



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 2, 2024

Day 76

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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United Conservative: 49

New Democrat: 37

Vacant: 1

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Deputy Chair: Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Armstrong-Homeniuk
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de Jonge
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Schmidt

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Armstrong-Homeniuk
Calahoo Stonehouse
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Eggen
Hunter
McDougall
Sinclair

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 2, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, it being the first sitting day of the week, we will now be lead in the singing of our national anthem by Robyn Ashley. 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 walk with us. We further acknowledge that the province of Alberta exists within treaties 4, 7, 8, and 10 territories and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Hon. members, please remain standing. As is our custom, we pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met.

Dr. Stanley Bernard Cassin February 19, 1935, to October 2, 2024

The Speaker: Dr. Stanley Bernard Cassin served as the Progressive Conservative member for Calgary-North West in the 21st Legislature from 1986 to 1989. He was a sponsor of Bill 9, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1987, which introduced mandatory seat belt use in Alberta. Born in Ontario in 1935, Stan Cassin earned his bachelor of science from Assumption University in Windsor, followed by a medical degree in 1963 from the University of Toronto, where he served as the president of his graduating class.

Dr. Cassin specialized in family medicine and is credited with introducing the concept of walk-in clinics to Canada, opening his first walk-in clinic in Calgary in 1979. Throughout his career, Dr. Cassin held many prominent roles, including the director of the Foothills emergency department and the president of the college of physicians and surgeons. He was active in both Canada and the United States, leaving a lasting impact on the medical community. Amongst his accolades Dr. Cassin was awarded fellowship in the College of Family Physicians of Canada and was named a life

member of the college in 2005. Dr. Cassin passed away on October 2, 2024, at the age of 89.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Dr. Stan Cassin as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, today we were led in the singing of O Canada by Robyn Ashley. Robyn is a talented artist from Edmonton who made waves last year with her debut single, *Sweet Goodbye*, which climbed to number six on the Canadian indie country charts. I ask that Robyn Ashley please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

It's also a pleasure to introduce two members of the public service joining us in the gallery today. 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-Strathcona has a school group to introduce.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you I believe 51 students from Garneau school, grade 6, in the fabulous riding of Edmonton-Strathcona. Some people may not know this, but the once-principal of Garneau school was the best man in my mom and dad's wedding. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the members of this Assembly.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to introduce to you and through you Madave Kinjo and what I think happens to be the most brilliant grade 6 class in the province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome from the House.

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

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to introduce two trustees from the STAR Catholic school division in Leduc: Dawn Miller and Jolyne De Marco. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the House.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you and to all the members of the Assembly Jessica Arseneault and her two wonderful daughters, Charlotte and Rebecca. Jessica is the manager of my Fort Saskatchewan constituency office, and I consider myself lucky to call her both my employee and my friend. Ladies, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Member Brar: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members Frank Cattoni, CEO; Lorraine Kinsman, program director; and Umida Sobirova, team lead for The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth. Since 1990 they have transformed the lives of newcomer youth in Alberta, growing from serving 2,500 to over 11,000 young people. Their multilingual team has created successful Albertans. I ask them to please rise . . .

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

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Angad Khattra, who represented Canada in grade 12 for the International Geography Olympiad, earning a bronze medal for excelling in multimedia and

fieldwork exams. He also won the Canadian Geographic Challenge national final in grade 10. I ask that Angad rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ms Hoffman: I rise to introduce Anshul Narula and Harjeet Kaur. Anshul is a caregiver, and Harjeet is a stage 4 rare blood cancer survivor. She is also an advocate and a public speaker. She is the cofounder of Chai and Hope, which is focused on empowering South Asian cancer patients, breaking stigma and fostering open conversations about it. Please rise and receive our warm welcome.

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

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you and to all members of the Assembly the hardest working constituency manager in the entire province, Lisa Ludwig, and, visiting the Legislature for the very first time, the newest member to our team in Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, Leah Foster. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you. I rise to present to you and through you and to all members of the Assembly Nick and Kyle. Kyle works full-time as a structural engineer and is also working on his master's of structural engineering at the U of A. Nick de Gier, my long-time friend, is a graduate of engineering at the U of A also. He is also a key board member in my constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka, and it's an honour to call him a friend. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I want to introduce the Edmonton-Ellerslie youth advisory group. They help me outreach and with communications. They're a wealth of knowledge. They are Mohit, Angelina, Owen, Nathan, Ahmed, and Luke. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

Ms Chapman: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you, actually, the hardest working constituency manager in the province, Travis Imber. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Hayter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you Lorraine Kinsman. I got to know her while I was a school chair and she was a principal of an NDP-built school in my riding. Thank you for being here.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a statement to make.

Federal Impact Assessment Act

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal production cap is just plain wrong. Our government has been fighting to protect Albertans' interests since this unconstitutional Impact Assessment Act was introduced in 2018, and once again we're taking the federal government to court over the flawed and still-unconstitutional amended Impact Assessment Act. It's like déjà vu all over again.

In 2023 the Supreme Court of Canada found that the Impact Assessment Act is largely unconstitutional. Its ruling affirmed what Alberta said all along: the Impact Assessment Act allows the federal

government to interfere in projects it has no jurisdiction to regulate. After this court decision Alberta once again tried to reason with the federal government. We repeatedly asked them to share details of proposed amendments for the Impact Assessment Act before it was introduced in Parliament, with no reply. Crickets.

Once passed, buried in an omnibus budget bill, it was clear that the amended legislation continues to put projects like in situ oil sands developments, major projects within our borders, power plants: they're all at risk from federal interference. After thoroughly reviewing the amendments, Alberta contacted the federal government again in October with our concerns and suggested our amendments to address the continued unconstitutional act and its nature. We gave the government a four-week deadline to respond to our concerns, Mr. Speaker. Crickets.

The federal government continues a path of blatant disregard for Alberta; this is unacceptable. In response we must once again turn to the courts for a decision. On November 28 Alberta's government referred the question of the constitutionality of the amended Impact Assessment Act to the Court of Appeal in Alberta, where we will again argue that this act is unconstitutional. Alberta's challenge to the federal government is more than a legal dispute or a political disagreement; it's a stand for the preservation of the Alberta advantage, against federal overreach, and to defend our Constitution. Our government stands ready to defend the rights of Albertans as many times as necessary to show Ottawa what it means to truly be strong and free.

Health Care System

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, this UCP government is failing Albertans on health care. Since 2019 Alberta has seen a decline in the number of doctors practising in the province, and for the first time since 2005 Alberta has fewer doctors per capita than the national average, a difference of 3 doctors per 100,000 residents. But these are not just numbers or statistics; they are real people suffering needlessly because of a system that is crumbling under the weight of poor decisions and misplaced priorities.

Dr. Cam Morhaliek, a psychiatrist who has served Alberta with distinction for 27 years, is at his breaking point. Forced to witness the privatization of care, the erosion of mental health services, and the staggering inequities his patients endure, he has made the heartbreaking decision to leave Alberta. He has already begun building a new life in British Columbia, where he feels valued as a health care provider. Dr. Morhaliek's story is not just a personal tragedy; it is an indictment of a health care system that is driving away the very people who dedicate their lives to caring for us.

His patients, like a retired professor struggling to afford privatized ketamine therapy for treatment-resistant depression, are left to fend for themselves. This man, who gave so much to our community, now faces financial ruin simply to access the care that should be a basic human right. Another 81-year-old constituent shared his agonizing experience of waiting for multiple surgeries over the course of 18 months; it has stripped him of his independence and dignity. Every passing day worsens his condition, yet our system offers only silence and delays.

These stories are not isolated. They are symptoms of a health care system in crisis, a system that forces Albertans to choose between bankruptcy and care, between hope and despair. Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve better.

World Nuclear Energy Day

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, December 2 is World Nuclear Energy Day. Today people around the world are celebrating the benefits of

nuclear energy. Nuclear power has the potential to provide safe, reliable energy to meet the future needs of a growing population and our growing industries.

While Alberta currently doesn't produce any nuclear power, about 15 per cent of Canada's electricity comes from nuclear power. Our country has been a leader in nuclear research and technology, exporting CANDU reactor systems developed by Canadian expertise. It also has a high proportion of the world's supply of radioisotopes that are critical in modern medicine, including cancer therapy.

Encouraging the development of innovative nuclear technologies in Alberta's unique competitive electricity market has great potential to provide reliable baseload power generation to our grid. Nuclear energy could play a key role in supporting Alberta's energy goals and offer unique opportunities for integration with the province's oil sands industry. That's why the Alberta government signed a memorandum of understanding with Saskatchewan last year focusing on advancing the development of nuclear generation. The government is also funding research into the deployment of small modular reactor nuclear technology in Alberta's oil sands through Emissions Reduction Alberta to multiple industry leaders.

As we continue to look at the future and the potential for nuclear industry in our province, engagement is essential. We need to hear from Albertans first, and our government's top priority is to consult with the public, industry experts, Indigenous groups, and other partners. With Alberta's long history of responsible energy development, I'm optimistic about the many promising and innovative opportunities for nuclear energy that lie ahead.

World AIDS Day

Member Arcand-Paul: Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked World AIDS Day, where the world collectively mourns the loss of those who have died while also bringing awareness to the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection.

Today many Albertans live long and healthy lives after being diagnosed with HIV because, you see, Mr. Speaker, HIV is no longer the death sentence it was back when this day was founded. With appropriate medication many people with HIV are undetectable and they do not transmit HIV to their partners. This is because of the breakthrough of modern medicine through antiretroviral therapies, which are helping prevent the transmission of HIV to others.

However, Albertans need to know about this breakthrough in medicine along with understanding the basics of how transmission occurs in the first place, especially so because in just October of this year an Alberta Health report was released which found that the number of HIV cases in this province jumped by 73 per cent in the last year, to around 507 cases in 2023, which is up from 293 cases reported in 2022. Worse yet, Indigenous, racialized, and new Canadians are overrepresented in these stats. In fact, this week we observe Indigenous AIDS Awareness Week, which highlights the unique challenges faced by Indigenous peoples, including the need for culturally appropriate support and education.

I would like to thank the many organizations in Edmonton like the Queer and Trans Health Collective, HIV Edmonton, and SafeLink Alberta, which all help advocate and educate our community in areas where the UCP government fails to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Alex Janvier

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with a heavy heart that I rise today to recognize the passing of an extraordinary individual,

Alex Janvier, a beloved member of the Cold Lake First Nation who left us on July 10 at 89 years old. Alex is survived by his wife of 56 years, Jacqueline, and his six children: Dean, Tricia, Duane, Kyle, Jill, and Brett.

Known as Canada's most acclaimed Indigenous artist, Alex Janvier masterfully wove Indigenous traditions into contemporary art, creating a unique and globally celebrated style of vibrant works that have graced public galleries, private collections, and homes across our country and the world. Here in this Chamber I take great pride in sharing with the visitors that the magnificent paintings before us, *Sunrise and Sunset*, were created by none other than Alex Janvier, one of my constituents. These artworks are a testament to his unparalleled ability to convey beauty and meaning through his craft.

Alex Janvier began on what was then the Cold Lake Indian reserve, now Cold Lake First Nations. From those humble beginnings he rose to become a global icon, developing his exceptional skills with resilience and unwavering dedication despite his many challenges he faced. Through his trail-blazing efforts Alex opened countless doors for Indigenous artists and made enduring contributions to the art world across Alberta, Canada, and beyond. Alex's life's work earned him many prestigious accolades, including the national Aboriginal lifetime achievement award, the Order of Canada, the Governor General's award for visual and media arts, and the Alberta Order of Excellence. His vibrant use of colour and flowing lines continue to inspire, leaving a legacy that will resonate for generations. While his presence will be deeply missed, his spirit will live on through his extraordinary art.

Rest in peace, Alex Janvier.

1:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, I can confirm that the Speaker official clock says 1:50. I that appreciate that the clock that is here in the Assembly may be a minute or two behind, but we will use the Speaker standard time for the clock today.

Oral Question Period

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

Affordability Measures

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, Albertans know that rent is up along with the cost of pretty much everything under the control of this government. Rents have gone up, up, and up. While Albertans know how hard it is to pay the rent, this government averted its gaze while its own members gave themselves an accommodation allowance increase of \$270 a month. On top of a retroactive Christmas bonus this year, the government will hand more than \$3,000 a year to UCP MLAs for their accommodation allowance. So regular Albertans are asking this Premier: if there's money to help MLAs cover the rent, when will there be help for regular Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the members opposite are trying to make up for the fact that they caused so much hardship to Albertans by bringing in a carbon tax nobody wanted, putting in an emissions cap, which we're still paying the price for, and phasing out coal early, which ended up not only creating a mess in our electricity markets but costing us billions of dollars. We on this side: we're pleased that we have been able to give \$6.5 billion worth of relief to Alberta residents over the last three years, cost

savings of \$2.7 billion in '22-23, \$2.6 billion in '23-24, and already \$1.5 billion this year.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, it's incredibly clear when I talk to my constituents that it's not just the cost of rent and mortgage payments that are going through the roof. Now we know that auto insurance is going to spike on January 1 thanks to this Premier, a 7.5 per cent increase. Alberta drivers are going to pay hundreds of dollars more a year just to drive the same vehicle they already do. The private-provider no-fault insurance scheme that this government has cooked up will raise rates this year and next year even for drivers with a clean record. Why did the Premier just watch as her MLAs raised their own rent while deciding to stick Albertans with higher auto insurance?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you exactly why we're going to a care-first system. It's a model that we borrowed from Manitoba which is working pretty well. Under the current system benefits are really low, and as a result people feel that the first decision they have to make is to hire a lawyer. I'll give you a couple of examples. Currently only \$50,000 of medically necessary expenses are covered for two years, only \$1,000 of chiropractic coverage, \$350 for massage therapy and acupuncture, \$750 for physiotherapy coverage. As a result, many people run out of their benefits before they get well. We're going to be changing that with the care-first model.

Ms Gray: It's called a no-fault insurance scheme.

Only this Premier would believe insurance company lobbyists: trust us Premier; let us raise rates now, and they'll come down later, we promise. Car insurance is going up 7.5 per cent this year. Car insurance is going up 7.5 per cent next year. Albertans have to wonder: why have the UCP done nothing to bring rates down on car insurance for all Albertans and instead are watching their own MLAs vote to give themselves more money to afford rent? It's ridiculous, and Albertans are sick of it.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason it's called a care-first model is because if you need care, you will get it for the rest of your life. That is the reason why we're changing to this model, which, again, we modelled after Manitoba. On top of that, under the current system you can only get up to \$600 per week of salary coverage, which is about \$31,200. The vast majority of residents in Alberta make more than that. The new model will allow people to receive up to \$120,000 in income replacement for as long as they need it. These are the reasons we had to make the changes, so people get the care they need and the income replacement they need.

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

Private Health Services Delivery

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, this Premier signed a 10-year federal-provincial health care funding agreement last year and committed her government to, quote, a shared responsibility to uphold the Canada Health Act that strengthens public health care systems. End quote. The private surgical centre in Fort McMurray her government members endorse says, "Over 98% of the services provided at this . . . facility [will be] covered by Alberta Health." So why, when telling the House about this U.S.-style facility, did the Premier incorrectly

say, "This is a completely private option. They're opted out of the system"? That's obviously not true.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have a public health guarantee that no Albertan will pay out of pocket for insured health care services, and we stand by that. There are no chartered surgical facilities contracted to Alberta Health Services or approved by our government to operate in the Fort McMurray area at this time. I will remind the members opposite, of course, that chartered surgical facilities are public health care, public health facilities, and they operate the same way a family doctor's office does, where they bill directly to the province and no one pays out of pocket.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, that same agreement that Alberta signed with the federal government commits in writing: "no patient would pay out of pocket for these services." Last Thursday the minister of energy said he endorsed this project because, in his words, quote, we don't have enough good health care. Why is the only health care this government supports a private, two-tier, U.S. model, where people have to pay for their knee, hip, and cataract surgeries out of pocket?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're taking the same approach that the NDP did when they were government. They had 40,000 surgeries that were done at private surgical facilities that were publicly funded. We're doing the exact same thing on this side. We are going to allow for a variety of different services to be funded by the public so that people can get the care that they need. In addition to that, we're also spending over \$300 million on our surgical initiative to increase and improve operating room capacity at our public hospitals. We're doing both.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo said Thursday, quote: I'm aware he did want to set up a private facility; I'm comfortable with that. End quote. When asked if he knew of the private facility, the member said, quote: he told me a long time ago, and I thought it was great. End quote. Will the Premier acknowledge that her government members knew about the two-tier, U.S.-style model of this private facility and admit she's privatizing health care to make Albertans pay for surgery in complete contravention of not only the Canada Health Act but the joint funding deal she and her government signed?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, not at all. What I will tell the members opposite is that we're very pleased that, through all of the measures that we are taking, we have more publicly funded surgeries happening this year than ever before. We had a record 304,595 surgeries completed in the '23-24 fiscal year, which is a 3.4 per cent year-over-year increase, and we're expected to complete more than 310,000 surgeries in '24-25; 60,000 are in chartered surgical centres, which means the vast, vast majority, 250,000, are being done in our public hospitals. That is why we are investing in both, so that we can increase the capacity so everyone can get the care they need.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Government Policies

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, across these past four weeks of session the Premier has introduced legislation that's completely out of touch with the priorities of Albertans. There's nothing to improve health care or hire more family doctors, just bills that attack the rights of

minority groups, making some Albertans less safe. There's nothing on education except for a bill that will pull Alberta's sex education curriculum to the bottom of the pile, increasing the number of unplanned teen pregnancies and infection transmission. And there's nothing on affordability except the Premier turning a blind eye to UCP MLAs granting themselves a retroactive Christmas bonus. To the Premier: how can the government be so out of touch with the realities that Albertans are facing?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, all of the measures we've taken so far have resulted in \$6.5 billion worth of savings to everyday Albertans. We've got the lowest overall taxes in Canada, including the lowest income taxes. No PST, no payroll tax, no health care premiums. We also are implementing an insurance model that'll give better care and also result in \$400 a year in average savings. We've completely transformed our electricity system, which is now bringing down the cost of electricity by 39 per cent year over year. We continue to support rentals through a rental subsidy as well.

