Now, there is a lot of truth around us, and there are a lot of lies around us. As it pertains to our stewardship and trust as Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, we seek the freedom and prosperity for all Albertans. It is our duty to seek to protect Albertans from being gamed, from being singled out and punished, from being gaslighted by some politicians who will not hesitate to attack Alberta for political gain. Motion 515 is all about that, and this motion is both relevant and material. It is a motion about hundreds of billions of dollars.

Yes, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve to know the truth about how much we are contributing to Canada on a per capita basis versus other provinces. You see, Albertans are the rainmaker partner; Albertans butter Canada's bread. That is the truth, and yes, Albertans deserve to know the truth about how little in expenditures we are getting back from Ottawa on a per capita basis versus other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, this motion uses the phrase "direct and indirect expenditures." Of course, there are direct expenditures, such as equalization, where Albertans are taken unfair advantage of, but we see a growing area of indirect expenditures also where Albertans are taken unfair advantage of. For example, why are substantially all federal jobs in this country located in Ontario and Quebec funded disproportionately by Albertans? Or why are all of the billions in battery plants located in Ontario and Quebec funded disproportionately by Albertans? Just recently Ottawa announced a \$100 billion plus high-speed rail in Quebec and Ontario, again funded disproportionately by Albertans.

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, but some of them do not care about Alberta; they only care about the money from Alberta. When taking from others and idleness displaces producing and work as a ruling principle, a sustainable society is lost. Alberta is the best province in a nation in trouble. Yes, Albertans deserve to know the truth about the massive economic damage and lost opportunity from this hostile and incompetent federal government with policies that target Alberta, that seek to undermine us, attack us, and hold us back; for example, carbon taxes, which disproportionately cost Albertans de facto production caps, forcing up electricity costs with less economic sources which, again, disproportionately cost Albertans; no-pipeline bills; and the list goes on and on. The federal government has cost all of us many, many billions, and we need to share these truths with Albertans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why did I say, "since 2015" in the motion? Well, it's because Legislative Counsel said that I had to. This is a rigged partnership, which makes Alberta vulnerable to abuse by corrupt politicians, including prior to 2015, and since 2015 we have a perfect storm. We have a corrupt and rigged partnership coupled with a Prime Minister who is also corrupt and has demonstrated on a continuous basis a pattern of leveraging this rigged partnership to attack the freedom and prosperity of Albertans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in this rigged partnership, what are we to do? Well, sharing the unbiased truth with Albertans on these matters costing them hundreds of billions of dollars is a good start. We don't need to do this in anger. We just need to share the unbiased truth. That is our obligation. As Albertans understand and grow in awareness of the massive unfairness imposed on them, the more accountability they will require from government, and that is very good. Accountability is needed more than ever.

Unfortunately, Canada has a worse version of the Westminster system, elevating this Prime Minister to powers of a de facto king in between elections. This king does not like Alberta. He does not like that Alberta succeeds in spite of him and rejects his hollow virtue-signalling words. This king has no clothes. Albertans see him for who he is. He is out of his depth, and this incompetent Prime Minister as a de facto king unilaterally can and has wasted hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars with his lemming caucus and the NDP sitting in a thoughtless stupor as his dumb accomplices.

The Premier of Quebec says that one of his favourite things about Canada is receiving equalization. Pretty parasitic, Mr. Speaker. In the real world Quebec would be kicked out of the partnership, and if Quebec was Alberta, they would have separated long ago. Who will dispute this? No one because it's true.

Mr. Speaker, we need to understand that while Canada has the potential to be the most free and prosperous nation in the world, by objective measures it is not, and Trudeau's Canada is a growing danger and threat to our freedom and prosperity. Trudeau has smashed through a trillion dollars of debt, accumulating more debt than all Prime Ministers before him combined. Canada pays more in interest on its debt than it collects on the GST. Prior to Trudeau in 2014 Canada's per capita GDP was 92 per cent of the U.S. What is it now? In 2022 it is 72 per cent, a 20 per cent drop in less than 10 years and getting worse. We are getting poor fast. It should not be this way. It does not need to be this way. Many Canadians are watching our national standard of living getting destroyed, yet feel helpless to do anything to stop it. We need to understand that, unchecked, Canada will destroy itself and take Alberta down. That is why Motion 515 is a good motion and seeks to share the truth.