2:00

Ms Gray: When I talk to Albertans, this government's agenda is completely out of touch, and it's really curious whose interests the government has at heart. We've seen privacy legislation that further restricts government from accessing information and making sure Albertans can see it, we have a bill that uses deindexing to allow for lower AISH payments and is wildly out of step with Alberta having the highest inflation in the country, and a suite of antitrans legislation that nobody asked for and the government didn't campaign on and that won't make life better. Where does the Premier get her policy ideas from? They are clearly not in the best interests of Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I may as well just continue on in talking about all of the things that we have done to make life more affordable for Albertans because these are policies that we have put in place that are benefiting Albertans today to the tune of a total of \$6.5 billion. As I've mentioned, we've got 14,000 people who are getting support through our rent supplemental program. That's going to grow an additional 20,000 by 2031. We've helped out our families who have kids \$700 per month in being able to defray the cost of their child care. That's \$9,000 a year. People are better off under a UCP government.

Ms Gray: Albertans do not feel any of that. They know things are getting more expensive.

Now, let's not forget about the government's bill that's going to alter our tried-and-tested method for determining electoral boundaries, serving the interests only of the UCP. After being shut out of Edmonton entirely and losing the popular vote and seat count in Calgary, the UCP has introduced a proposal to allow them to gerrymander the electoral map across the province. They can't win in a fair fight in cities, so they're going to carve up communities. When not a single Albertan is calling for a gerrymandered U.S.-style system, why is this a government priority?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier has the call.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite well know that every 10 years you have to do a look at what is happening in each of the ridings, and you cannot have too much deviation from the average number of representatives. We've got a lot of deviation because of a lot of growth that is happening in both south Calgary as well as south Edmonton. We want to be able to make sure that

the Electoral Boundaries Commission has the ability to draw boundaries into those growth areas. I'm not going to prejudge the outcome on that. The members opposite have members that they can appoint to that committee. The members on this side do, too. Let's let the commission do its work.

HIV/AIDS Prevention

Member Eremenko: As World AIDS Day passes and the global community strives to eradicate HIV by 2035, it is clear that Alberta is falling behind. Since 2019 the number of reported HIV cases in Alberta has nearly doubled, with a staggering 73 per cent increase between '22 and '23. The Premier has repeatedly attacked public health experts, professionals trained to prevent increases just like this, all to score political points with her base. Will the Premier admit that the exponential growth in HIV rates is a consequence of her government's political interference and mismanagement of Alberta's public health system?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll admit no such thing because it's not true. In fact, we have dedicated \$12.4 million for sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, just in Budget 2024. We recognize that numbers are up, but we also recognize that 55 per cent of those that have been diagnosed with HIV in the last year have come from out of province, have obtained those diseases out of province. We're looking to see what more we can do, and we'll continue to do more.

Member Eremenko: Well, while we've just been lectured on following the Canada Health Act, perhaps the minister would know that out of province or otherwise they are still a responsibility of this government.

Another critical factor contributing to the rise of HIV/AIDS is Alberta's primary care crisis. The AMA reports that over 650,000 Albertans are currently searching for a family doctor. Front-line service providers are sounding the alarm, Mr. Speaker. One of the best ways to reduce HIV case numbers is to prevent transmission in the first place, and that demands adequate and accessible harm reduction. What is the Premier going to do about it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to work with the Alberta Medical Association to get more family physicians here in Alberta. In fact, working with the College of Physicians & Surgeons to streamline the processes, I can tell you that we've gone from overall 10,600 physicians in the province to 12,126 physicians. While the members opposite would have you believe that they're just registering for the sake of registering, we are seeing by their billing that they are in fact practising here in the province. The members opposite have nothing to say on this, because their record was abysmal.

Member Eremenko: Mr. Speaker, preventing the spread of HIV begins with education. Teaching youth and young adults about safe practices and how to protect themselves is critical. Alberta's current opt-out sex education system wasn't broken, yet the government insists on meddling with it. Switching to an opt-in system will inevitably reduce student participation, increase potentially unsafe sexual activity, which will lead to a rise in HIV and other STIs. To the Premier: will she halt this harmful shift away from the opt-out program and listen to experts for the best way to effectively limit the spread of HIV?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, nothing but conjecture and fear-mongering from the NDP. We know that's no surprise, though, because that's their standard operating procedure. In 2019 they were telling Albertans that, if elected, a Conservative government would blow up hospitals, would do all sorts of things. None of that happened. An opt-in model ensures parents are fully informed about their child's education and ensures that they are equal partners to help foster that learning, that essential learning, that they will receive at home. Nothing that the NDP has just said is based on any kind of fact or information. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Automobile Insurance Reform

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, the cost of insurance for commercial drivers like taxi drivers and truck drivers in Alberta has skyrocketed, leaving workers in my riding of Calgary-Falconridge and across Alberta struggling to make ends meet. Why is the Minister of Finance allowing insurance premiums to increase to levels that make it impossible for hard-working Albertans to afford? How can Albertans trust a government that fails to intervene in the face of such mounting financial burdens?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, the fact that rates will have to increase in the short term speaks to the amount of cost that is in this system. That is why we're moving towards a new system. By changing the system, we're going to take material cost out of the system while providing better care, quicker care, care that you don't have to get a lawyer and go to the courts to access or wait years for. That's why we're doing the change. We regulate this. We don't control all the parameters within the system, but we're very fortunate that we've done the good work to take us to the system that's right for Albertans.

Member Boparai: Given that in addition to the rising insurance costs, taxi driver insurance in Alberta does not cover critical risks like hail, theft, or fire, leaving drivers financially exposed, and given that the government only ignores the growing financial burdens on taxi drivers and truck drivers, who are essential workers, when will the minister take action to ensure that these drivers have access to comprehensive coverage that protects them from these significant risks?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's going to take two years to get this system up and operational. That's why we have the short-term reforms to get to 2027, but then, once it's in place, we look forward to making sure that it can apply to commercial drivers and everyone else within the system. First, we have to start with private passenger vehicles, and then we will expand it once the system is stood up and operational.

Member Boparai: Given that thousands of commercial drivers, many of whom are racialized and are newcomers, are facing the devastating effects of these costs and given that driving was a path to financial stability and upward mobility but given that it's becoming increasingly impossible to sustain their livelihoods, how can the minister justify the impact it is having on hard-working families striving to build a better life? Does the minister even care about people like us, or will he just continue to ignore our struggles?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we care about all Albertans. That's first and foremost. It's important, when you're creating policy, to look at the policy levers that actually exist. You know, it's not like this is a system where we can control all of the costs, so when you look at what happens in other jurisdictions, you

look at what levers you can pull that make a material difference in the system. That's what we're doing with these long-term reforms, but it's because we're concerned about escalating costs for everyone that drives in this province. I'm confident that we'll get there. It's going to take a couple of years, but it'll be a system that will serve everybody well.

2:10 Wildfire Prevention and Control

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, only one year ago Alberta had nearly 70 wildfires that carried over from the 2023 wildfire season, which posed a significant risk of spreading as we went from winter to spring temperatures. Since the 2024 wildfire season saw even more active wildfires than we saw during the record-breaking 2023 season with over 1,200 fires, could the Minister of Forestry and Parks provide an update on how many wildfires Alberta is currently seeing and explain the key steps taken by the government to improve wildfire management in the province?

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

Mr. Loewen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. I'm proud to announce that as of today there are only eight active wildfires in Alberta, all under control, the lowest number in nearly two years. This is thanks to the incredible work of our wildland firefighters and support staff and the historic \$155 million we've invested in wildfire response and our continued investment in equipment and cutting-edge technology, but most importantly it's thanks to the strength and resilience of our communities. We will continue learning from every wildfire season and make sure that we can continue to improve our response.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister. Given that Alberta has experienced two of the most challenging wildfire seasons, with unprecedented damage to forests, homes, and infrastructure, and given that the government has consistently worked to enhance our wildfire prevention and response efforts, including investing in more firefighters and better firefighting equipment, and given that the 2025 wildfire season is fast approaching, can the minister outline the measures the government is taking to further ensure that Alberta is ready to face another challenging wildfire season?

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

Mr. Loewen: Thanks again for that question, and thanks, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has faced unprecedented wildfire seasons over the last two years, and we have learned from them. Our FireSmart and community fireguard programs are vital, with new fireguards being built around Canmore and Whitecourt. But we also can't ignore the decades of fire prevention and limited tree clearing that have created a buildup of aging trees, increasing wildfire risk. As Albertans we love our forests, but we must not love them to death, which is why our work with controlled burns and selective harvesting is more important than ever to reduce fuel and mitigate the risks of catastrophic wildfire.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that the Alberta government has long called on the federal government to take a more hands-on approach to responsible wildfire mitigation and given that the tragedy in Jasper highlighted the need for decisive action to protect our national parks and surrounding areas and given that Alberta continues to push Ottawa to take action to mitigate the

risk of catastrophic wildfires, could the minister elaborate on what steps Alberta's government is taking to hold the federal government accountable and ensure that Alberta has the tools in place to fight and prevent wildfires on Parks Canada lands?

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While our crews assisted the Parks Canada response from day one, we must learn from the tragic Jasper wildfires and do better. That's why we continue to push the federal government to properly manage the forests on Parks Canada lands. Our communities, including Jasper, which is still vulnerable, remain at risk. We call on the members opposite and their missing leader to join us. Pick up the phone, call your boss in Ottawa, and make it clear that the federal government needs to act now if we want future generations of Albertans to have the same opportunity to enjoy our communities on federal lands.

Photoradar Use in Alberta

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, once again the UCP are recklessly dumping more costs onto municipalities, increasing the financial burden on everyday Albertans while making our communities and roadways less safe. Photoradar revenue currently pays for policing, critical initiatives for traffic safety, and community safety programs. Stripping it from municipalities with no additional support means budgets will fall short and these essential programs will lose funding. Will the minister acknowledge his short-sighted decision will leave Albertans with less safety at higher costs, or are the UCP content to just once again defund the police?

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question was just ridiculous. The changes that we've made to photoradar will make sure that photoradar is used for traffic safety and not revenue generation. That's always the intent of photoradar that's being used across the country. It's something that now, going forward on April 1, will be the use of photoradar. Municipalities can apply if they so choose on a case-by-case basis to add more sites, but the changes that we made today will focus photoradar in three areas – in school zones, playground zones, and construction zones – so that we can keep members of the public safe.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, given that in Edmonton 20 per cent of photoradar fines go to the victims of crime fund, 40 per cent to the provincial government, and the rest to traffic initiatives and given that in Calgary 15 per cent of fines support victim services, 16 per cent to the provincial government, and the rest supports municipal initiatives and given that this UCP government has already passed legislation that diverted 60 per cent of the victims of crime fund towards their own ends, will the minister acknowledge that these changes will strip supports from Albertans who depend on the fund to help rebuild their lives after becoming victims of serious crime?

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, the changes we've made to photoradar are common-sense changes that are going to help out drivers and also increase road safety. But if the member opposite doesn't trust me or believe me, maybe he will trust the only NDP transportation minister, who said in this Chamber: our goal is to eliminate photoradar as a tool for revenue generation; photoradar operations must contribute to significant traffic safety outcomes, like reducing collisions and saving lives. We actually listened to the only NDP transportation minister that ever existed in this province, and going forward, photoradar will be used for traffic safety.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, given that this decision to drastically limit photoradar with no additional support will significantly hurt cash-strapped rural municipalities, many of which are already on the verge of bankruptcy, given that in Taber 15 per cent of fines go to victim services, 42 per cent to the province of Alberta, and the remaining balance supports operational funding of that town and that in Edson 40 per cent goes to the province while Edson funds policing and public safety initiatives with its share, why is it that this government is undermining policing and community safety in the funding of already struggling municipalities? Does the minister not care? This could push . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of transportation.

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I'm not having an effect, it seems like, with this member opposite. The leader of the NDP that actually was there for four years, that is still in this Chamber, she actually said that the UCP continue to hammer household budgets with photoradar; Jason Kenney's UCP government will continue to hit Alberta drivers with costly photoradar tickets despite a lack of evidence that they contribute to traffic safety. That was the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona who said that. We also have the transportation critic for the NDP, who's also in this Chamber, who said: closer to 75 per cent or more of photoradar cameras, is my estimation; I think the public would be behind that; I look forward to seeing new bumper stickers between Edmonton and Calgary saying that the UCP photoradar . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

School Construction and Modernization

Ms Chapman: Overcrowded and underfunded, that's the UCP legacy in education. Parents have been asking me: where are all the schools that Calgary needs right now? No answers. Our school boards have capital priority lists, but the government has yet to announce how or when these schools will finally be built. To the minister: the UCP is great at wasting money on things like Turkish Tylenol no one wants, but has your government considered spending that money on something helpful, like improving conditions in our classrooms?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, news flash: we have and we will. We've announced an \$8.6 billion initiative to build over 90 new schools in our communities of greatest need. In addition, we will be modernizing and upgrading 24 schools over the course of the next three years. Our government is committed to ensuring that our families have the schools that they need and deserve right in their local communities, and our government will get the job done.

Ms Chapman: Given that stable and consistent funding for education infrastructure is critical for Alberta's growing communities but given that the UCP has not put stable education funding on the table, especially when parents from whole regions like Calgary-North East don't have schools and have to transport students huge distances just to get them to overcrowded classrooms, how can this minister justify neglecting school infrastructure for so many years while Alberta families wait for the classrooms that we've been promised?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP was in office, they never had to worry about building schools because they drove everybody out of the province. They had 13 consecutive quarters of migration out of the province. Not just that; they told people to go find work in other provinces. They told Albertans to leave their beautiful home and go to B.C. On this side of the aisle we want Alberta to be the place that everyone chooses to come to to build a

home, a family, and a life, and we're going to make sure they have the schools that they need.

2:20

Ms Chapman: Given that the UCP's current capital announcement signals their chronic underfunding of the education system and their scramble to fix the problem they made, given that this rushed approach can drive up construction costs rather than save money, given that the UCP still hasn't figured out how they plan to staff all of these schools and given that the NDP delivered 244 school projects in one term with consistent and prudent planning, does this minister need some advice from across the aisle on how to responsibly build schools in Alberta?

Mr. Nicolaides: Definitely not, Mr. Speaker. I don't need any advice from that side of the aisle when it comes to building schools and getting it done. I just have to note that all the schools they claim that they built, it was Conservative governments who put them on the list. Now, you know, as a child I used to love that book *Where's Waldo?*, and now I get to play a different game every day here in the Legislature, which is *Where's Nenshi?* I haven't seen their newly elected leader show up for work at all – I'm really curious when he's going to do that – unlike our leader, who's here every single day.

The Speaker: While the Speaker has no opinion on members who aren't members of the Assembly, referring to the absence or the presence of a member of the Assembly would be unparliamentary.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Anticrime Initiatives

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural crime is a real and growing challenge. I recently spoke with a farmer in my constituency who watched helplessly as copper wire was ripped out and stolen from his pivot. Unfortunately, these types of incidents are all too common. Rural Albertans are increasingly vulnerable to property theft and intrusions and are often unable to defend themselves and uncertain of when or if help will arrive. It is unacceptable for individuals to feel powerless, especially knowing that if you were to act in self-defence, the law may be turned against you. To the Deputy Premier and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services: what are you doing to protect rural Albertans and their property?

The Speaker: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I appreciate her for recognizing that copper theft is a huge concern right here in Alberta and, quite frankly, throughout Canada. As we all know, the NDP-Liberal alliance has created an environment that has allowed organized crime to thrive with little to no consequences, and that's why we're making amendments to the Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act, where we're holding public engagements with stakeholders, to make sure that Albertans in this province are going to be safer.

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

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer and his work to protect Albertans. Given the population growth in the Calgary metropolitan region, we have seen a troubling rise in crime. The surrounding communities like Chestermere and Langdon are particularly affected, with visiting offenders often targeting these areas in the early morning or overnight, seeking opportunities to commit crime. To the same minister: what steps are you taking to enhance public safety in the Calgary region, both within the city to prevent crime

from spilling over into the smaller surrounding communities and within those communities themselves?

The Speaker: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you. As we all know, the soft-on-crime policies from the NDP-Liberal alliance have been an absolute and catastrophic failure for not just Canadians but us here in Alberta. Of course, we're all aware that we passed Bill 11, the Public Safety Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, where we as the United Conservative Party government had to think outside the box. That is why we're willing to hold offenders accountable through electronic monitoring in order to track them. But hope, I will tell you, is on the horizon as we know that there is a new federal government coming, who's going to repeal Bill C-75 and make all of Canada safer.

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

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that repeat violent offenders out on bail can significantly undermine community safety as their freedom often leads to ongoing criminal activity and increased fear among residents and the revolving door of the criminal justice system can frustrate law enforcement efforts and erode trust in public safety measures and the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs, given that addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach, can the same minister please explain what is being done to capture criminals who reoffend while out on bail?

The Speaker: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I'm frustrated. This government is frustrated. Albertans are frustrated. Canadians are frustrated. You know who's not frustrated? The NDP, because this is their policy which has been the catastrophic failure for Canadians, Albertans. That's why we have over 82,000 people on outstanding warrants in this province alone, and that's why we created the fugitive apprehension teams, the surveillance teams, the SCAN teams. This government is taking action, and we are going to make Albertans safer.

New Child Care Spaces

Member Hoyle: Mr. Speaker, two daycares have closed in Edmonton and three in Calgary following investigations that these facilities were noncompliant with regulations. Now 184 children need to move to other spaces. Owners of child care facilities recently told me that there is almost no support for parents who had to rush to find alternative child care or for existing facilities to cope with space demands. To the minister: why are parents being left with virtually no options as they struggle to find alternative child care options for their children?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure has arisen.

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proposed amendments to the Early Learning and Child Care Act are there to deal with exactly some of these issues. They're intended to enhance the authorities of the statutory director by enabling them to cancel, refuse, or renew a facility-based licence or a family day home agency, temporarily close a facility or a portion of a facility, or suspend a family day home agency licence and issue a probationary licence. The act will also require agencies to post information about enforcement actions that they are subject to and, where needed, add administrative penalties.

Member Hoyle: Well, the minister neither addressed families or businesses.

Given that I've met with child care facility owners who are keen to support parents and families by opening up new facilities and given that they're very frustrated, waiting for the space creation grants to be processed, and given that buildings are ready, families are signed up, and rent is due, but it's been months since they've gotten an update, what's this government's plan to lessen the burdens facing small-business owners and families who rely on their services?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Guthrie: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Bill 25 addresses a number of different things, but it also addresses administrative issues such as explicitly stating that certified 16- and 17-year-olds can work in ratio under supervision, enabling public disclosure of early childhood educator certification status, public posting of all stop orders now including unlicensed providers, and it explicitly allows for the statutory director to create standards for family day homes. These amendments provide transparency for parents while improving safety for children.

Member Hoyle: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again the UCP is unable to talk about child care.

Given that children deserve a safe and healthy environment and given that existing child care facilities are bursting at the seams with increases in demand and given that business owners are ready to get new spaces opened up and new facilities built that are fully compliant and support early childhood education, to the minister: what's your plan to expedite processing times for the space creation grants so that these small businesses can open up their doors and serve families?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. These changes to the ELCC address also a recommendation from the Food Safety and Licensed Facility-Based Child Care Review Panel. Amendments clearly state that all facility-based licence holders must comply with applicable zoning, health, and safety legislation by specifically stating which health and municipal legislation applies to their operations, including the Public Health Act and the Safety Codes Act. Additionally, amendments to the act will enable changes to the ELCC regulation. Alberta is putting kids first by ensuring parents will have the tools that they need to select the best care for their children.

Rat Control

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has proudly maintained its rat-free status for over 70 years, a remarkable achievement that safeguards our agriculture, infrastructure, environment, and human health. Our government has launched the Rat On Rats! campaign with a \$110,000 grant through the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. Can the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation explain how this initiative will enhance public awareness and ensure continued vigilance in keeping Alberta rat free?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of agriculture.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Alberta being rat free is another one of this province's great advantages, and we continue to make sure that Alberta remains famously rat free. Now with our province continuing to grow, we need reminders that it takes constant effort to keep rats out of our province, and that's why we've invested in this campaign through SCAP. Billboards, posters, and much more

across the province will encourage Albertans to rat on rats by emailing rats@gov.ab.ca.

2:30

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the campaign includes billboards, posters, and training workshops to educate Albertans and visitors about recognizing and reporting signs of rats and given that infestations have been reported at some facilities in the province, can the minister elaborate on how to address these infestations and ensure that facilities are equipped to prevent and manage rat occurrences?

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

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and once again to the member for that question. Now, occasionally rats can be found at different facilities within the province. Sometimes rats enter the province by hitching rides on vehicles. If that happens, the facility in which they are found is responsible for working with my department, the pest control company, and the municipality to ensure that they are eradicated. These incidents reinforce the importance of immediately reporting any signs of rats or a rat itself, checking equipment, vehicles, and, as well, with that, staff training.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's zero-tolerance policy for rats has been instrumental in protecting our economy and our environment and given the increasing risk posed by transport vehicles and materials entering the province from other jurisdictions, can the minister explain how this campaign will work alongside existing measures under the Agricultural Pests Act to strengthen Alberta's defences against the threat of invasive species?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is proudly rat free, but it's up to everyone in this province to keep up that legacy. Now, our economy is growing and we're seeing many new companies, and they may not know about the hard work that goes into ensuring that these pests stay out. This campaign, which is based on previous successful campaigns, will let people know how to report rat sightings and signs. I encourage everyone to visit alberta.ca/rats to find out more, and if you see a rat, call 310.FARM or e-mail rats@gov.ab.ca.

Continuing Care Standards

Ms Sigurdson: The 2023-24 report on Protection for Persons in Care shows that the number of founded allegations of abuse has more than tripled compared to the last report. Failure to provide the necessities of life such as medical attention, proper nutrition, and adequate hydration of residents are some of the most prevalent concerns. The UCP, instead of focusing on these significant issues, are making administrative changes that do nothing to support seniors. When will the minister do something to support vulnerable seniors in continuing care?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, it's the very reason we have audits in place and we have a process in place where complaints can be heard and we can act on those complaints of abuse. Any time there is an abusive situation, we look into it once it's reported. That is abhorrent to us. There is no way we support anything that would cause harm to any of our seniors, and we will look to strengthen those

even further. It's why the Continuing Care Act actually modernized the system.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the Carewest Colonel Belcher facility was created for veterans who served our country but given that complex mental health patients are now being co-located there with vulnerable seniors, some with dementia, and given that in 2023 there was a 138 per cent increase in incident reports by the Calgary Police Service and 2024 is trending to have even higher reports, when will the minister stop this dangerous practice of co-locating complex mental health patients with vulnerable seniors and provide both populations with the appropriate supports?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're doing with the health refocusing process. We have Health making sure that they're going to make sure that their licences are in place, that all our facilities are complying with the rules. They're going to have my department making sure that we have enough capacity and, most importantly, that everybody is in the right place for the care they deserve. Unfortunately, underneath the NDP we saw grandma and grandpa stuck in hallways and broom closets, everywhere but where they were supposed to be, or expensive acute-care units instead of being in the proper facilities to provide proper care in line with their family and the community. That's why we're refocusing the health care system and fixing what the NDP broke.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that under the UCP's watch dangerous situations in continuing care are increasing dramatically and given that low levels of staffing and no minimum daily hours of care mean operators do not face any consequences when care is substandard and given that seniors deserve to live in dignity as their contributions built this province and supported our freedom, how can the minister ignore this situation? When will he act to ensure the well-being of seniors in our province?

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you. Again, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health said, there's a very clear process that her department has made over time in the Continuing Care Act to make sure that licensing is in place, rules are followed. Their department works hard to make sure that is the case. My department makes sure to work hard that everybody is in the right spot.

I'll tell you what is not humane; that is, what the NDP were doing when it came to the elders who built our province, placing them in the wrong beds, hundreds of them, thousands of them, frankly, Mr. Speaker, in the wrong facilities, inappropriate care that was taking place for them. We're going to get everybody in the right place, make sure that they receive the care that they need going forward.

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

School Construction in Northwest Calgary

Ms Hayter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been calling on this government to fund for teachers, support staff, and psycho-ed assessments so students have proper supports for learning, but today I'm asking questions about the building, not the staff. A 2017 major modernization plan showed Ranchlands school to have \$9 million invested into their school for student learning environments by 2020-2021, again part of a three-year plan, at a cost now over \$12 million. The school should be modernized today. To the

Minister of Education: when will this overflowing community school expect to see their learning environments modernized?

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, it's a priority for our government to make sure that we are building schools across the province, and we'll make sure that that gets done. In addition, we recognize that at the same time we have to contend with potentially competing priorities, but we're committed to making sure that all these priorities get accomplished. That first, of course, is building new schools in our fastest growing communities, and secondly we need to make sure that we're modernizing and upgrading any aging infrastructure that we have in the province. We will ensure that we facilitate that, and we have put dollars aside to make sure that we're able to modernize schools.

Ms Hayter: Given that the schools in my riding and their playgrounds are aging – pieces of playgrounds are actually being removed because they aren't safe – and given that playgrounds increase academic performance, reducing destructive behaviour, promoting imagination, and that playing outside can build students' connection to new sights, smells, textures, and sounds and given that we're in an affordability crisis and the cost of living is going up while wages are not but families are expected to fund raise for needed learning items, leaving fewer areas behind, to the Minister of Education: when can parents stop fund raising for essential learning needs and expect the government to use our tax dollars to properly fund Alberta's student learning?

Mr. Nicolaidis: Mr. Speaker, we have recently announced \$125 million in new funding to support our school divisions. That's in addition to an increase in overall funding in Budget '24. Of course, when it comes to playground infrastructure, when a school is modernized, the playground will also be modernized as well, and new schools are built with those capacities in place.

I'm happy that the member has noted that we are indeed in an affordability crisis. I know that they haven't called on their ally in Ottawa to repeal the carbon tax and to reverse all of the inflationary policies that have led us to this situation, but we will make sure that Albertans have the support . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Hayter: Given that the children of Sage Hill are travelling into the community of Hawkwood, my riding, and given that those same students in Hawkwood are now being bused to Arbour Lake in Calgary-Foothills riding and given that all this busing across the ridings of Calgary-Foothills and Calgary-Edgemont is causing traffic and delays for parents and students every morning while we wait for overcrowded schools that are not in our own neighbourhoods, can the Minister of Education tell Calgary parents in the northwest when the Sage Hill-Kincora middle school will be built by the Alberta government?

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We are onside with parents in northwest Calgary and in any other community that have to deal with excessive busing times to get their kids to and from school. That is exactly why our government took the lead and took the initiative in developing the new school construction accelerator program that will see 90 new schools built in our fastest growing communities. When our program is complete and these schools are built, we're confident that fewer students will have to deal with long busing commutes in order to get to school. We'll make sure they have the schools in their communities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

2:40 Promotion of Alberta's Energy Industry

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government's proposed production cap threatens Alberta's families, businesses, and economy while violating provincial rights which guarantee exclusive jurisdiction over nonrenewable resource development. With energy security a critical issue the Trudeau government and their NDP allies push policies that could strip Albertans of reliable, locally produced energy. This government is fighting for Alberta's future, and we will continue to defend Alberta's energy interests. To the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas: what is our government doing to counter the short-sighted Liberal-NDP agenda to shut down oil and gas production here in Alberta?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that important question. Unlike the members opposite and their new leader, we are standing up for Albertans, for our energy industry, and for safe, affordable, reliable energy here in Alberta. Thousands of Canadians have written or called their Member of Parliament telling the federal government to scrap their dangerous cap. We are creating a constitutional shield so that we are ready to take this fight to the courts the second that this cap becomes law and stop it from ever being implemented and enforced in this province. We won't throw the Alberta economy into free fall. We won't kill tens of thousands of jobs. We won't implement this production cap.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. President-elect Trump has indicated that energy security will be one of his top priorities for his administration. Alberta has always been a reliable partner, positioning itself as a key solution for energy security across Canada and the world stage. Furthermore, Ottawa's so-called emissions cap is in truth a cap on Alberta's prosperity, our livelihoods, and economic growth. To the Minister of Energy and Minerals: how has Alberta engaged directly with the United States to ensure that the federal Liberal-NDP agenda does not jeopardize opportunities for stable jobs, job growth, and expansion of the Alberta advantage?

Mr. Jean: Well, it's true, Mr. Speaker; the U.S. is our largest trading partner, period. We're constantly talking with them and looking for ways to improve our relationship to build that. The fact is that the U.S. needs our heavy oil. They're looking for our heavy oil, and they just don't produce enough heavy oil for their own market. It looks like as time goes, they'll be producing less and less heavy oil and less and less natural gas. They need Alberta. It's clear that when you ask the question on U.S. security for energy, Alberta is the answer.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that countries like Saudi Arabia have poor environmental standards and given that Canada and the U.S. both continue to import energy from Saudi Arabia and other environmentally regulated jurisdictions with poor environmental restrictions, sidelining locally produced sources of energy, and further given that Alberta's energy companies use cutting-edge technologies to extract our oil and gas, to the same minister: what steps are we taking to promote the export of Alberta's energy technologies world-wide while also supporting our industry's abilities to provide low-carbon, environmentally responsible energy?

Mr. Jean: Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a global leader in developing clean energy and technologies like carbon capture and utilization and storage, like hydrogen, like ammonia, and so many things. We're also world leaders on developing new methods for extracting lithium and other critical minerals that are so important to the world. We're expanding our markets in Asia to supply them with the clean natural gas that we need to kick their dirty B.C.-NDP thermal coal addiction. It's true; the NDP believes in thermal coal. We believe in clean energy to solve the world's problems.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a statement to make.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Health Care System

Ms Hoffman: Get me a family doctor and fix health care. When I ask people what the provincial government could do to make their lives better, that is absolutely the most common answer.

Nearly one million Albertans are without a family doctor. Last year, the government acknowledged that this was a serious issue and asked the Alberta Medical Association to help them fix it. The government and the AMA agreed that this was urgent. The AMA sat down to negotiate an amending agreement expeditiously to stop the loss of family doctors to other areas of the system, to early retirement, or to other provinces.

There was good news. The Premier announced 201 days ago that a deal was reached and would be signed in a few weeks. Then the minister said that they'd need a few months. Then she said we'll need a few more, and now she's saying it won't be ready until April. Doctors are leaving; this government doesn't care.

The UCP has repeatedly pushed American-style, two-tiered private care, and here we go again. A clinic that's offering a mix of public and private, for-profit surgeries is promising financial investors an opportunity to double their investment or more. Who is encouraging people to invest in this clinic? A minister, a local MLA, and a parliamentary secretary for rural health. This is clearly a violation of the Canada Health Act and of our current government's pre-election public health care guarantee.

At the same time they are destroying public health services. They break it up to sell it off. First step: addictions and mental health. This has caused chaos for patients and staff, and they have done the same to surgeries, pushing workers and patients out of existing public hospitals and into private surgical centres. They're paying more, and the Canadian Institute for Health Information says wait times are going up.

It's time for the UCP to stop breaking their promises and listen to Albertans. They could start by restoring contract negotiations with doctors, restoring services for patients in hospitals, and stop sitting back while registered nurses can't reach a deal with this government. Everyone deserves the right care in the right place at the right time, and it's time for the UCP to stop attacking public health care.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 213, Cancer Care Delivery Standards Act, sponsored by myself.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(7) of the Election Act and section 4(2) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, I am pleased to table the 2023-24 annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Ms Hayter: I rise to table five requisite copies of the Queer and Trans Health Collective's Statement on the UCP's Proposed Gender Policies. They are saying that it's a real threat with incalculable harm, and their policies will attack the gender-diverse individuals in our society, especially gender-diverse children and youth. I encourage everybody to read their statement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three different letters from constituents Esther Kupsch, Skye Vermeulen, and Dr. Cameron Barr, who are expressing their deep concern about the antitrans bills.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of a study that I relied on in speaking against Bill 29. It's E-Alliance's Transgender Women Athletes and Elite Sport, a scientific report which debunks the misinformation quoted by the government in developing Bill 29.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the five requisite copies of an article from the *Guardian* called Pakistan Army and Police Accused of Firing on Imran Khan Supporters. The local Pakistani community, of course, are very concerned, and they're calling for respect of the rule of law and for human rights and especially for the ability of these people to be able to protest peacefully.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a number of e-mails, a giant stack, in fact, from folks all across Alberta urging the UCP to kill their egregious antitrans legislation, including Andrew, Davis, Greg, Deanna, Sharon, Melissa, Leslie, Cody, Leni, Barry, and I urge all members to read their e-mails.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Glenora followed by Sherwood Park.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of two public letters written by labour leaders here in Alberta and from across Canada. The first is CUPE talking about the attacks against trans youth, and the second is from the Canadian Labour Congress, also talking about the attacks against trans youth and using public-sector employees to enforce them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a letter to the editor that appeared in the *Fort Saskatchewan Record* titled Hands Off Our Pensions. It expresses concern over the lack of transparency regarding the firing of the AIMCo board and government meddling in the management of our pension money.

2:50

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has a tabling.

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've actually got two tablings. One is a parliamentary committee note from the federal committee on decreased funding levels for CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency, showing that their continued cuts are creating the problem at the border.

And two is an article showcasing that it's the provinces who are stepping up to fix that problem, not the feds.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, followed by Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the letter from the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, signed by Diane McLeod, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, containing comments and recommendations regarding Bill 34, Access to Information Act. I urge the minister of service Alberta to read this letter and make edits.

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

Prior to doing that, I might just remind members that if a document has been tabled in a current session, there is no need for it to be tabled again. Not a hundred per cent that was the case – I believe it was – but providing you a caution.

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of e-mails and postcards from 55 people expressing their concerns about the government's decision not to fund the new building to replace the Vecova Centre, which can no longer safely remain open.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Jones, Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade, pursuant to the Workers' Compensation Act, Workers' Compensation Board Alberta 2023 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order, and there were no points of order, so members get a gold star.

That brings us to Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 8(1) in order to allow consideration of government business.