5:10

Mr. Ellingson: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Motion 515. Once again, we see this government doing the busy work of picking a fight with the feds instead of doing the real work that Albertans

are demanding: fixing a broken health care system; providing excellent education, public education to their children, all of their children; building a robust, sustainable, diversified economy that provides good-paying jobs to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I spend a lot of time in community in Calgary-Foothills attending events, community association meetings, meeting with constituents on their doorstep. Shockingly, I haven't heard anyone talk about the need to do a deep dive into the funds transferred between the province and the federal government. I do hear them share stories of their family members struggling with the health care system. I do hear them ask me questions about when they can expect a neighbourhood school and the challenges getting their kids to school on the other side of the city while also juggling their work schedule. I do hear them tell me that it is harder to find work today and harder to find housing that family members can afford. But instead of doing the work to serve Albertans, we have a government bring forward motions that serve only to direct government resources for their ideological fight against Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, what Albertans need is a government that rolls up their sleeves and works with Ottawa and the other provinces for the betterment of Alberta and all Canadians. What Albertans need is a government like the Alberta NDP that did the hard work from coast to coast to coast to build the Trans Mountain expansion, a project that the Conservatives failed to do. Our work was collaborative across provinces. We did this work together, and we did so while also working with industry to strive towards lower emissions while enhancing market access. What Albertans need is a government like the Alberta NDP that worked together with the federal government to cut child poverty in half. What we need is a government like the NDP that listens to constituents and builds the infrastructure that they need, like the Arthur J.E. Child comprehensive cancer centre in Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, as we consider this motion, I'd like to remind the members of this Chamber that the Harper government reviewed and authored our current equalization system that operates in this country. The Conservative government at the time had the opportunity to review, investigate, and implement changes to equalization. The former leader of the United Conservative Party and Premier of this province, Premier Kenney, was a member of Prime Minister Harper's cabinet and party to the equalization system that we have today. When the Alberta NDP was in provincial government, we were critical of that formula, but we were not critical of the underlying principle of equalization, ensuring that all Canadians across this country receive the services that they need. While this government continues to point the finger at Prime Minister Trudeau, the questions they are asking in this motion can be responded to by their own who sat in Ottawa to create our current system of equalization.

Mr. Speaker, time and again we have experienced this government turn their back on funding from the federal government for programs that would support Albertans. This government said no to funding for dental treatments for children and no to pharmacare for people living with diabetes. This government even passed a bill to block federal funding to any agency in this province under their jurisdiction, including municipalities and postsecondary institutions. If this government was really concerned with what is best for Albertans, rather than answering the questions raised in this motion, they would be spending the time sitting down with the federal government and collaboratively designing and funding programs that Albertans are asking for.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I move that Motion 515 be amended.

The Speaker: Just prior to doing that, if you just give me a second there, hon. member, the pages will deliver the amendment to me, the table, the mover. We'll clarify some things have happened, and then I'll get you to proceed.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 41(5.2), "An amendment to a motion other than a Government motion, moved after the motion has been moved, must (a) be approved by Parliamentary Counsel," this amendment has been approved on it would appear to be the 30th of October, and the hon. Member for Red Deer-South was to have received notice by 11 o'clock. Can he confirm that did in fact take place?

Mr. Stephan: Barely.

The Speaker: Barely is still in time.

This is in order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills can proceed.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The amendment is as follows: (a) in clause (b) by striking out "and" after the semi-colon; (b) in clause (c) by replacing the period with a semi-colon; (c) by adding the following immediately after clause (c):

- (d) all revenue from Albertan municipalities and Albertans living in Albertan municipalities paid to the provincial government since 2019;
- (e) all direct and indirect expenditures from the provincial government to Albertan municipalities and Albertans living in Albertan municipalities since 2019; and
- (f) the total economic impact on Albertan municipalities from provincial government policies and actions since 2019.

Mr. Speaker, our amendment requests that the motion include a full analysis of all funds between the province and municipalities. While this government continues to cry foul with how Alberta is treated by the federal government, they turn around and do exactly the same to municipalities right here in Alberta. The government used to fund municipalities by paying 100 per cent of property taxes as a grant in place of taxes. This was cut in 2019, cut again in 2020, and when asked in question period when they will provide these funds to municipalities, they respond with rhetoric trying to paint us with a brush that we don't understand what is going on. Well, the city of Edmonton knows exactly what is going on. The province simply refuses to provide funding through grants in place of taxes. Edmonton isn't alone in this. Alberta Municipalities adopted a resolution at their most recent convention asking that the grant in place of taxes be restored.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, this government replaced the municipal sustainability initiative with the local government fiscal framework and then dragged their feet on transferring funds to municipalities. While this government talks about increasing funding, the numbers don't add up as the funding allocated in Budget 2024 is below previous amounts in past years.

Mr. Speaker, if this government was serious about the questions being asked in Government Motion 515, they would look in their own backyard and ask the same questions. Are the funds transferred between municipalities and the province equal and just? Are the municipalities in this province getting what they need from the provincial government? Is the provincial government considering what revenues they are receiving from every municipality when they decide how they're going to transfer funds to those municipalities? Are they asking the questions whether or not those municipalities are able to build out the critical infrastructure that they need?

5:20

If the government is serious about this – and clearly they are not; I see them being torn up – they will accept and vote yes to our amendment. If the government is not going to be hypocritical about their approach, they will have the same approach with their own municipalities as they are requesting from Ottawa.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against this very bad amendment. Now, I encountered opposition in submission to my motion. This amendment is unrelated and should have been ruled out of order. If the NDP cares so much about these other matters, they can bring their own motion on it. That is their right. I will just say that this is disappointing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in my opening remarks I did not talk about the members opposite, but they have chosen to seek to deflect and avoid Motion 515 and inject themselves into it. I must now ask: why is this the case? Is it because they cannot handle the truth? Yes, that is the case in some instances. Is it because some of the members opposite actually think that it is perfectly hunky-dory that Albertans get continually gamed and ripped off by Ottawa? Yes, that is the case in some instances. Is it because some of the members opposite are Trudeau lovers? Yeah, it appears so in some cases. Is it because some of the members opposite take their orders from the mother ship, Jagmeet Singh? Is it because some of the members opposite – not all, I am going to assume – really do not like me? Yes, that is true. They wish I would not talk.

Mr. Speaker, the main reason I reject this amendment, besides the fact that it should be a separate motion, is because it seeks to deflect from the truth of how unfairly Albertans are taken advantage of by this federal government compared to other provinces. I honestly do not understand why the members opposite appear to either not care or fail to understand these facts. It almost seems as if they are triggered by this.

Let me share an example: Quebec leveraging equalization through its state-controlled Quebec Hydro. Quebec Hydro boasts about providing the lowest residential power rates in all of North America to Quebecers. This has resulted in Quebec having one of the highest per capita rate of swimming pools in North America, including more than California. As Quebec Hydro artificially sells power at under market, it reduces Quebec's income and fiscal capacity, thereby increasing equalization payments, primarily from Alberta families and businesses. Quebec sandbags its hydro income in the billions. This allows Quebec to leverage and take billions more from Alberta businesses and families. In essence, under equalization Alberta families and businesses pay for and subsidize Quebec Hydro providing the lowest power rates to Quebecers in all of North America. Now, Mr. Speaker, we want affordable power for Albertans. Why are Albertans having to subsidize Quebecers' power? Why, and why do the NDP have no problem with this?

But this is just the tip of the iceberg, Mr. Speaker. Another example: today Trudeau announced he will seek to force Canada's oil and gas industry to cut emissions by 35 per cent from 2019 levels. The oil and gas industry has expanded since 2019, so this mandate from on high would force them to contract production, notwithstanding the industry has become more efficient on a per barrel basis since 2019. I am told that this will shut down about 1 million barrels a day, cause billions in lost royalties to Alberta to pay for government services that all Albertans care about and that the NDP asserts they care about, and it will cost about 150,000 jobs across Canada.

Well, what will this mandate do to investment in Alberta? Who wants to invest in Alberta oil and gas if their investment is at risk? This plan will be forced through a cap and trade system, forcing companies to buy and sell a limited number of emission allowances. Mr. Speaker, this makes Alberta less competitive. This will cost Alberta. This will be destructive to Canada. This is directly in paragraph (c) of Motion 515, the economic impact of federal government policy on Alberta businesses and families.

Mr. Speaker, where is the NDP? Why are they not defending Albertans? Now is not the time to sit in a thoughtless stupor with the Liberal lemming caucus and the NDP as their dumb accomplices.

Some will say: "Why are you bringing forward this motion? It is divisive." It is not divisive to stand up for Albertans. Some will say: this is contentious. No, Mr. Speaker, it is not contentious to tell the truth. The truth may make some angry, but that is their choice.