The Speaker: Hon. members, for clarity's purpose this is a unique request for unanimous consent that sets aside private member's business to immediately proceed to government business.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Motions

Oil and Gas Sector Greenhouse Gas Emissions Cap Regulations

53. Ms Smith moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly approve, pursuant to section 3 of the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, the following motion:

1. The Legislative Assembly is of the view that

- (a) in accordance with section 92(a) of the Constitution Act, 1867, the Alberta Legislature has exclusive legislative jurisdiction over the exploration, development, conservation, management, and production of nonrenewable natural resources in Alberta,
- (b) the government of Canada has proposed the oil and gas sector greenhouse gas emissions cap regulations (“federal initiative”), which would, if implemented, cap oil and gas production in Alberta, result in a production cut of at least one million barrels of oil per day, and effectively prohibit future oil and gas production growth in Alberta,
- (c) the federal initiative will damage the economic and social well-being of Albertans by eliminating hundreds of thousands of jobs, cause the insolvency of tens of thousands of Alberta businesses, and lead to the loss of hundreds of billions of dollars in tax and royalty revenue by the government of Alberta to support public social programs and infrastructure for Albertans,
- (d) the government of Alberta is, on behalf of the people of Alberta, the owner of the majority of oil and gas resources in Alberta and has a duty to ensure the value of those resources are maximized for Albertans,
- (e) the government of Alberta is committed to its continued partnership with private industry to maximize the value of Alberta’s oil and gas resources by granting mineral interests to corporations (“interest holders”) in exchange for resource royalties and income tax payments paid by interest holders to the government of Alberta,
- (f) it is the intent of the government of Alberta to more than double the production of oil and gas in the province of Alberta from current production levels while promoting and incentivizing the mass development and implementation of emissions reduction technologies related to oil and gas production, and
- (g) the government of Alberta remains committed to ensuring that current and future Albertans continue to own and control oil and gas resources in Alberta, receive the full benefit of the development of those resources, and are not restricted in the marketing or sale of those resources by any other government.

2. The Legislative Assembly is of the opinion that the federal initiative is unconstitutional on the basis that it is not directed at a matter falling within section 91 of the Constitution Act, 1867, and impermissibly intrudes into an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, namely the exploration, development, conservation, management, and production of nonrenewable natural

resources as set out in section 92(a) of the Constitution Act, 1867.

And be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Lieutenant Governor in Council to consider the following responses to the federal initiative:

- (a) ensure that the government of Alberta and any provincial entity as defined in the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act refrain from participating in the implementation or enforcement of the federal initiative within Alberta, to the extent legally permissible,
- (b) use all legal means necessary to oppose the implementation or enforcement of the federal initiative in Alberta, including launching a legal challenge in the Alberta courts,
- (c) ensure that oil and gas production facilities and related infrastructure that are owned by an interest holder in Alberta (“interest holder facilities”) are considered to be “essential infrastructure”, as defined in the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act,
- (d) prohibit the entry by any individual, including an employee or contractor of the government of Canada, to an interest holder facility, excepting the interest holder and their employees and contractors, or anyone else specifically authorized to enter that interest holder facility by the government of Alberta,
- (e) declare that all information or data related directly or indirectly to greenhouse gas emissions that are collected by interest holders at an interest holder facility (“emissions data”) are proprietary information and data that are owned exclusively by the government of Alberta and require all emissions data to be reported or disclosed by an interest holder only to the government of Alberta,
- (f) use the conventional oil royalty in kind (CORIK) program to sell oil through the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission to purchasers around the world, work collaboratively with industry to expand the bitumen royalty in kind (BRIK) program, and develop a similar natural gas royalty in kind program to ensure the government and industry can maximize the value of Alberta’s oil and gas resources, expand pipeline capacity, develop new markets for industry, and minimize economic risk to future oil and gas resource development caused by the hostile policies of the government of Canada, and
- (g) work collaboratively with the governments of the United States of America, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Northwest Territories, and Yukon as well as First Nation governments located in those jurisdictions and in Alberta to substantially increase pipeline capacity from Alberta to tidewater ports and to the United States of America.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier has the call, and, for the benefit of the Premier, she has up to 90 minutes should she choose to use it.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don’t think I’ll need all 90 minutes. But let me thank the private members for agreeing

unanimously to hear this motion today. I'm rising to speak to Government Motion 53, which uses the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act to protect our province from unconstitutional interference. I would seek unanimous support for this as well when it comes down to voting on it.

Albertans are proud Canadians, and we love our nation dearly. This is our home, and we are honoured to be contributing members. The way that Ottawa has been treating Alberta over the last number of years is unacceptable. The Canadian Constitution was created to establish a respectful union, where the provinces would have their own areas of jurisdiction free from interference. They would have autonomy over the laws and policies within their province's own spheres of influence. Sadly, this respectful union and select autonomy has not always been the case.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act creates a framework that provides the Legislative Assembly the ability to identify constitutional concerns with a specific federal program or a piece of legislation and then recommend a measured and appropriate response that will prevent or frustrate federal intrusion. The Constitution is written in a way that gives the federal government the power of what they call dissolution. So if the provinces pass legislation in federal areas of jurisdiction, they have the ability to say: you can't do that. I think it's been an unfortunate factor that we haven't had an equivalent power, and I can tell you that I'm talking with my provincial counterparts on whether we ought to try to have a constitutional amendment to do exactly that. The federal government shouldn't be allowed to legislate in our areas of constitutional jurisdiction without the express agreement of the province. But that's a discussion for another day.

Today I will say that we are not using this act lightly. This is the mechanism that we have to tell the federal government that we believe they are acting in a way that is illegal and unconstitutional. But the federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has forced us into this position with their emissions cap, which, as I will describe, is a de facto production cap.

When the cap is in place, Alberta stands to lose. There are a number of ways in which we stand to lose, and it's not just us saying this; there are three independent studies that have been done looking at the impact of a production cap. Deloitte forecasts that Alberta's revenue will decline by 5 per cent by 2035 and billions will be lost, not only in provincial GDP but in federal GDP.

The Conference Board of Canada forecasts job losses of 150,000 across the country, and that will be 92,000 jobs lost in Alberta alone. They also calculate that the impact of having this cap in place and the increase in prices will cost the average household \$495 per month in additional costs at a time when we have an affordability crisis and families are paying more for everything, including their rent, their food, and their fuel. Both the Conference Board of Canada and S&P Global forecast that there will be production cuts.

The only way to meet the aggressive targets that the federal government puts in the emissions cap of 2030 and 2035 will be to reduce production by 1 million barrels a day by 2030 and 2.1 million barrels per day by 2035. This is unacceptable. We have a number of different economists and other commentators who have quoted on this. Eric Nuttall of Ninepoint Partners LP calls it, quote, economic lunacy, unquote. Michael Belenkie of Advantage Energy Ltd. said: what's unusual about Canada and our emissions is we seem to be the only exporting nation in the world that is willing to self-immolate; all we are doing is we're shutting ourselves down at our own expense and watching global emissions increase.

Mr. Speaker, we should be maximizing the value of our natural resources for Albertans; we shouldn't be minimizing it. We should be working to get more of our ethically produced energy products to market to support global energy security, not leaving that potential

unrealized, and we should be increasing production while phasing out emissions, not the reverse. On top of all of this economic pain, the cap violates section 92(a) of the Constitution, which clearly gives provinces exclusive jurisdiction – it says those words right in the Constitution: exclusive jurisdiction – over nonrenewable natural resource development. That's why we brought this motion forward.

It is all the more important now, with the threat of tariffs when President-elect Donald Trump is inaugurated in January, Mr. Speaker. We cannot be complacent, especially not now. We should not discount the incoming administration's commitment to energy security, and Ottawa must recognize that Alberta is uniquely positioned in all of the world as the perfect partner to the United States in achieving that objective. It is therefore utter foolishness for the federal government to enact an energy production cap that would result in a massive curtailment of oil to the United States.

We want to be part of Team Canada as we navigate these decisions and policies with the United States, but we need Team Canada to be on Team Alberta, and that means scrapping the damaging energy production cap immediately as a show of commitment to North American energy security and partnership. The Prime Minister should understand that since oil and gas was one of the main topics discussed with the President-elect on Friday, with President Trump expressing his disappointment that the Keystone XL pipeline project was cancelled by current President Joe Biden and also talking about ways in which we can meet the United States' national security goals with supporting their energy security goals. Ramping down our energy industry is, quite simply, not an intelligent move for anyone.

Now, let me go to the substance of what we've put forward in this motion, Mr. Speaker. We begin by asserting that

in accordance with section 92(a) of the Constitution Act, 1867, the Alberta Legislature has exclusive legislative jurisdiction over the exploration, development, conservation, management, and production of nonrenewable natural resources in Alberta.

That is just a statement of fact. We go on to say that the Legislative Assembly is of the opinion that the federal initiative is unconstitutional on the basis that it is not directed at a matter falling within section 91 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which is the federal areas of jurisdiction, and impermissibly intrudes into an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, namely the exploration, development, conservation, management, and production of nonrenewable natural resources as set out in section 92(a) of the Constitution Act, 1867.

3:00

We know, Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned, that this will result in at least a million barrels per day in future oil and gas growth being shut in. We also know, as I've mentioned, that it will damage economic and social well-being by eliminating hundreds of thousands of jobs and tens of billions of dollars, not only in economic GDP but also in tax and royalty revenue to our government and the federal government.

We also know that it is our job as stewards of this resource on behalf of the people of Alberta to maximize its value in the interests of the people of Alberta. We also know, Mr. Speaker, that we have a continued partnership with private industry that we have asked to develop this resource on our behalf and on behalf of all Albertans and to maximize the value through mineral interests that we grant to corporations.

We also have stated our intention to double the production of oil and gas in the province of Alberta from its current production levels while promoting and incentivizing the mass development and implementation of emissions reduction technologies related to oil and gas production.

On that point, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you those two things are not mutually exclusive. In a recent court decision in the Hague, Shell

won the case because they were able to demonstrate that if their production was curtailed, it would result in an increase in the use of coal, which would increase overall emissions. That is something we have to be mindful of, that if this is a global emissions reduction problem, then having more of our product, which is a lower emissions profile, displacing higher emissions fuel actually reduces global emissions. That's why we believe we can increase oil and gas production yet also dramatically reduce emissions using that kind of export as well as using technology.

And, of course, we do remain committed to ensuring that current and future Albertans continue to own and control oil and gas resources in Alberta so that they are the principal beneficiaries of it. That is the framework for why this motion has come forward.

Now, the substance of what it is that we are seeking legislative approval for – and we've got several different items where we believe that we will be able to assert our constitutional authority. In the first case, we want to ensure that the government of Alberta and any provincial entity will refrain from the enforcement of the federal initiative within Alberta to the extent that is legally permissible. We also are going to use all legal means to oppose the implementation of the enforcement of the federal initiative in Alberta, including launching a legal challenge in Alberta courts.

My Justice minister advises me that we have to wait until the federal government actually makes this law before we can launch that challenge, but we will be ready to go should they persist so that we will launch the challenge immediately after.

In item 2(c) we also are asserting and ensuring that oil and gas production facilities and related infrastructure are declared to be essential infrastructure under the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act. This is also just a statement of fact, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the incredible amount of value that is in places like Hardisty and the need for its protection among all of the other sites that are leading to the development of this incredibly important resource for our security and for our trading partners' security.

2(d) prohibit the entry by any individual, including an employee or contractor of the government of Canada, to an interest holder facility, excepting the interest holder and their employees and contractors, or anyone else specifically authorized to enter that interest holder facility by the government of Alberta.

If these contractors are developing our interests on our behalf, we certainly do not want federal agents nosing around in there without our permission and express consent. We saw this happen in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, when we found that federal agents were going onto private property and testing water. The provincial Saskatchewan government also passed similar type of legislation.

2(e) declare that all information or data related directly or indirectly to greenhouse gas emissions that are collected by interest holders at an interest holder facility ("emissions data") are proprietary information and data that are owned exclusively by the government of Alberta and require all emissions data to be reported or disclosed by an interest holder only to the government of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has made it essential for us to take this measure by passing Bill C-59, which makes it illegal for the companies who are developing the resource on our behalf to celebrate the substantial measures that they have been taking to reduce emissions. It is being called greenwashing. It is not greenwashing to look at what emissions were 10 years ago, look at what emissions are today, and celebrate the fact that we're seeing a reduction. That is giving truthful information. And because of the federal government's approach in passing Bill C-59 with this provision in it, the only way that we can trumpet the success that we're having in emissions reduction and also make sure that we're using consistent data, rather than have the federal government take

data, skew it, and use it against us to say something that it doesn't say, is to make sure that we are the ones who are making that data available to everyone. I'll have more to say about that in a moment, Mr. Speaker.

Item 2(f) is:

use the conventional oil royalty in kind (CORIK) program to sell oil through the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission to purchasers around the world, work collaboratively with the industry to expand the bitumen royalty in kind (BRIK) program, and develop a similar natural gas royalty in kind program.

The reasons to do this, Mr. Speaker, are severalfold. Number one, it firmly asserts that as the owner of the resource we have the ability to take possession of it and develop contracts so that we can ensure that our friends and allies and customers receive that. There are a few reasons why this has become necessary.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that the chancellor of Germany came to Canada and asked us to work with him to be able to get natural gas exports. You'll recall that the federal government at the time said that there was not a business case for the development and export of natural gas. Japan has also come calling. South Korea has come calling. India has come calling. Every time when they reach the federal government, the answer is no. Well, this gives us the opportunity to say yes. Whether it is for bitumen, whether it is for conventional oil, or whether it is for natural gas, we will look at those opportunities, and we will make sure that our friends and allies and trading partners have the resources that they need to develop their own economies.

We are also wanting to ensure that we can do this so that we can expand pipeline capacity. As we know, Mr. Speaker, one of the problems that we have had with the federal government creating such a convoluted approval process is that there are multiple projects that have been abandoned because they can't see a way through to completion and approval. And even when they do, you have a federal government that has arbitrarily cancelled their ability to do so. I'm talking about the Northern Gateway pipeline, which probably was the main pipeline that should have been built to the coast. I believe it was going to be 900,000 barrels of egress.

If you look as well at the Energy East pipeline, which would have assured energy security to our friends in eastern Canada and the eastern United States, that also got abandoned after a billion dollars' worth of regulatory costs spent because the company couldn't see a way through to the finish line. Keystone XL, which was cancelled five seconds after the U.S. President Joe Biden got elected and which, sadly, the federal government did precious little to advocate on our behalf, is another example of the uncertainty that has been created around pipeline construction.

When the Trans Mountain pipeline finally got built, the only way to get it built was for the federal government to take ownership over it and, at a cost of six times more than it originally began with, finally get it completed. But that is not a pathway that we want to pursue, Mr. Speaker. We believe that if we are taking our royalty in kind, we can operate as a shipper on that line, and we would be able to ensure that the pipeline capacity is able to continue to be expanded. That's one of the other reasons, to derisk some of those projects because the industry will be sending a very clear signal that we intend to act as an aggregator to make sure that the pipeline is full.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have heard from some of our smaller players about the difficulty that they have in being able to negotiate pipeline space. This will allow for us to be able to advocate on their behalf, identify pipeline space, and continue to make sure that our small producers are also benefiting as we continue to double our oil and gas production.

Then, finally, Mr. Speaker, we're working collaboratively with the governments of the United States of America, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Northwest Territories, and Yukon as well as First Nations governments located in those jurisdictions and in Alberta to substantially increase pipeline capacity from Alberta to tidewater ports and to the United States of America. Increasingly, we are seeing that the world is changing their perspective on the need for energy security.

I think what we have seen in the last five years is that the fantasy vision of environment minister Steven Guilbeault, that our entire economy could be powered on solar and wind and batteries, has been blown out of the water. We now know that that is not possible in Alberta. We now have seen, especially last year, that the instability we saw in our power grid had a lot to do with the fact that we need to build more baseload power and, in our jurisdiction, powered by natural gas. We have learned that. The Americans have learned that with the tragedy that they saw in Texas a number of years ago. Our partners in Europe have learned that as they turned back on coal plants because of the instability that has been created with an overemphasis on renewables. We are on the cusp of being able to be a leader in providing energy security to all of our trading partners and allies.

3:10

I think I can speak on behalf of my Indigenous Relations minister and all of our government members how proud we are of the leadership role we took in developing the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation. It began as a \$1 billion loan guarantee so that we could underwrite projects of a significant investment nature but also delivering significant revenues to Indigenous communities. We now have over \$700 million worth of projects underwritten, including several pipeline projects and some power generation projects. Almost all of our First Nations and Métis settlements have been engaged in that process in one way or another, and it will be generating \$1.3 billion worth of revenue to those communities. It was so successful that we ended up increasing the loan guarantee to \$3 billion, and we hope to see many more projects of this nature develop in partnership with First Nations communities.

So I think that the world has changed quite a bit, Mr. Speaker, and that is the reason why I would ask the members opposite and all the members in this Chamber to support us in passing this motion.

I should mention, Mr. Speaker, I had said that I'd speak a little bit about the emissions record that we have. Let me tell you what our 10-year record has been collectively. From 2015 to 2024 we have increased production by about 34 per cent. We're looking at production in November and December meeting average monthly production in the first 10 months. We have seen an increase particularly in the last number of months, so a 34 per cent increase in production over this last 10-year period.

At the same time emissions in our province have decreased. In 2015 Alberta's total emissions were 290.1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents. In 2019 Alberta's total emissions were 287.1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents. In 2022 Alberta's total emissions had dropped to 269.9 million tonnes. The largest reductions came after the UCP came into office.

Natural gas production and processing emissions decreased 8.4 megatonnes from 2015 to 2022. That's a 15.5 per cent decline. Conventional oil emissions decreased 4.4 megatonnes from 2015 to 2022, also a 20.3 per cent decline.

Our methane emissions: what a great news story that our Environment and Protected Areas minister was talking about a couple of months ago. They are also significantly down. In 2014

Alberta had 31.9 million tonnes of methane emissions. In 2019 21.7 million tonnes of methane emissions. In 2023 methane emissions were down to 15.3 million tonnes. That is a 52 per cent reduction from 2014, which means that we reached our 45 per cent methane emissions reduction goal three years early.

Alberta decreased its emissions intensity as well, Mr. Speaker, from 1.02 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per \$1,000 of GDP in 2005 to .82 in 2022, a 20 per cent decline. We're getting wealthier, we're producing more, and we're reducing emissions. That is a story worth telling. Alberta's GDP, meanwhile, in that period, 2005 to 2022, increased 34 per cent while emissions grew by just 7.4 per cent.