Mr. Speaker, there are storm clouds on the horizon. Let's tell Albertans the truth. Let's undertake or commission a study to identify and assess all revenue from Albertans paid to the federal government compared to revenue from other provinces, all direct and indirect expenditures from the federal government to Albertans compared to other provinces, and, increasingly more important, the total economic harm and impact on Albertans from this federal government.

A partnership founded on principle and good faith would never cause or tolerate the hypocrisy and hostility endured by long-suffering Alberta businesses and families. As government shares more truth with Albertans, there is more trust. We must trust Albertans with the truth. We must trust Albertans to direct to do what is right. Alberta is a land of freedom and prosperity. We must be vigilant to keep it this way.

I urge all members to reject this amendment and vote in favour of Motion 515. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be happy to vote in support of Motion 515 because, unlike the members opposite, we are not afraid of the truth. We are not afraid of facts, we are not afraid of figures, and we are happy to have a look at these numbers, credible numbers, on what dollars go out from Alberta and what comes back to the province.

Now, of course, Mr. Speaker, commissioning a study: there is a good question about who they would give that study to. Certainly, we have seen the kinds of ridiculous numbers they have come back with on their report about an Alberta pension plan and pulling out of the CPP. We have seen some of the ridiculous lunacy that has come back from some of the expert panels they struck to look into issues around the pandemic. So, certainly, there are fair questions to ask about to whom they will give this study, but in principle we have no issue with a credible study that sticks to the facts and provides the truth to Albertans. I will also vote in favour of this amendment because, once again, unlike the members opposite, we are not afraid of providing the truth to Albertans about the realities of what they are facing under their current government.

5:30

It is ironic, Mr. Speaker, to hear the member opposite speak about "powers of a de facto king" when he sits with a government and voted in favour of legislation not once but at least twice where this government attempted to give itself the power to make changes or introduce entirely new legislation in this Legislature, actually without even setting foot in the Legislature, a government which has given itself unprecedented power over municipalities to fire and

remove councillors, to interfere with their ability to access federal funding. This is not a government that can sit and talk about anyone else seizing unprecedented power.

But let's talk about the matter at hand, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about costs imposed as a result of the government's choices in policy. This government's ban on renewables, estimated at up to \$33 billion of investment, 24,000 jobs, their interference with municipalities' ability to access that revenue for themselves and to be able to fund services for their people: that is a direct economic impact from this government's decision that, if put forward, would be able to be measured as part of providing this information to Albertans. That is what this amendment is asking to do.

Let's talk, Mr. Speaker, about other choices this government has made. A report that just went to Red Deer city council: in the past five years they've cleaned up 2,966 camps – of course, this is the Member for Red Deer-South who brought this motion – in his city. His government's decisions, their failures have cost that city \$2,865,892 to clean up encampments. In that report, they make it quite clear that when they are clearing people from those encampments, those people are not choosing to go to the local shelter because there are issues with that shelter. Who is responsible for shelter standards in the province of Alberta? This government. Their decision, their choices on how they are handling shelters, on the refusal to invest in housing is costing the people of Red Deer nearly \$3 million in the last five years.

Here in Edmonton: \$2.2 million provincially mandated costs for the 2023 shigella outbreak, again, Mr. Speaker, in part because this government has refused repeatedly to step up to the table in providing proper supports, housing, proper shelters, other pieces for individuals who are living unhoused.

The drug poisoning crisis, Mr. Speaker. This government, the minister of public safety stood in this House today and bragged about their work earlier today. Five years and this government has built three of 11 recovery communities – three – a fraction, a sliver of the capacity needed to actually address this crisis. What has the cost of that been? Edmonton Fire Rescue Service was dispatched to 10,000 events in 2023, a 47 per cent increase from 2022, 790 per cent increase from when this government came into power – 790 per cent – cost borne by the city of Edmonton because of this government's decisions and policies. The response for the community standards and neighbourhood branch: in 2023 peace officers responded to 4,748 drug-related incidents, assisted in 631 Narcan deployments, a response that cost roughly \$715,000, about 9 per cent of the total volume of responses from peace officers in 2023.

Let's talk about this government's Bill 20 and the cost that is going to download to municipalities across this province. Here in Edmonton, city council received a report saying that they were looking at costs of up to \$4.8 million in 2025. Mr. Speaker, \$4.8 million: that would cover the salaries and benefits of 50 police officers – the 50 police officers we're still waiting on here in Edmonton from this government – for a year.

That money is being burned on conspiracy theories, forcing the city of Edmonton to hire people to hand count ballots when there is no evidence of any voter fraud in the province of Alberta. Again, that is a cost being downloaded onto every municipality. Well, not every municipality because they're only imposing it on – pardon me; no, every municipality. Sorry. This is one of the ones where they are imposing it on every jurisdiction in the province.

Ms Hoffman: School boards.

Mr. Shepherd: School boards, too. That is this government burning dollars, Mr. Speaker.

All we are asking for with this amendment is mutual transparency, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Red Deer-South bragged that they are not afraid of the truth. Well, it seems like they are if they can't support this, if they can't trust Albertans with the truth: equal analysis of their government's impact on our municipalities alongside measuring the impact of the federal government on our profits.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are happy to vote in support of the motion. We certainly hope that the government executes it in a transparent and credible manner so that the report, if a report were to come from it, is one that actually demonstrates the facts and is not another one of the biased exercises in so-called consultation that we have tended to see from this government, and it would be our hope that this government is also able to hold itself accountable and transparent and trust Albertans with the truth in voting in favour of this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on the amendment on the private member's Motion 515 brought forward by my good colleague the Member for Red Deer-South. In the words of my good friend, this is a good motion . . .

Mr. Getson: A very good motion.

Mr. Cyr: . . . a very good motion, and the NDP amendment is a bad amendment, a very bad amendment. But, you know, one of the things that the member opposite was talking about is mutual transparency.

Let's talk about mutual transparency when we're looking at this amendment, Mr. Speaker. It starts at 2019. Our motion starts at 2015. I wonder what possibly could have happened between 2015 and 2019 that they're trying to hide. Maybe – maybe – it's their record.

An Hon. Member: Whoa.

Mr. Cyr: Whoa, Mr. Speaker.

This is why we need to vote down that amendment. It's embarrassing that they want to hide their own record.

Broadly speaking about the motion, this urges government to identify and assess the revenue that Albertans have paid to the federal government since 2015 and the amount the federal government has spent on Albertans since 2015 and the total economic impact on Albertans from the actions and policies of the federal government since 2015.

When we talk about tax revenue and the Alberta-Ottawa relationship, there's no better place to start than the equalization program. The federal equalization program was first introduced in 1957 and was later added to Canada's Constitution in 1982. The intended purpose – and this is important, Mr. Speaker – was originally to provide reasonable comparability in levels of public services at reasonable, comparable levels of taxation; that is according to section 36(2) of the Constitution. Though it has been amended several times since its inception, this is still largely the spirit of the program.

However, the spirit of fairness has changed significantly over the recent years. This should be better known as the prairie pillage era. The prairie pillage era. The equalization program continues to grow even when fiscal disparities shrink due to GDP growth constraints. This ties the size of the program over a three-year moving average

of Canadians' nominal GDP growth. The intent of this was to limit growth to the program.

5:40

However, despite the gap between the so-called have provinces and the so-called have-not provinces decreasing, the equalization payments have gone up. It means that the amount that the have-not provinces receive continues to increase even if its fiscal disparities decrease. Does that sound fair, Mr. Speaker, or even equal? I don't think so, and many of my colleagues on this side of the Chamber feel the same way. Of course, the NDP, with this amendment, are trying to hide their hero Justin Trudeau's and his wonderful sidekick Jagmeet Singh's record. That's abhorrent. Of course they would.

When it comes to direct and indirect expenditures from the federal government relative to what the other provinces receive, I believe it shows that there is also a significant fiscal disparity, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't surprise me, my constituents in Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, or many Albertans. This is why I support my colleague the MLA for Red Deer-South's private member's motion and reject the amendment put forward. We need to study what exactly has happened, not hide from it, like what the NDP are trying to do today.

This is also why, Mr. Speaker, Albertans had a referendum in 2021 on the question: "Should section 36(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982 – Parliament and the government of Canada's commitment to the principle of making equalization payments – be removed from the constitution?" What does this mean? The 1998 Supreme Court decision on Quebec's secession states that if a province holds a referendum on the proposed constitutional amendment with a clear question and a clear majority vote in favour, the federal government has the obligation to negotiate that amendment in good faith. Again in the words of my good friend who moved this motion: Trudeau is bad, very bad.