Now let me tell you the story of some of our largest competitors. When you look at the international energy-related emissions trend, Canada, first of all, is responsible for 1.53 per cent of global emissions. That doesn't mean that we don't have our part to do, Mr. Speaker, but it does mean we have to put into context what would happen, that even if we got to zero emissions faster than anyone else, the impact it would have on global emissions is 1.53 per cent. That is less than each of China, India, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Russia. Now let me tell you about the record of those much larger producers of emissions than Canada.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

China: in the period between 2000 and 2022, 22 years, they increased 245 per cent in their global emissions, and they're now responsible for 31.11 per cent of global emissions. By the way, Mr. Speaker, they don't have any intention of reaching greenhouse gas net neutrality until at least 2070.

In India they increased 182 per cent between 2000 and '22. They're responsible for 7.38 per cent of global emissions and, once again, Mr. Speaker, no desire or interest or aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality until at least 2060. Iraq increased 135 per cent in their global emissions between 2000 and '22. They're responsible for .5 per cent of global emissions. Saudi Arabia increased 127 per cent between 2000 and 2022. Iran increased 123 per cent between 2000 and 2022. And Russia increased 10 per cent between 2000 and 2022. They're responsible for 4.76 per cent of global emissions, and I don't know if they've got a target at all, Mr. Speaker, to reduce emissions.

I should as well mention that we should all in this Chamber be very concerned about energy sector employment and overall employment. These are good-paying jobs, Mr. Speaker. As Chris Varcoe from the *Calgary Herald* pointed out, oil patch employment is now its highest that it's been since February of 2015. We've got 212,000 people working in the sector. I also just had a chance to go to the Canadian Association of Energy Contractors on Friday, and they have said that they have now finally begun to turn a corner and seen an increase in the amount of drilling rigs that are out there. I believe it's a 15 per cent increase over the last two years, which is amazing, because we know that those companies, that kind of drilling also benefit every single community in this province by employing people locally, having hotels filled, having local restaurants able to serve their patrons. We think everything is on the right trajectory as long as the federal government doesn't stand in the way and cause that to go in the wrong direction.

When it comes to our American neighbours, in 2023 energy products accounted for approximately \$133.6 billion, or about 80 per cent, of Alberta's exports to the United States. Our total trade relationship with the Americans is about \$188 billion. It's fair to say that we are one of the most significant trade partners with the United States compared to our provincial neighbours, but that is also why it is such an incredible point of leverage for us to talk to the Americans in terms of their interest, which is ensuring that we

have a robust national and international defence fuelled by robust energy security. If we want to be able to avoid 25 per cent tariffs on all Canadian goods, we have to lead with talking about those areas of mutual interest, and I was pleased to see that that conversation has finally begun. However, we will have no credibility in making the case to the Americans that we truly intend to meet their energy demands if the federal government persists with an energy cap that would result in production going down between now and 2030.

I should mention as well that when we talk about the impact it would have on our revenues, just to put it in terms of what we would have to face in the future – and that’s a near future, Mr. Speaker, because the federal government doesn’t wish to give the long time horizon that we need to make sure that we can do this emissions reduction in a way that wouldn’t impact production – if we ended up seeing 2.1 million barrels per day shut in by 2035, we calculate that that would be a \$12 billion reduction in provincial revenues by that time.

When you look at not only what we receive in royalties but also what we receive in personal income taxes and corporate income taxes, what is \$12 billion? It’s cutting primary, secondary, postsecondary education systems by 80 per cent. That’s how much \$12 billion is. It’s cutting nearly half of our health care system spending. Nearly half, Mr. Speaker. It would be wiping out all of our social services programs with an additional \$5 billion in additional reductions still required. That’s how big \$12 billion is, which is why this is existential for our province not only in terms of jobs, not only in terms of the GDP that it would generate, but in terms of the dollars coming in to our provincial government to support the things that Albertans care about.

The very reason – the very reason – why former Premier Peter Lougheed and former Premier before him John Brownlee made sure that through the natural resources transfer act and the validation of our constitutional authority to develop our resources was enshrined in the Constitution, the very reason why we own the resources is so that we can steward them on behalf of Albertans so that we can deliver on the things that Albertans care about. That is why we have to pass this motion, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it’s not just me. Let me tell you what various business groups have said. I think we have about 30 different business groups and economists who have also mirrored our grave, grave concern with the approach that the federal government is taking with this emissions cap, so let me list off a few of them.

3:20

The Business Council of Alberta says that the oil and gas emissions cap announced today is a discriminatory and divisive policy proposal, the epitome of bad public policy. “It will likely cap Canadian prosperity – billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs lost for no benefit, and the burden will be borne largely by one region and one sector.”

The Business Council of Canada also weighed in: “at a time when Canada’s economy is stalling, imposing an oil and gas emissions cap will only make Canadians poorer.”

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers: “the result would be lower production, lower exports, fewer jobs, lower GDP, and lower revenues to governments to fund the critical infrastructure and social programs on which Canadians rely.”

The Canadian Association of Energy Contractors:

At a time when Canadian families are struggling with high energy and food prices, the Trudeau Liberals’ new emissions cap will make everything just a little bit more unaffordable... The Trudeau government does not care about Canadian blue-collar, middle-class energy workers who rely on the industry to support their families.

The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters: “the federal government’s announcement of a cap on oil and gas emissions threatens Canada’s energy trade, economic interests, and national unity.”

The Montreal Economic Institute says that ultimately, every barrel of oil Ottawa keeps in the ground here will be replaced by a barrel of oil produced elsewhere in the World.

This announcement has much more to do with Steven Guilbeault’s bias against the energy industry than effective environmental policy... There is nothing to indicate that the jobs Guilbeault has in mind for the tens of thousands of workers he seeks to render unemployed are as well compensated as the ones they have now.

And Canada Powered by Women says that “this would exacerbate Canada’s already-prominent productivity problem, negatively impacting Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and quality of life for Canadians.”

Mr. Speaker, Ottawa’s oil and gas regulations and their so-called emissions cap: it all spells disaster for Alberta’s economy and Alberta families. It is clear that either the federal government did not do their homework to learn the full impacts of their ill-conceived policy or they do not care about the negative impacts it will have on the country but also disproportionately on Alberta. We cannot sit back and allow them to steamroll over the Constitution, and we will not.

In November 2022, after COP 27, federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault, acknowledged that natural resources are the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces, yet he continues to bulldoze his way into matters of our jurisdiction. His cap will hurt Alberta families by threatening their livelihoods, increasing costs, and threatening the programs and services they rely on.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the Chamber we support our energy workers, we stand with our energy workers, and we fight for Alberta families. As part of that, we need to reset the relationship with Ottawa, and that’s what this motion does.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that every member in this Assembly votes in favour of this motion. I hope every member of this Assembly will choose to side with Alberta workers and Alberta families instead of a radical, ideological federal government because if we don’t stand up now, we risk so much more, and that is not a risk that I am willing to take.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of . . .

Mr. Nally: Service Alberta.

The Acting Speaker: . . . Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Nally: There you go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government does not virtue signal, we don’t protest pipelines, and we don’t support a cap on the oil and gas industry. That’s because we recognize that oil and gas built our province. Oil and gas paved the roads. Oil and gas built the hospitals. They built the schools. It is the oil and gas industry that has given us a quality of life in this province that has become known as the Alberta advantage.

Now, Mr. Speaker, while we recognize that oil and gas has built the province, we also recognize that it didn’t just do it once. It did it again in 2019, when we got elected. You see, when we got elected in 2019, we inherited a job crisis thanks to the caucus from the other side. As you recall, we saw a precipitous drop in oil prices, and they, of course, did the worst thing possible. They raised taxes. In addition to raising taxes, they embraced an Extinction Rebellion like ideology, and because of that we saw \$100 billion worth of investment flee the province. We lost 180,000 jobs during that time.

We took action. We lowered corporate taxes, we cut red tape, and we created a business-friendly environment, and it was the oil and gas industry as well as petrochemical that responded. And, boy, did

they respond, Mr. Speaker. In fact, while Alberta is just 12 per cent of the population of Canada, we created 40 per cent of the private-sector jobs in this country. We punch above our weight class because of the oil and gas industry.

But I also want to say that oil and gas, while it's about jobs and it's about investment, that's not all it's about. It's about the environment. We know that we have a 200-year supply of clean natural gas. We also know that in the first half of 2024 China approved nine more coal-fired power plants. That's right, Mr. Speaker, nine coal-fired power plants just in the first half of 2024. While they're still building coal-fired power plants and contributing to the emissions, we have the solution right here in Alberta. We have clean natural gas that, if we could just get it to natural markets, would cut those emissions in half. We have the solution right here.

Our government is steadfast in defending the best interests of Albertans and the industries that have contributed to our prosperity and strength despite a federal government that seeks to limit the industries that maintain the Alberta advantage. This motion directly challenges the proposed federal oil and gas emissions cap as an unconstitutional intrusion into Alberta's exclusive jurisdiction over nonrenewable natural resource development as guaranteed by section 92(a) of the Constitution Act of 1867. I want to be clear, Mr. Speaker. Oil and gas is the exclusive privilege of the provinces, not the federal government. Let me be clear. This is not simply about emissions; it is about Ottawa attempting to exert control over Alberta's energy sector at the expense of our province's economic security and the jobs of tens of thousands of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just our government who recognizes the potentially catastrophic nature of an emissions cap. Independent analysis from respected institutions like Deloitte and the Conference Board of Canada has shown the catastrophic consequences of the emission cap. A reduction of at least 1 million barrels of oil and gas per day will reduce 150,000 jobs across the economy, and billions will be drained from Alberta's economy. This so-called emission cap won't reduce emissions. It will reduce jobs instead, and it will raise oil production in jurisdictions that lack Alberta's world-class standards and monitoring of oil and gas production.

This motion is more than a defence of what makes Alberta great. It is a declaration of Alberta's sovereignty within Canada. It seeks the Assembly's approval to take proactive, effective steps to counter the federal government's reckless actions if these regulations become law. Alberta will not sit idly by while Ottawa jeopardizes the prosperity of this province and the livelihoods of our people. This motion proposes a suite of measures to safeguard Alberta's interests. These include constitutional challenges, declaring oil and gas infrastructure as essential under the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, and ensuring the federal government has no authority to enforce or implement its unconstitutional cap within Alberta. Additionally, this motion calls for innovative economic measures such as selling conventional oil through a royalty in kind program and expanding pipeline capacity to secure new markets for Alberta's responsibly produced energy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to support this motion, to stand with Alberta families, and to send a clear message to Ottawa: Alberta will not bow to unconstitutional federal overreach. Scrap the cap.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Al-Guneid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that it feels like Groundhog Day. This debate on Government Motion 53 is awfully similar to the debate we had back in February 2024 on Government Motion 16. Last time it was on the federal Canada

electricity regulation, and this time it is on the federal emissions cap. Both times the Premier and her MLAs got up here in the House, stomped their feet, and did nothing but local theatrics. It is painful, frankly embarrassing, to watch our government throwing a tantrum with this paper tiger, the sovereignty act. The UCP has this list of things they want to do in Government Motion 53. The reality is that the UCP can execute this list without invoking the so-called sovereignty act.

3:30

Now, let's look at what the Premier wants to do in Government Motion 53 that does not require the imaginary powers in the sovereignty act. For starters, the Premier wants to bar energy companies from submitting oil and gas emissions data to the federal government unless the provincial government specifically approves it. The Premier wants to bar energy companies from letting federal employees onto their production sites. This is wild, Mr. Speaker. Talk about big government running your private business for you. Why does the UCP think that they can do the job of the private sector for them? Does the Premier even understand how institutional investing works, what data investors look for to make investment decisions in our jurisdiction? Is the UCP government forcing oil and gas companies to break federal laws?

Mr. Speaker, the former CEO of the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission Richard Masson said that he believes the Premier's proposal here will come off, quote, poorly around corporate board tables in Calgary and will be viewed as, quote, another layer of complication and uncertainty. He continues to say, and I quote: I'm not even sure it's going to have the desired effect of getting the federal government to back off; it just looks like more fighting, more risk, and to companies it will probably look like another example of governments who can't get their act together to try to come up with some kind of attractive investment environment in our country. End quote. Investment environment: that is a key word here.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and her ministers did not even bother to consult with the oil and gas sector before deciding they want to own the oil and gas sector's emissions data. The president and CEO of the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada, EPAC – by the way, the Premier was quoting him as well but forgot an important quote there. He said, and I quote: we weren't broadly consulted; that's where we would like to be collaborated with; we would like to be talked to to see how that would specifically work. End quote.

This government sounds like the wild, wild west, Mr. Speaker. The EPAC president continues to say, and I quote again: if the province wishes to ban certain types of other government officials from sites, we, the industry, are not going to get involved in that; that would be up to the province to enforce it. End quote. Of course the private sector does not want to get involved in the UCP government's nonsense and sad fights with the federal government.

The political theatrics and random musings are risky and signs of big government. With this type of government overreach, how is this even a conservative government, Mr. Speaker? This government overreach is awfully familiar. It's what we saw with Government Motion 16 back in February 2024, when the UCP government motion mused about creating a Crown corporation to nationalize our electricity market, which would send waves of uncertainty to investors.

Now, by declaring all emissions data to be the Alberta government's property, the UCP shows a similar pattern of government intervention. We saw this big government intervention in dealing with AIMCo, firing the board and bringing the pension agency close to government. Even the *New York Times* wrote about it and called this pension purge a Soviet-style purge, Mr. Speaker, and this is a direct quote.

Congratulations to the UCP for making the headlines, always for the wrong reasons.

Mr. Speaker, what would the next UCP government motion be? Is it nationalizing both the electricity and oil and gas sector while owning their data? It feels like everything is possible at this point. Once again the Premier is meddling in Alberta's strong markets and sending confusing messages to global investors about the stability of our jurisdiction. The UCP government is bad for business.

Mr. Speaker, I've said this before, and I will continue to say it. We are in a race to attract low-carbon investments in Alberta and in Canada. The American Inflation Reduction Act, policies in Europe and the Middle East are transforming the energy investment space, leading to creating new industries and well-paying jobs. Capital is flowing in stable jurisdictions with policy certainty, recognizing that we live in a carbon-conscious future because of climate change.

Unfortunately, the federal emissions cap comes down on us without understanding Alberta's existing carbon management frameworks and without sufficient consultations with industry and impacted communities. We have robust made-in-Alberta tools like Alberta's technology innovation and emissions reduction regulations – that's TIER – that provide policy certainty while reducing emissions. The focus should be building on TIER and strengthening industrial carbon pricing in Alberta.

Credit where credit is due, Mr. Speaker: the former UCP government under Jason Kenney and the former environment minister and former MLA for Calgary-Glenmore Whitney Issik raised the industrial carbon tax to \$170 to match the federal one. Again, credit where credit is due. That was the right move. That is the current UCP industrial carbon tax policy.

Moving forward the UCP should focus on sharpening our industrial policies. I would like to underscore that this government is not anticap in principle. Alberta already has the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, an oil sands emissions cap. This legislation was a negotiation between the government of Alberta and industry, Indigenous leaders, and environmental organizations, which resulted in a historic climate and industrial plan in Alberta back in 2016.

This legislation exists and is maintained by the current government. The legislation establishes a 100-megatonne limit for greenhouse gas emissions from all oil sands sites. It was introduced by the Alberta NDP government. This emissions cap continues to be maintained by the current UCP government, led by the current Premier.

Mr. Speaker, we need to engage to make our case. We need to negotiate with the federal government. We need to address climate change and take actual, appropriate measures to move forward together. It should have never reached this point, and the government should never have led with this level of foolishness. Alberta would never have gotten to this point if this UCP government hadn't been such an unwilling partner to actually take on this issue with the industry, with the federal government, and even at a global level.

What we need is meaningful engagement with the rest of Canada, not invoking an act that ignores the rule of law or how this country functions. Mr. Speaker, Albertans have told us time and time again that they are proud of being Albertan and they feel strongly Canadian. We're seeing the opposite of this in Government Motion 53 and in the previous Government Motion 16.

Mr. Speaker, I do have a genuine question. Since when did Alberta stop making deals? No one fought for Alberta like former Premier Peter Lougheed, yet he brought deals back to Alberta. The Alberta government must develop a set of robust industrial and climate policies to negotiate a deal with the federal government and secure Alberta billions of dollars that can be used to build new

industries, reduce emissions, and create thousands of well-paying jobs for Albertans.

3:40

Where are the deals, Mr. Speaker? This government hasn't secured a single deal to date. The government's reaction here is once again harming the image of the province by telling investors that it does not believe in Alberta's entrepreneurs and engineers to lower emissions and create jobs.

There is federal money for emission-reducing technologies available. There is even \$40 billion in federal money available to upgrade Canada's electricity grid. Alberta's grid is one of the most carbon-intensive grids in Canada. It will require more upgrading and investments than most other provinces to bring on new technologies to enhance reliability and affordability. Instead of political theatrics, why isn't this government at the negotiations table, representing Albertans and bringing home the biggest share of that \$40 billion? This is literally the government's job.

We currently have the so-called climate plan, the emissions reduction and energy development plan, that has promises, strategies, and goals, but this plan does not have implementation and monitoring programs. Without monitoring or implementation, this plan will neither reduce emissions nor be actioned nor create jobs. It is wishful thinking with some rainbow fairies and unicorns, Mr. Speaker.

Investors want clarity. Investors do not like the lack of policy certainty. Investors want to see stability. I wonder how global carbon capture and storage investors will react when they know about the governing party's new official policy that removes the designation of carbon dioxide as a pollutant.

It would be nice if our environment minister focused more on doing her job and less on her obvious UCP leadership bids. If only she did her job and tried to bring an equivalency agreement of some sort with the federal government on issues such as methane reductions to create jobs for Albertans instead of bringing more legal suits, creating more jobs for lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, we have energy products to sell in global markets. We need a serious government to be able to ensure we remain competitive. We are competing with the U.S. to sell our products and attract investments. We're competing with Ontario, B.C., and Saskatchewan. Our products need to be both cost competitive and carbon competitive. The oil and gas sector is a major economic contributor to the Alberta budget: \$12.5 billion came directly from bitumen royalty alone in 2024. It is no small feat. We need to keep it competitive.

The federal emissions cap poses challenges for Alberta – there's no question – and we must protect our provincial interest, but using the sovereignty act or owning the oil and gas sector's data is political theatre that will neither protect Alberta's jobs nor solve the problem.

The UCP's confrontational approach and years of fighting climate action have failed Alberta and Albertans. This means that investors will take their money and investments elsewhere, taking thousands of jobs with them. Their refusal to engage constructively with Ottawa has left us with worse policies and less influence. Alberta could have helped shape these federal policies to work better for our province; instead, the UCP chose political games over protecting Alberta's interests.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Leduc-Beaumont has risen.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today to speak in favour of Government Motion 53 to invoke the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. This motion is fundamentally about prosperity. The federal government's production cap would

make Alberta less prosperous and lower our standard of living. I rise today deeply frustrated that in a country as great as Canada we have a federal government that is actively trying to harm one of its provinces. This is wrong and ridiculous. And make no mistake: this is an intentional and hostile act that the federal government is taking to deliberately make life worse for Albertans. To everyone in Alberta who may be listening: the federal government is choosing ideology and political expedience over you and your family.

This energy production cap, disguised as an emissions cap, being proposed by the federal government would mean fewer jobs, reduced production, and slower growth. This would affect the entire Alberta economy, including agriculture, manufacturing, and small business. My riding of Leduc-Beaumont, home to many oil field support companies as well as thriving manufacturing and support industries, would be deeply impacted by this unfair and arbitrary production cap. The good news, Mr. Speaker, is that our United Conservative government will stand up to Ottawa and fight for Albertans.

I also rise today in hopes that Alberta's Official Opposition will be joining us in this important fight and vote in favour of this motion, but, unfortunately, I have my doubts. After all, we know that the NDP doesn't support the concept of prosperity as it is directly at odds with socialism. But even they have to see how damaging this federal government is acting towards Alberta.

We also know that the opposition is now led by Justin Trudeau's choice for NDP leader, Naheed Nenshi. Why would Albertans expect an NDP party and leader that are so closely intertwined with Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberals to possibly go against them? It's a shame, Mr. Speaker, because I'm sure there are several members on the other side who are forced to put on a brave face publicly and dutifully support their new leader, but in private I'm sure they are asking themselves how bringing in some good old-fashioned Liberal arrogance and corruption could possibly be good for their party.

I also wish that this was an isolated incident. For far too long Alberta has found itself on the receiving end of policies crafted in Ottawa that fail to understand or account for Alberta's economic strength. Whether it is the destructive carbon tax, restrictive environmental regulations, or delays in vital infrastructure projects, Albertans have had enough.

That is why our government is proposing measures to stop this federal emissions cap from damaging the province's economy, industry, and prosperity. We are taking this fight directly to Ottawa. This motion, if passed, will help to protect Alberta's economy and the province's ability to continue producing responsible, low-carbon energy to meet the world's growing demands.

Mr. Speaker, this issue is easy to summarize. It is embarrassing that Canada has such a weak, ideological, and divisive federal government. It is a travesty that Justin Trudeau and Steven Guilbeault are deliberately trying to harm Alberta, but it is unforgivable that the members opposite are standing right behind them.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other speakers? I will recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief. I rise to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the afternoon sitting.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The Minister for Advanced Education has risen.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to speak to Government Motion 53, which has been proposed by the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is not unaccustomed to the federal government interfering in our affairs. Since this Trudeau Liberal government took office in 2015, we have seen repeated attacks on Alberta and on Albertans. From the Impact Assessment Act and the plastics ban, both of which have been ruled unconstitutional, to his attacks on law-abiding gun owners to, of course, the carbon tax that is driving up the cost of everything, it is no secret to Albertans that Justin Trudeau is no fan of ours.

Mr. Speaker, after all of these destructive policies, today we face from Ottawa what can only be described as an existential threat to Alberta's economic prosperity and way of life. The proposed oil and gas emissions cap from the Trudeau Liberals is, in reality, a thinly veiled production cap, one that would result in a production cut of at least 1 million barrels a day of oil and gas in Alberta, killing 150,000 jobs. In short, this would decimate Alberta's economy and threaten the well-being of every Albertan.

3:50

Considering Trudeau's track record, it should come as no surprise that this proposed production cap constitutes yet another infringement by the federal government upon Alberta's sole and exclusive provincial jurisdiction. Under section 92(a) of the Constitution Act the provinces have the exclusive right to make laws relating to the exploration, development, conservation, management, and production of nonrenewable natural resources, but as we've seen previously, this federal government just doesn't seem to care. That's precisely why, in 2022, our government passed the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. This act gave us a useful and necessary mechanism to stand up for Albertans by defending our exclusive jurisdiction under the Constitution, and that's exactly what the motion before us today will do.

I know my colleagues have already spoken at length on the unconstitutionality of the emissions cap, so I'm going to focus the rest of my comments today on competitiveness and the role of technology and innovation in reducing emissions.

First, let's go down memory lane. In the early days of the carbon tax and the climate policy action plan, I recall speaking to investors in my role at that time as a business development economist and having a very real discussion with two investors from the United States, and what they said to me was shocking. They said that with a socialist government in place provincially and a leftist government in place federally, essentially, Canada became too politically risky to invest in. They said: we don't have certainty; we don't know if the rules are going to change overnight; we're not clear if we will be able to repatriate our funds should something change; we are finding that our conversations with those in power are not balanced, reasonable, logical, and for this reason, we're out.

Imagine that: Alberta being more politically risky than other jurisdictions. Who would have thought? Fortunately, we were able to reverse some of these tax policies in the province when we formed government in 2019, but the actions of the federal government inflicted lingering damage and continue to this day to undermine our competitiveness.

I was listening to a podcast recently by renowned economists Peter Tertzakian and Jackie Forrest, who are with the Arc Energy Research Institute. I would recommend that everybody listen to this particular podcast. Peter made a very good point about the emissions cap proposal. It is essentially another layer upon many existing layers of policies that have created a complex web of policy frameworks that can be quite confusing – very confusing – and difficult to navigate through for anyone considering investing in our country. This

additional emissions cap would create a very unusual and redundant situation where we are layering a cap-and-trade framework on top of a carbon pricing framework. Very unusual; nothing to be proud of.

Even for seasoned investors, trying to dissect between all of these different policies may not be worth their while, particularly as we have a significant policy disparity with our neighbours to the south. Anyone who has capital that they are looking to invest, who's looking for a decent if not significant rate of return, will always choose the jurisdiction that is simpler, that is more transparent, and that is going to create more certainty for the investor. Unfortunately, the way the federal government is layering their policies on our country, we are no longer going to be that jurisdiction.

Let's talk about the federal government for a moment. I know that the Leader of the Opposition has basically said that the best course of action is for everyone to come to the table and explain to the federal government the impact of the emissions cap, which is a de facto production cap. I would maintain that this is a very naive and inexperienced position to take. Of course we have collaborated with the federal government on many priorities. We know that to be the case. We are partners in this Confederation, but there are many, many examples where the federal government has not held up their end of the bargain.

As a minister spending five years in government, I can give you more than several examples where the federal government did not bargain in good faith, but in the interest of time, I'll just provide one: the Indo-Pacific trade strategy. I was in Ottawa and had an opportunity to ask the bureaucracy why they excluded conventional resources, LNG, and other forms of energy outside of renewables from the strategy. I can tell you that there was no satisfactory answer because the reality is that the Indo-Pacific would be thrilled to have access to Alberta energy. As the Premier had mentioned, we know that the Prime Minister of Japan and the chancellor of Germany were in Canada not too long ago speaking to the Prime Minister, and he basically talked them out of partnering with Canada.

This is very concerning, in this era of security of supply and food security, that our federal government is not understanding that we can be a power player in terms of energy production and distribution. It's concerning that there's no vision around the role that Canada can and must play. It's concerning that the federal government is completely blind to the ways they hamper industry in the ideological pursuit of dysfunctional climate policy.

I've said it many times before. Environmental stewardship and economic prosperity go hand in hand. We have proven it by being the most ethical, responsible producer on the globe, yet again and again we are undermined by our federal government's lack of imagination and real ineptness in understanding how to build robust energy policies.

Yes, it is naive to think that a mere round-table discussion will sway the federal government. It hasn't ever worked. This federal government has no desire to work productively with the provinces as it relates to energy due to their ideological blinders that keep them from understanding that our nation's road to prosperity and strength lies in the economic engine of Canada, which is our energy sector.

Is emissions reduction a desirable goal? Of course it is. Is creating policies that are going to impact production the answer? Of course not. As production is reduced, it is billions and billions of dollars of reduced revenues for the economy. It has a devastating impact. It's hard to even quantify the multiplier impact of this withdrawal of funds from the economy.

The answer to emissions reduction has to lie in technology and innovation. Alberta's government already incentivizes through our own carbon-pricing mechanism organizations to contribute to the

TIER program, which incentivizes and helps organizations invest in technology and innovation.

When I was at the Alberta Energy Regulator as one of the economists working on the methane emissions abatement requirements, one of the things that we frequently talked about was fugitive emissions, those emissions that are really hard to detect. What we discussed was that if someone was able to develop a smart camera technology – I'm sure that it's developed already – this would be the solution to capturing those fugitive emissions and getting to the root cause of the problem.

And let's not forget about multistage fracturing, a technology developed here in Alberta by Packers Plus, that has been so key in enabling the shale revolution in the United States, leading to dramatic increases in production. Here in Alberta we are the world leaders in energy technology.

Is adding more bills and fines to producers the answer? Is there going to be any more incentive to spend that money on tech and innovation, to work with research institutions to ensure that they are on top of the latest and greatest technology? No again. This federal government is short sighted in how the correct policy incentives should be created to really move the needle on new technology for emissions reductions.

It's disruptive technology that will change the landscape, so that is where we must invest. That is where we must look for the answers to emissions reductions, not in destructive and unconstitutional production caps that will only drive investment to other jurisdictions.

I will be voting in favour of this motion, and I call on all members in the Assembly to do the same. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other speakers? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to express my thoughts on Government Motion 53 and also my concerns about the unconstitutional cap on emissions tied to oil production by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Grande Prairie I'm very proud to represent a region that embodies, really, the spirit of Alberta's resource-rich heritage, our hard-working attitude, our can-do attitude, and our entrepreneurial spirit. Grande Prairie isn't just a thriving community; it is a cornerstone of Canada's energy sector, particularly in the gas sector. The oil and gas industry plays a pivotal role in our city, in our province, driving incredible economic growth, creating jobs, and supporting essential public services.

The energy cap that the federal government is looking to place upon us is very short sighted. It's a slap to Albertans who have incredible, responsible energy development and a huge challenge to our energy security as a province and our nation, Mr. Speaker. Motion 53 isn't just a motion for Alberta's energy but a motion that has world-wide impact and should be treated as such.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, in 1914 Alberta's first well discovered oil, and that discovery set forth a path for future discoveries. In 1947 the drilling of Leduc No. 1 set a path forward for Alberta. Now, this single event in 1947 transformed Canada's energy from being energy poor to being energy self-reliant, to being able to be self-sufficient in this and being able to support the world, to be part of an energy industry that is world renowned and supporting the world in their energy needs.

Today, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a leader in oil and gas production, both in quantity and in outcomes. We have the energy industry that has been one of the largest assets in Canadian history for the people of Canada and for Albertans and is a cornerstone for future industries as well. The use and future of powering and heating our

homes is very much part of the crux of this conversation. In the middle of winter we are warm here in Alberta because of our gas industry and because of our energy industry. Not only this, but it keeps our phones powered; it keeps our Androids going. Petroleum products are used in ski and snowboarding equipment, in our clothing, and also to power the airplanes and vehicles to get to work and to go on vacation.

Oil and gas are the backbone of all of our industries. It is key, and without it we will not function as a province or as a country, Mr. Speaker. With natural gas expected to expand by about close to 20 per cent in the near future, continuing to be one of the most important sources of energy across the world, we need more energy. Alberta is positioned to be a player in this market and be a solution to this growing market in need, but for some reason Alberta's energy industries are somehow considered to be unclean, which is very untrue.

The Liberal-NDP carbon cap showcases that they don't believe in Alberta's energy sector, but they want anyone who doesn't match their ideals to pay more for everything. Albertans would pay more for energy, removing energy security from Albertans and Canadians, and it would remove the opportunities to reduce world emissions through the use of Alberta industry technologies that could be used throughout the world.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Further, if Alberta's regulatory standards were adopted globally, associated CO₂ emissions could be reduced significantly across the world. Albertans are doing the work and doing it responsibly, yet the Trudeau-NDP coalition seeks to limit Alberta's potential with their unconstitutional emissions cap. Canada works within a Charter of Rights, and the Charter is very clear. Provinces have jurisdiction over nonrenewable natural resource development. The federal government wants to overreach and overstep into provincial Charter responsibilities, and this is gross overreach, Madam Speaker.

This right is fundamental to our economy, to our jobs, and to our future, and we will not stand by while the federal government disregards our voice. This federal government's arrogant, short-sighted policy ignores the interests of western Canada and undermines this prosperity of the entire nation. It is our duty to challenge this unlawful cap and stand up for the people of Alberta. This province deserves to thrive without interference from a federal government that fails to understand its value and our contributions to Canada.

Madam Speaker, this cap is not just impractical; it is, in fact, dangerous. Experts such as Deloitte, S&P Global, and the Conference Board of Canada have highlighted severe economic risks, yet the federal government continues to ignore these substantive warnings. Production cuts required to meet the cap's targets would devastate our economy and undermine Canada's energy security. This motion will include a clear commitment to launch an immediate constitutional challenge if or when the federal production cap becomes law.

Alberta will not allow this federal injustice to stand. Our United Conservative government will protect our resources, our peoples, and our futures. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand today to provide my support for this Motion 53, and I thank the Premier for introducing this motion. Let me first express my comments on the alarming actions Ottawa is taking that threaten the very foundation of Alberta's economy and our constitutional rights. The federal government's radical proposal to cap oil and gas production is not

just an issue for the industry; it is an issue for every Albertan and every Canadian. This proposal is a direct attack on our economy, our families, and our way of life, and it will have devastating consequences for Alberta and Canada as a whole.

Let me highlight that this cap is bad for families, it is bad for businesses, and it is bad for Canada's economy. Alberta's energy sector is the backbone of our province, providing good jobs, driving innovation, and contributing billions to the Canadian economy. This strike on our resources is an attack on hard-working families who rely on these jobs to support their communities and their children's future.

But there is more at stake here than just jobs or economy, prosperity. This cap violates our Constitution. Section 92(a) of the Canadian Constitution is crystal clear. It gives provinces exclusive jurisdiction over nonrenewable natural resource development. This is the right that was given to all provinces in Canada, including Alberta, and Alberta will not stand by and let Ottawa take it.

Madam Speaker, we already have a system in place that is working. The oil and gas industry in Alberta is evolving. Emissions per barrel are declining even as production and our contribution to GDP continue to grow. Our economy, our industry is becoming greener, more efficient, and more innovative. We are making progress, and the federal government needs to recognize that.

The proposed 35 per cent cut in production by 2030 is not just unrealistic; it is impossible to have it. Not only will it devastate Alberta's economy, but it will not significantly reduce global emissions. Canada's emissions represent a fraction of the global total. This extreme move will hurt our people, our businesses, and our national economy while doing little to address the global nature of climate change.

Albertans will not accept this attack on our economy. We will not accept Ottawa imposing radical, top-down measures that will destroy our prosperity and hinder our future. We will not accept the federal government ignoring our rights and our ability to govern ourselves.

We are committed to fighting this cap at every level. Two weeks to this plan will not be enough. This cap must be scrapped. We will use every legal tool at our disposal, including constitutional challenges and the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, to protect our province and our people. We will not allow Ottawa's activist agenda to take away our rights to control our resources and our economic destiny. This is not just a fight for Alberta. It is a fight for all Canadians. It is an advocacy for our economy, our family, and our future. Together we will stand strong, we will stay united, and we will ensure that Alberta's voice is heard.

Madam Speaker, Alberta's government has repeatedly called for the federal government to abandon its proposed production cap on the province's oil and gas industry. The limiting of production would harm Alberta's economic growth, prosperity, particularly in a time when global demand for energy is growing and when the province is a key player in the energy sector. To counter the perceived threat, Alberta's government is introducing this motion under the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. This motion aims to assert the province's autonomy and propose concrete actions to prevent the federal production cap from being enforced.

One key aspect of this motion is the recommendation that Alberta's government immediately challenge the production cap if it is passed into law. This cap violates the rights of the province and our ability to manage our natural resources effectively. Additionally, the motion proposes several proactive measures that the government would take to protect Alberta's interests. This includes the potential refusal to enforce the cap within the province as well as using the existing legal protection such as the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act to shield the

province's energy industry from any attempts to restrict production. The Alberta government is also prepared to explore other legal and practical strategies to safeguard its energy sector, ensuring that Alberta can continue to meet the demands of both domestic and global markets.

4:10

If this motion is passed, Madam Speaker, Alberta's government would begin to plan and develop the necessary legal logistic actions to ensure that the province's energy industry remains competitive and resilient regardless of federal policy changes. The Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act is seen as a strategic tool for asserting the province's authority and protecting its economic interests, particularly in the face of what is perceived as overreach by the federal government.