While some legal scholars believe the obligation in question relates to only secession negotiations, there are others who believe it applies more broadly to encompass all constitutional changes. In the October 2021 Alberta municipal elections a clear majority of 61 per cent of voters agreed to the clear question in this referendum. Though Justin Trudeau doesn't seem to take the Constitution or the Supreme Court seriously, Mr. Speaker, Albertans do and so do I.

It doesn't surprise me, though, Mr. Speaker, that this never-ending spending spree Prime Minister Trudeau and his puppet Jagmeet have gone through is something that we all need to be questioning. It seems that the NDP and the Liberals' sole reason for existence is to retain all the reliable revenue that Alberta is pitching its way. Of course, it's crickets from the Alberta NDP and their leader Naheed Nenshi, who still hasn't got a seat in the Chamber. It seems pretty easy to spend money or even advocate for money for Canada when it's coming from Alberta, when you're not sitting in here.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more reliable revenue than the engine that the Alberta economy brings, and I'm going to tell you that it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that we need to know exactly how much money is being drawn from Alberta and sent to other parts of Canada. We are a generous people, we are a compassionate people, but we have limits and Albertans deserve to know that, even though the NDP moved an amendment that mocks this. That's shameful.

This brings me to the final component of my colleague's private member's motion, that being to identify and access the economic impact to Albertans from federal government policies since 2015. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that there is no Prime Minister or NDP flunky that has accumulated more debt in Canada's history than

Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh even if you added all the previous Canadian Prime Ministers together? It makes you wonder why the NDP and their leader Naheed Nenshi have decided to align themselves so closely with the Liberals. Our former Prime Minister Stephen Harper very wisely warned us about Justin Trudeau in 2015. Initially, we would see tiny little deficits. This is what he promised before he got his mandate. He promised three small \$10 billion deficits after being handed a balanced budget by the previous federal Conservative government. Well, we all know that was not the case. Former Prime Minister Harper also warned us that once the country loses the anchor of a balanced budget, it is always under pressure to spend more and not cover it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, all these predictions turned out to be true. This is why I wholeheartedly support my colleague from Red Deer-South in his private member's motion, because I want Albertans to absolutely be clear about what their federal tax dollars have been going towards. We all need to clarify on the revenues that Albertans pay to the federal government compared to the provinces. We need to clarify on the direct and indirect expenses the federal government spends on Albertans. I urge each and every member here to support my good colleague, my very good colleague, my friend.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Pitt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in this House to speak to the amendment here before us on the motion. I heard the comments from the mover of this amendment in this House who used words like "hypocritical." When Alberta stands up for Alberta, often against the federal government, members of the opposition take great offence, and I'm not really sure why, despite many of the facts that are so clear to Albertans right across this great province, one of which is this important issue that we're addressing here today.

I think it's probably important, very briefly, to touch on social studies 101. Canada as a country exists via co-operation of the provinces. That's it. We have clear areas of jurisdiction, many of which the government likes to step into, and Alberta spends quite a bit of money putting them back into doing the things that they are supposed to do and allowing us as a province to do the things that we have every right to do.

Now, the municipalities exist via permission and/or creation, actually, of the province itself. That's it. This is a very different relationship, and I hope that members of the opposition are listening to me so that they can tell their supporters this very simple thing that we all learned in grade 6. Maybe they didn't all grow up in Alberta at that time.

Let's start there. This amendment is completely disingenuous, and I'm saddened to see this move forward when we really need to be talking about the revenues, the inequity of revenues collected from Albertans to Ottawa and disbursed inequitably across the country. Nova Scotia has in fact taken the federal government to court over the inequity of the equalization payments.

Quebec right now receives about \$13.3 billion in equalization payments. They received the highest amount of equalization transfers in the entire country. Now imagine – and I'll say that roughly we think, just for numbers' sake, that about \$50 billion comes from Alberta and is disbursed across the rest of the country. If we take just Quebec's portion, the \$13.3 billion, that's roughly 266 schools in Alberta; 266 schools. We don't need 266 schools in this province. We don't need that. That's an extraordinary amount of wealth just in schools in this province. Or even better – even better – we could reduce every single Albertan's tax by about \$2,600 per year. That's, like, half of a hockey fee. That's a number

of different impacts to every single – \$2,600 directly back in Albertans' pockets. That's just from the \$13.3 billion that Quebecers receive, that Quebecers get in their pockets that came from Alberta and Alberta's wealth.