In essence, Madam Speaker, we are taking a strong stance against the proposed production cap. It would not only damage the province's economy but also undermine our ability to contribute to Canada's energy needs and global energy security. The motion is designed to give Alberta the legal and political tools to resist what it sees as a harmful federal policy, ensuring the province remains a vital and prosperous player in the global energy market.

Madam Speaker, let me just highlight the fact that the members opposite have not criticized the federal carbon tax, which is putting pressure and burdens on Albertans. The federal carbon tax is constantly contributing to the rising of prices of gasoline, utilities, food supplies, and the cost of living in Alberta. My constituents in Calgary-East have shared that whenever they see their utility bills, a portion thereof is the carbon tax, and they know that this will increase come April 2025. The current carbon tax on natural gas is \$4.09 per gigajoule, on gasoline it is 17 cents per litre, while 21 cents per litre is on diesel. By 2030 the carbon tax on natural gas could amount to \$8.55 per gigajoule while for gasoline it would be 37 cents a litre, an expensive cost that burdens every one of us.

This carbon tax, Madam Speaker, is not even meeting its target on lowering emissions. What it is only accomplishing is to require Albertans to pay more whenever they use cars or trucks to drive to work or to deliver the food supplies or other necessities. And when we heat our homes, we are charged more.

Now that the federal government is seeing that their carbon tax is not meeting its target and only burdens Albertans and Canadians, it seems that they would try to accomplish the target by imposing this emission cap on Canada's largest export industry. The federal government would try to please a few countries but at the expense of the oil and gas industry that is supporting more than 400,000 jobs and millions of Canadians indirectly and the whole Canadian economy. Instead of focusing on resolving Canada's internal important issues, including affordability, lowering of costs of necessities, and the cost of living, the federal government is fixed on pleasing other nations. The federal government should find solutions on paying Canada's debt, which is expected to be about \$1.4 trillion by the end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year, and not put more burdens on Canada's largest economic contributor, which would limit production, thereby limiting the industry's capacity to contribute more to the economy.

It is just sad and disturbing, Madam Speaker, that the federal government would impose this emissions cap at the expense of Canadians while we watch many countries continue to emit more emissions. I'm encouraged that we have an opportunity to stand and fight for the right of Albertans. Again, I thank the Premier for having this motion, and I ask all the members of this House to support this significant motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise today to support the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act motion that was just introduced by our Premier and also address some of the misinformation and statements made by the Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

This motion, Madam Speaker, outlines seven very specific measures that our government will take to protect Albertans' jobs, livelihoods, our economy, and our way of life. They are very specific that when this production cap is finalized and becomes law, as we do understand the federal government will be moving forward very quickly to jam this one through the processes, we will launch an immediate constitutional challenge against it. We will also ensure that no provincial entity will participate in enforcing or implementing this production cap in any manner.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about ensuring that all interest holder oil and gas production facilities and related infrastructure in the province of Alberta are deemed as essential infrastructure, this matters at a time when the very security of these sites is obviously at risk not only by the regulations being put forward by the federal government but, quite frankly, by an activist agenda.

Prohibiting entry by any individual, including a federal official or contractor, onto these interest holder facilities. I believe the member opposite said today that that is wild. Madam Speaker, this is something that we've seen in other provinces. This is a reaction to federal overreach to in fact protect our areas of provincial jurisdiction. The Premier raised a very good example, in the Premier's opening remarks, that I'm not sure that the member heard, that in Saskatchewan we saw federal agents testing water on private property, an area that was not their jurisdiction, and the province of Saskatchewan stood up to protect against that overreach.

Now, when it comes to declaring all information directly or indirectly related to greenhouse gas emissions, Madam Speaker, this is something that falls directly within the ministry of environment. It's something that we feel is necessary given what the federal government is seeking to do with their de facto oil and gas production cap, which they are calling an emissions cap. But I'll get to that in a second.

They have put industry and our provincial government in this position with Bill C-59. This was a piece of legislation that was inspired by the NDP, so of course, Madam Speaker, it makes sense that the members opposite are trying to defend it. But it has put industry in this position where they are not able to defend their record, whether that be to their shareholders or to the general public, when it comes to emissions because of that legislation that the federal government pushed through rapidly with very little engagement or public dialogue on that topic.

This motion, of course: we want to look at utilizing our royalty in kind programs and work with other provinces across the country to ensure that we have market capacity.

These are things, Madam Speaker, that I would imagine every member of this House would want to protect because they are, in fact, in the best interests of Albertans. And it's not just our government that is saying that. When we look at the data being put forward by S&P Global, by Deloitte, by the Conference Board of Canada, we look at impacts of a million barrels cut every day of production according to S&P Global, \$28 billion a year in lost GDP according to Deloitte, and up to 150,000 jobs lost according to the Conference Board of Canada. It's not just us coming up with that data; these are reputable firms. This is people. This isn't just numbers; these are real people with real jobs across Alberta, all across Canada, quite frankly, and impacts to our economy that

would devastate our variability to invest in the public services that Albertans and Canadians rely on.

Now, Madam Speaker, if this was about emissions and if this was actually about the environment, I'd be happy to talk about that. As the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas for Alberta I am so exceptionally proud of our environmental record. The issue here is that this isn't about emissions; this is about production. But for all of you out there who are wondering what our emissions and environmental record truly is, it is that our overall emissions continue to decline even while production continues to grow to meet global demand for safe, affordable, reliable energy.

4:20

Overall annual emissions have declined by over 7 per cent since 2015. Alberta had the biggest reduction in emissions in Canada in the most recent reports that we've seen. We've reduced our methane emissions, as the Premier said, by 45 per cent. We were able to hit our target by working with industry, not doing what the federal government told us to do – I think that is an important point – three years ahead of schedule and for \$600 million less in cost to industry. Oil sands emissions intensity per barrel has fallen 23 per cent since 2009. It is expected to decline another 28 per cent by 2035, Madam Speaker. Once again, I am exceptionally proud of our environmental record when it comes to energy development in our province.

Now, when we look at this de facto production cap, because this is what it is – and I do want to be clear that when the federal government says, “This is an emissions cap; it's not a production cap,” they are misleading Canadians, and they are doing that on purpose. They know that if they tell the truth, the courts will find what we know, that this cap is unconstitutional.

Again, you know, when I listen to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore talk about her opposition to this motion, saying that we should just work with industry and we should all just make sure that the federal government hears our concerns and then we can negotiate, we have been doing that, Madam Speaker, for two years.

I am going to quote industry just so that the Member for Calgary-Glenmore and our other colleagues across the aisle can hear this. The Business Council of Canada says, “A cap on the energy sector will make Canada's climate policy landscape even more incoherent and uncompetitive, which will leave the country with an expensive piecemeal approach to reducing emissions.”

Madam Speaker, the Business Council of Alberta said, “It will likely cap Canadian prosperity – billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs lost for no benefit, and the burden will be borne largely in one region and one sector.”

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce said, “The proposed emissions cap will make Canada uncompetitive in the fight for the global capital.”

The Canadian Association of Energy Contractors said, “At a time when Canadian families are struggling with high energy and food prices, the Trudeau Liberals' new emissions cap will make everything just a little . . . more unaffordable.”

The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters said, “The federal government's announcement of a cap on oil and gas emissions threatens Canada's energy trade, economic interests, and national unity.”

Eric Nuttall, senior portfolio manager at Ninepoint Partners said, quote: “Look around the world. No other major oil and gas producer is doing what we are doing. It behooves us to take a moment and ask: well, why is that? It's economic idiocy.”

Now, Madam Speaker, Michael Belenkie, CEO at Advantage Energy – this is an interesting one because when the members opposite say that we should just work with the federal government

and we should make more investments in technology, this actually is an Alberta company that the federal government has recently invested in to support a CCUS project. I'm going to quote Michael Belenkie, CEO at Advantage Energy. “All we're doing is we're shutting ourselves down at our own expense and watching global emissions increase.”

Madam Speaker, Kendall Dilling, president of Pathways Alliance:

A decrease in Canadian production has no impact on global demand – meaning another country's oil will simply fill the void and the intended impact of the emissions cap is negated at a global level.

He continues to say:

An emissions cap gives industry less – not more – of the certainty needed to make long-term investments that create jobs, economic growth and tax revenues for all levels of government. It simply makes Canada less competitive.

Now, Madam Speaker, I could go on and on, but one very important quote that I do want to end with is from the mayor of Drayton Valley, Nancy Dodds who said, quote: “This will crush our province and it will crush our community. We can't go through that again.” Now, when the mayor of Drayton Valley says “again,” what she's referring to is 2015. It was a time overseen by the NDP government here in Alberta. It is a record and a time that we don't want to go back to, that Albertans certainly don't want to go back to, and we heard that from Albertans loud and clear not only in 2019 but once again in the last election in 2023.

Madam Speaker, we saw that movie before, when in 2015 the NDP just rolled out the red carpet for Justin Trudeau to shut in and shut down production and our industries. They killed over 180,000 jobs. They, in fact, said: “Don't worry, Prime Minister. We will just roll out your carbon tax for you. You don't even have to do that hard work yourself. We'll do that for you.” A tax, again, that the NDP never campaigned on and Albertans certainly didn't support or vote for.

Now, if the NDP cared, I would love to see them stand in this House, support our opposition to this, I would say, very, very punitive production cap. But, again, I'm guessing by the comments from the Member for Calgary-Glenmore that she will not be supporting this motion. I do just want to respond to some of her specific concerns that this is bad for investment, that it results in a lack of clarity. I would agree, and much as industry has pointed out in the quotes that I quoted just moments ago, this uncertainty, this lack of clarity is exactly what we are trying to protect our province against from this incredibly outrageous federal overreach.

Citing the energy producers, EPAC: we spoke to them. The Premier spoke to them on Friday, and the message was very clear, that they are grateful that our government is standing up to protect Alberta and our industries against this federal government, and they look forward to working with us on all aspects of this motion as we will be engaging with them, well, I hope, after this motion is passed in this House. When it comes to collecting greenhouse gas data, again, the NDP-inspired Bill C-59 makes that nearly impossible. It puts us in this position, Madam Speaker.

Methane equivalency. We should work with the federal government on methane equivalency, Madam Speaker. I'm not sure if the member opposite knows, but we have had that equivalency for a number of years. It's why we were able to move ahead and reach our targets on methane emissions reduction three years ahead of schedule for \$600 million less cost to industry. We are working on a new methane equivalency because, once again, when it comes to methane, the federal government is going to be moving forward on a policy that is completely out of touch with reality and is punitive,

with only one goal, which is shutting down our energy industry. We will not stand for that either.

Working with other provinces, working on our competitive advantages: that is exactly what our Premier is doing as we see Premiers across the country standing up to protect their constitutional jurisdictions, much like we are here in Alberta, Madam Speaker.

None of this is surprising. I had hoped that maybe at the beginning of today's debate on this motion this could be unanimous. I was hoping that unlike when the NDP in this House failed to stand up against the carbon tax and support our motion in opposition to the carbon tax – again, we failed to see the NDP stand with us in opposing clean electricity regs that would risk our electrical grid and mean much higher costs for electricity for the people of Alberta. The NDP said: “You know what? No. We’re going to stick with our ideological, activist counterparts on that one and ignore the very real concerns raised by Albertans.”

Then again, you know, taking us back to 2015, while Albertans have moved on from that type of policy, where we just roll out the red carpet, allow Justin Trudeau to impose his ideological agendas on Albertans, in 2024, nine years later, we see the Member for Calgary-Glenmore proudly supporting an emissions cap. For any of you who don't know what that is, it was a little cap gifted to Minister Steven Guilbeault that he could wear as long as he would push through this eco radical activist agenda. When you wonder – it was a bit of a joke, I would say, on some energy-producing places, much like Alberta and our industry. That is where the members across the aisle are at still in 2024 despite the evidence, despite the facts, despite the additional costs, despite the lost jobs that that would mean for Albertans. That is where the NDP government is at, Madam Speaker.

Much to the opposite, our government will continue to defend Alberta, defend our major industries, defend the jobs of hard-working men and women all across our province. We will defend the well-being of Albertans, and we will defend our constitutional jurisdiction. We are grateful, Madam Speaker, to the hard-working men and women in our energy industry for working so hard every day to provide us safe, affordable, reliable energy security and, of course, energy security at a time where it is more important than ever before.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would encourage all members of this House to support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to join the debate on Government Motion 53?

Seeing none, I will ask the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 53 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:30 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Glubish	Nixon	Wilson
Guthrie	Petrovic	Wright, J.
Horner	Pitt	Yao
Hunter	Rowswell	Yaseen
Jean	Sawhney	

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Chapman	Hayter
Arcand-Paul	Dach	Hoyle
Boparai	Eremenko	Renaud
Brar	Goehring	Sabir
Ceci	Haji	Sigurdson, L.

Totals:	For – 47	Against – 15
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[Government Motion 53 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 34 Access to Information Act

[Debate adjourned November 26]

The Speaker: Hon. members, before the Assembly is Bill 34, Access to Information Act, at second reading. Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? Hon. Member for St. Albert, I believe that you adjourned debate, which would make it difficult for you to speak again.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address Bill 34, the Access to Information Act. This proposed legislation sets out new regulations governing the public's access to government information, a key principle for transparency and democracy. While the government suggests that the bill is aimed at improving transparency, upon closer examination it becomes clear that it undermines access to information, tilts towards secrecy, and significantly diminishes the accountability mechanisms that underpin our democracy.

Our concerns with Bill 34 begin with its overall direction. This bill moves Alberta further away from transparency with numerous provisions that prioritize restricting access rather than expanding it. The most concerning aspect is the new exemption for political staff. This provision shields communications involving political staffers from public scrutiny, yet the term “political staff” is left undefined, with the government reserving the right to clarify it later through regulation, which is not debated in the House. This ambiguity allows for an overly broad interpretation, potentially extending protections to an extensive group of individuals and communications. At its core, this exemption serves to insulate ministers and their staff from public accountability.

The bill also tightens restrictions on accessing factual and background information of communication between the minister and political staffers. Under existing legislation Albertans can file freedom of information requests to obtain such details which are crucial for understanding government decisions. Governments are custodians of decision-making on behalf of the public, and the public has the right to know some of those decisions that impact the lives of many Albertans. Bill 34, however, places these materials off limits by denying access to even basic facts. The government creates a wall of secrecy that prevents Albertans from fully understanding the basis of key decisions affecting their lives.

Another troubling element of Bill 34 is the introduction of a vague reasonable effort of time. This provision allows public bodies to reject information requests outright if they are deemed too broad

or complex or time consuming, which is the case of today's era of communication. The lack of a clear definition for what constitutes reasonable creates room for arbitrary decision-making. Previously broad or complex requests could still be processed, although with higher fees to cover the additional administrative tasks or additional efforts that those who are working or retrieving that information involved. Now there are pathways for rejecting requests altogether, further limiting public access to government records.

4:40

Compounding these concerns is the change from calendar days to business days for processing requests as well. By shifting the standard response time from 30 calendar days to 30 business days, the bill effectively with that change extends the waiting period to around six weeks. This change does not address the current delays in processing requests but instead institutionalizes a longer wait time, placing an additional burden on Albertans trying to find government decision-making or trying to find information.

Mr. Speaker, these issues do not exist in isolation; they are part of the broader pattern of diminished transparency under this government. Alberta already has one of the most restrictive access to information regimes in Canada. A 2023 report by the *Edmonton Journal* highlighted how challenging it is for Albertans to obtain information about government decisions under the current system. You would expect legislation or amendments that will address this current challenge that Albertans are facing, but instead it is further restrictions creating walls of barriers that will prohibit Albertans from accessing this information. Rather than improving this situation, Bill 34 makes it more difficult by introducing more exemptions and creating new barriers for requests.

The bill also weakens the oversight role of the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Previously the commissioner held exclusive authority to approve or deny the dismissal of information requests. Under Bill 34 this power is transferred to the heads of public bodies. This change reduces the independence of the process and places more control in the hands of those who may have vested interest in withholding this information. Furthermore, these applicants file complaints if their requests are denied, adding an additional hurdle for citizens trying to seek accountability.

Mr. Speaker, another notable provision is the removal of time limits on certain exemptions. For instance, under the current legislation information related to prosecutorial discretion becomes accessible after 10 years. Bill 34 eliminates such time frames, creating indefinite exemptions that keep critical information permanently out of reach.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, all records subject to legal privilege are now off limits, broadening the scope of inaccessible information significantly. These challenges have far-reaching implications for transparency and accountability in our province. Freedom of information requests are a vital tool for journalists. It's a vital tool for researchers. It's an important tool for citizens to scrutinize government actions.

Over the past three years the number of such requests has increased dramatically, reflecting a growing public demand for access to information. In Medicine Hat, represented in the House by the Premier, for example, requests have risen nearly fivefold. Instead of meeting this demand with a more efficient and transparent system, the government tables Bill 34, which is erecting new barriers that will frustrate and discourage legitimate inquiries. This trend is not only troubling in comparison to Alberta's past but also when viewed against the national standards. Other provinces in Canada have taken steps to enhance access to information while Alberta is moving in the opposite direction.

It's worth recalling the recommendations made by Jill Clayton, former Information and Privacy Commissioner for Alberta during

2013 as part of the FOIP Act review. In the written submission known as *Becoming a Leader in Access and Privacy* the former commissioner outlined a vision for proactive disclosure and greater transparency. Among the recommendations were mandatory disclosure requirements, minimum standards for proactive information sharing, and robust reporting on the processing of information requests. The former commissioner also highlighted that these recommendations, rooted in the global best practices, are a stark contrast to the regressive approach embodied in Bill 34.