5:50

Imagine here for a second, actually, if we didn't just think about fairness, right? Albertans have been very generous to the rest of this country. Not only do we share our hard-earned dollars with the rest of Canada to make things equitable and fair; we provide employment for many other Canadians who come to Alberta, who make very decent wages and then fly back to their home provinces and pay taxes there. This is the indirect cost in which Alberta is contributing to this great country.

Imagine for a second if Alberta were to unleash its ability to be prosperous. I think the Alberta advantage is a very real thing that's existed in this province for quite some time, where Albertans really had the opportunity, still have the opportunity, to be something great, to do something great. Over the years, through the actions of this federal government, through the tanker ban, Bill C-69, a number of other hostile pieces of legislation – well, what came out today? The emissions cap, to probably 150,000 lost jobs. It'll cost every single Albertan, the estimate is about \$419 a month.

Imagine for a second that those things didn't exist and Alberta's opportunity to provide a wonderful lifestyle for all Canadians was unleashed. We wouldn't be here talking about the unfairness of transfer payments, of equalization payments. We wouldn't be talking about this because Albertans, Canadians, every single Canadian wouldn't be struggling to pay taxes, wouldn't be struggling to buy food. We wouldn't be fighting about these things. We wouldn't have crippling economic policies and individual household crippling policies like the carbon tax. We wouldn't have that. We wouldn't be paying taxes.

Albertans are getting pretty fed up. I know that many members opposite struggle to think beyond the four things that are important to them as individuals, but I can assure you that constituents are frustrated, and if they understood the full impact as to why they actually should be frustrated, why they actually can't make ends meet, and if we all just actually work together and sing from the same songbook as Albertans, maybe we'd get a change here and maybe we'd get a fair shake and maybe we wouldn't have high food bank usage, which, by the way, is not the highest usage, in the province of Alberta. It's out of control everywhere because our federal government is hostile, because our federal government is overspending, and they're using the wealth of the provinces, particularly Alberta, to make up that gap, and we're done.

Motion 515 is important. Let's get a broad view of what's happening here, of what this really means, and then let's make a change. I know that change is coming soon in Ottawa. I wish it was sooner rather than later. But in the meantime our government is going to continue to stand up for Alberta and Albertans. Every single one of us in this House has a duty to Alberta and Albertans.

Let's get a broad view of what's happening here. How did we get here? How did we get to this point, where equalization has become so confusing that less than half of the members in this House don't actually understand what it is? It is confusing. It's convoluted. It's

an imbalanced system that protects some provinces and punishes others. It protects . . .

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt. Standing Order 29(3)(b) allows the mover of the motion five minutes to close debate, with apologies to the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, who I missed prior. My apologies for that. Having said that, the time for debate has concluded. The hon. Member for Red Deer-South has five minutes to close debate.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the input from the members from Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul and Airdrie-East. I regret that I did not have the opportunity to hear from my friend from Drayton Valley-Devon.

I'm going to close how I began, speaking of the value of truth. Mr. Speaker, Ottawa is dead weight. They are in the way of Alberta. It's true. While we cannot control the choices of others, we can make positive choices for ourselves by doing small and simple things, informing ourselves with the truth, doing what is right. It is surprising how much positive improvement occurs both in speed and scope, sometimes even in miraculous ways. You know, this is true. Our ability to make better choices increases as we inform ourselves with truth. As truth always prevails in the end, we can unconditionally trust in it.

Let's provide Albertans with the unbiased truth and facts surrounding fiscal federalism; who is paying what and who is getting what directly or indirectly from Alberta businesses and workers. Albertans should be supplied with the truth about what they are paying for. That is what Motion 515 is all about.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot sit in a thoughtless stupor with this lemming Liberal caucus and the NDP puppets as their dumb accomplices. That is very bad. Let's arm Albertans with more truth and trust them to lead, to know what is best. Let's increase Alberta's leverage for fair treatment. The less Alberta needs Canada, the more leverage Alberta has. Albertans need to prepare, insulate, and protect themselves from this accelerating train wreck, which, unabated, will crash as sure as night follows day. Alberta is a blessed land of freedom and prosperity, and we must be vigilant to keep it this way. Reject this unrelated NDP amendment and vote for Motion 515.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Red Deer-South has closed debate on the amendment as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

[Motion on amendment lost]

[Motion Other than Government Motion 515 carried]

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

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me take this last opportunity to congratulate the Member for Red Deer-South for a job well done.

Mr. Speaker, with that said, I move to adjourn this Assembly until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday, November 5.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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