Fast-forward. After 11 years the current commissioner seems to agree with the previous commissioner. The current commissioner's response also highlighted significant concerns about how the process changes could impact Alberta's access to information rights and, more broadly, the overall functioning of Alberta's access to information system. A letter that was written by the commissioner highlighted these concerns. It said, and I will quote. After reviewing Bill 34 the commissioner also stressed the importance of carefully considering the proposed changes and the implications for Alberta's access to information.

Mr. Speaker, transparency is a cornerstone of democracy. When government operates in secrecy, they erode public trust and undermine accountability. Bill 34 not only fails to address the existing shortcomings in Alberta's access to information system, but also it introduces new barriers that will make it harder for citizens to understand and scrutinize the actions of their elected government.

I urge all members of the House to reconsider the provisions that are provided in Bill 34. Instead of insulating government decisions from public scrutiny, we should be working to expand access to information, streamline the request processes, and restore the trust in our democratic institutions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Bill 34 is introduced under the guise of modernization. It has nothing to do with openness. It has nothing to do with accountability. It is all about tightening the grip of secrecy and undermines the democratic rights of Albertans.

Let's talk a little bit about expanding secrecy and eroding democracy and accountability. First and foremost, let's address the sweeping exemptions in section 4. Section 4 exempts political staff communication and prosecutorial records from disclosure. Why is it important to include these in public disclosure? It is all about public accountability. This government doesn't care about any sort of accountability. Under this UCP's Bill 34 this accountability is shrouded in secrecy.

Let me talk about section 27, Mr. Speaker. Now, under this Bill 34, section 27 extends cabinet confidentiality to include background factual information. How can Albertans trust a government that systematically buries the facts under the guise of confidentiality?

The other part I want to highlight is section 7(3). It is a very troubling section in this Bill 34. It puts the burden on applicants to provide enough detail for public bodies to locate records. What does "enough detail" mean? It means nothing in this bill. This bill is not clear about "enough detail". It is very vague. It is very subjective and ripe for misuse. As a result of this vague and subjective bill and improper use of the words, the genuine requests can be denied, leaving Albertans in the dark. That is dangerous for democracy. That is dangerous for open government. That is dangerous for honest government. That is dangerous for the entire democratic rights of Albertans. Albertans expect better; Albertans deserve better.

4:50

Now, let's talk about the timelines under Bill 34. This bill replaces calendar days with business days. I don't know which part of the brain this government uses to think, Mr. Speaker, that instead of addressing the real issues, instead of addressing the root causes of the problems, they come up with weird solutions that don't help anybody. Instead of properly resourcing the FOIP offices, instead of hiring more people there, they are coming up with changing or increasing the timelines. That doesn't help anybody. It also transfers the powers from the independent Information Commissioner to the head of public bodies. Now they can dismiss the requests that they find inconvenient, undermining the very idea of oversight, undermining the idea of democracy.

This government's pattern of avoiding accountability is on full display under Bill 34. Let me give you some examples. This bill is exempting the energy war room from transparency laws and refusing to release the detailed pandemic spending records. The UCP has always prioritized secrecy over accountability. I don't know; I mean, maybe this government has to spend too much time deleting the e-mails when they are caught, so this bill will maybe save some time to not delete those e-mails.

Government always talks about and touts modernizing efforts. In reality it is not about improving the access of information to Albertans. If it were genuinely about improving the access to information we would have seen proactive disclosure provisions improved under this bill, we would have seen streamlined processes under this bill, and we would have seen enhanced public awareness campaigns under this bill. We have seen nothing of that sort under this bill from this UCP government. In reality what we have got is government controlling the narrative and doing nothing to serve Albertans, who have elected all of us to serve them in this Legislature.

This government is very far away from addressing the real issues that Albertans are facing, whether that be education, whether that be health care, whether that be affordability. There are no schools in my riding of Calgary-North East being built. Teachers are struggling to find more funding from this government. EAs are completely underpaid. The government is attacking gender-diverse kids and taking away the rights of their parents and medical professionals.

Under health care: the Premier promised to fix health care in 90 days. What we have seen is long wait lines in emergency rooms. What we have seen is no new hospitals in Calgary-North East. The south Edmonton hospital was cancelled.

Mr. Speaker, there is no respect for workers under this government. Adding more insult to injury, the UCP is giving the hard-earned pensions of these workers to Stephen Harper. I mean, couldn't this government find a better educated, qualified person to do this job?

Same thing with affordability: insurance is through the roof; utilities are through the roof; tuition costs have skyrocketed. Out of 13 bills introduced by this government in this session we have seen nothing that addresses these issues. Alberta has the highest unemployment rate amongst youth, the lowest minimum wage, which this government even refuses to acknowledge, and what is this government doing to address these issues? Nothing. What is this government focused on? Hiding information from Albertans. They have stopped reporting the class sizes to Albertans, and just before the election this government even didn't report the number of deaths caused by opioids in Alberta.

This is not the government that Albertans deserve. This is not the government that they elected. This is not the government that Albertans expect. Being a student of public policy, Mr. Speaker, let me, a little bit, tell this government what good governance is. Good governance is about transparent government. It is about open

government. It is about accountable government, and it is about honest government. Under this UCP we have seen nothing of that sort.

Why not invest in FOIP? This bill does not build trust; it erodes it further. This government has done nothing to build trust in Albertans, and transparency is not just an administrative task. It is the foundation of any functioning democracy. A government operating in shadows loses the trust of Albertans, and it is very hard to regain that trust. Hiding information does not solve the problems. In fact, hiding information delays the accountability, and accountability delayed is accountability denied. Being the shadow minister of red tape reduction, let me suggest to this government to cut the red tape that this bill wraps around Albertans. Why not rename the ministry of red tape reduction to the ministry of information obstruction? It would at least be honest branding, Mr. Speaker.

Let me also talk a little bit about the letter that the Privacy Commissioner wrote to the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction. It is a concerning letter that the minister got from the Privacy Commissioner regarding Bill 34, the so-called Access to Information Act. This letter is not just feedback, Mr. Speaker; it's a wake up call. It is a stark warning about the direction that this government is taking on transparency and accountability. The commissioner's concerns are clear. Bill 34 represents a step backward for Albertans' access to information rights. It undermines the principles of good governance, accountability, and trust that should be the foundation of any democratic government. The letter clearly highlights that Bill 34 creates new overly broad exemptions to public access. For example, section 29, shields cabinet deliberations and even background factual information. This is not transparency.

The commissioner also rightly criticizes the shift of power from the independent office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to the heads of public bodies. These changes make it clear and make it easier for public bodies to disregard requests, further eroding the checks and balances critical to accountability.

Now, this bill has a serious impact on Albertans. Mr. Speaker, the latter makes this very clear. These changes will harm Albertans' ability to engage with their government. By narrowing what constitutes accessible information, Bill 34 risks turning Alberta into a province where asking questions is met with silence. Albertans will struggle to uncover the truth about decisions that impact their lives, whether that be health care, whether that be energy strategies or education funding. This bill takes a wrecking ball to the right to know. The commissioner rightly points out that Alberta had an opportunity to lead in transparency. Proactive disclosure, modernized digital access, and public education about information rights could have made Alberta a global example of open governance. Instead, Bill 34 seems more focused on shutting doors than opening them.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, this letter from the Privacy Commissioner is not just criticism; it's a road map. It offers thoughtful recommendations to enhance transparency, protect access rights, and ensure Albertans are not left in the dark. I call on this government to at least listen to the Privacy Commissioner, amend Bill 34, strengthen it and not weaken the FOIP process, restore the commissioner's powers, and reduce the overly broad exemptions that undermine the very purpose of access to information legislation.

Albertans deserve that, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve an honest government, an open government, a transparent government, a government that works for them, a government that is open, that shows them what this government is doing behind the bars. It is important for any government to engage with the people that elected it, to show them their progress, to show them who they are meeting with, to tell them what advice they are getting and from whom.

Unfortunately, under this UCP government Albertans have got the exact opposite. They have got the government that is always willing to hide information. They have got the government that is always willing to not be open, not be accountable, and instead keep everything behind the curtains.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks. I also request all members of the House to vote against this bill and to send a message to this government that they need to be more transparent, they need to be more open, and they need to be more accountable to the people of Alberta. Albertans deserve better, Albertans expect better, and they should get better. Come 2027, if this government doesn't listen to them, there will be a change in the government, and they will be able to get the government that will listen to them, that will be open, and that will be a transparent and accountable government in Alberta.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the . . .

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has the call.

Member Eremenko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What an honour to follow these incredible remarks that my colleague from Calgary-North East made. I am pleased to be able to speak to Bill 34, the Access to Information Act. Just last year the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner echoed concerns that had been raised by journalistic sources, well-reputable journalistic sources, from across the country who raised some major red flags about Alberta's freedom of information process, about the legislation, and that there was significant room for improvement. That is always not a great thing to have on a report card, significant room for improvement, but that was, in fact, the finding for Alberta's legislation.

Now we have this new legislation that actually split up FOIP into two different pieces, bills 33 and 34, and today we're talking about the Access to Information Act, that does not make any of the improvements that Albertans would expect from such a critically important piece of legislation.

Our record, as I said, Mr. Speaker, on freedom of information is not good; quite the opposite. In comparison to other jurisdictions Alberta was found to be the only province to refuse to respond to routine information requests, something that the legislation requires public bodies to do, but we consistently had a record of just refusing: "I don't know. My dog ate it. Like, I just forgot. It's in the mail somewhere." Consistently, time and time again, far more than other jurisdictions, we refused to provide routine information requests.

In the 15 minutes that I have today, Mr. Speaker, we'll dig into a number of the pieces of the Access to Information Act that I think Albertans should be very, very concerned about, but first I wanted to go back and understand a little bit. Given that we all know this red flag about our current legislation, what was some of the minister's rationale in creating Bill 34 as it is? I went back to the *Hansard* to hear from the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, the sponsor of this bill, and he said, "A key feature of this legislation is that it empowers public bodies to proactively disclose information. In other words, Albertans would be able to receive more information without having to go through a lengthy access request process."

What that tells me, Mr. Speaker, is: "Albertans, don't worry. We've decided the information that is important for you. We've already got it up on some, you know, maybe tucked-away URL somewhere on the government of Alberta web page." Or maybe not; maybe it's actually more accessible than that. But the point is the kind of patronizing paternalism to assume that we will decide what information is useful for you, Albertans, so you have nothing else to look for. Like, we're good; we've proactively disclosed. It's absurd to claim that: oh, we're ahead of you; we've proactively

disclosed all the information that we have decided is going to be important for you just to save you that process of actually having to file a request on your own.

That's not up to government to decide, Mr. Speaker. Journalists, civil society, individuals, citizens have a right to a fair and transparent process by which they can apply for information requests and that that request be respected, that it be followed through upon, and that it was not up to government to proactively decide the information that is important. That is exactly why this legislation exists. It is exactly why the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner exists.

To suggest that to proactively disclose means that, you know, you don't need to fuss with that finicky little FOIP request absolutely diminishes the role that my colleague so eloquently highlighted around good governance and the respect that voters and citizens in this province deserve. I can't believe that proactive disclosure means: oh, don't worry about it; we've got it. If I had a dollar, Mr. Speaker, for every Conservative candidate who has run on a somewhat vague platform of transparency and accountability – never have those words rung more hollow.

Let's talk about some of the pieces where Bill 34 significantly misses the mark. They have to go back to the drawing table on this one, Mr. Speaker, because it is worse than it has ever been, and if the whole point was to update a piece of legislation that needed significant updating, to be sure, this ain't it. Let's talk about one thing right off the hop around the definitions that are included in the legislation and, more importantly, the definitions that are not. One of them is this very vague term of "political staff." We were just chatting here with a couple of my colleagues in preparation for this debate, and we were like: so who is political staff, exactly? I don't know. I don't know. Is it ADMs and DMs? Is it chiefs of staff? I mean, some of them are obvious. Some of them are not so obvious.

This legislation allows for correspondence from political staff to members of Executive Council, to MLAs to be entirely exempt from what would be considered FOIPable, but where there is no clear definition about what actually qualifies as political staff – gosh – I mean, the sky is the limit. That is the kind of ambiguity that undermines this entire piece of legislation, and I would strongly encourage considerations to go back to the drawing board and provide some definition about what that actually means.

That certainly feeds into my second point around a significant broadening of exemptions and exceptions. The definition of who qualifies as political staff: I've mentioned that already. The legislation expands cabinet confidentiality to include messages between and from a minister to a political staffer and vice versa. Who political staff are I don't know. Maybe it depends on the day of the week or potentially what the issue is that a FOIP request may be dealing with.

5:10

It now exempts factual information. That means that it's not just advice and deliberations between members of Executive Council, for example, or between that all-elusive political staff and Executive Council member. It's not just the subjective advice and content that is a matter of debate; it's the actual fact that informs that deliberation that is now also exempt from a FOIP request. So we can't even know the kind of, like, foundational data points that are a topic of discussion. How can we have some general consensus on an agreement of fact when we don't have that information privy to us?

Advice and deliberations have always been exempted, but that has now been expanded to include these background or informational records. All records subject to legal privilege will be inaccessible under the new legislation. Previously, Mr. Speaker, it was only

solicitor-client records that were inaccessible to the commissioner, a threshold that is actually quite high but now is made much, much lower.

I'd like to move on to the power to disregard requests, again, something that we were already failing, frankly, prior to Bill 34, but now this legislation provides public bodies with an even greater scope of ability to disregard requests. First of all, the decline does not come from the commissioner any longer. It comes from the public body. Before it had a very high threshold. It had a very high mark that it needed to meet, that being that a request had to be frivolous or vexatious. Now that has been dramatically expanded. It kind of just feels like public bodies can just decline a request because they don't feel like it. Maybe they're busy that week, maybe it's budget time, and they don't want to bear the brunt of having to review the request.

I think it's incredibly important that where declines are provided to an applicant, the applicant can then first appeal the public body, and then they can move on to the commissioner. I hope we can have a significant conversation in committee about how we are going to appropriately resource this office when it comes to the sheer volume of concerns and complaints that are going to be coming as a result of declined requests. Once more the terms are ambiguous. They are without definition.

Changes to extended time limits from 30 days. Yes, certainly, from 30 calendar days to 30 business days has changed, but more importantly, in my mind, who can extend that and for how long? Again, a public body could say, "Ah, come back next year," for heaven's sake, and that doesn't feel like a transparent and accessible process in any way.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the freedom of information act was certainly due for a review. One would think the review would make government more accountable, but what is so frustrating is that this achieves the complete opposite. Public bodies are no longer required to have a duty to assist. Where before maybe somebody who doesn't submit a whole lot of these requests might be submitting one for the very first time to get important information relative to them or to their community or to an issue that they care about – maybe they were doing it for the first time. A public body would have what is called a duty to assist: let's help you navigate this system so that you can have the most effective and productive FOIP request possible so that you can get as much information as possible on that particular inquiry. No more duty to assist.

Again, when it comes to the fundamental, foundational pieces of an effective democracy, we need more accountability, more transparency, not less. I am absolutely positive that if the roles were reversed here – an opposition, let's say, that the UCP were in, who supports small government, who supports freedom to information and access to information – they would be livid if we put forward this kind of constraint on a process that belongs to all Albertans. These are the pieces of legislation, regardless of political stripe, regardless of current affairs, that are so incredibly important to maintain the integrity of government, of those 1,200 public bodies that are subject to the freedom of information legislation and now the Access to Information Act. So there is a lot of work to be had on Bill 34, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of a chronically and continually underfunded media, those good men and women who are going to work every day to do the very best job they can to provide the information to Albertans to make informed decisions about how they vote, their choices that they make every single day, this is exactly the kind of legislation that we need to fulfill those responsibilities every single day. I'm pleased to be able to speak firmly in opposition to Bill 34 and hope

that government will heed some of those considerations, will heed the office of the commissioner, and will come back to the drawing board.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 34, Access to Information Act. Before I get into the contents of the bill, I think there are a couple of things that, really, Albertans should be concerned about when it comes to not just Bill 34 but also Bill 33. That is the fact that currently we have a legislative committee who is looking at different levels of information acts, PIPA specifically. That is currently in front of Resource Stewardship, currently in front of members of this Chamber, looking at whether or not changes should be made to that legislation, how that impacts the office of the Privacy Commissioner, yet we see elements of PIPA being discussed in this Chamber with another piece of legislation.

Then we see Bill 34, Access to Information Act, which is currently being investigated by the Privacy Commissioner. The Privacy Commissioner is looking into concerns that were raised around FOIP and the current government's use of the legislation, and that investigation by the commissioner was supposed to be completed this month but sounds like needs to be extended for whatever reason. Obviously, we have no purview to that information at this point, but that is still an active investigation that is being done by her office. Yet here we are in this Chamber discussing what the government has perceived as changes that need to be made and how we address and manage FOIP.

I think that in itself speaks to the concern around this government's openness and willingness for transparency, this government's respect for due process and allowing Albertans to gather information and to have information shared with them to ensure that their best interests are being met and to really understand what information they have a right to have access to. And I find it really concerning that the government would bring forward a bill while they are currently working with the Privacy Commissioner and while we're waiting for a report from the Privacy Commissioner around what needs to change in relation to this legislation.

5:20

It feels like the government is trying to change the narrative in regard to what might be coming. I feel like the government probably knows, which is probably why this piece of legislation is in the House. What I think is happening is that they're going to try to get ahead of a story and say, "Well, we've already fixed that," when in fact what appears to be happening within this legislation is a further erosion of openness and transparency.

What this government is very good at is blaming someone else. "It's always the federal government's fault. It's always the municipality's fault. It's always someone else's fault." It's never the province of Alberta's fault; they're perfect. [interjections] I love how everybody on the government side is like: yup, that's true; it is everybody else's fault.

Mr. Yao: Come on over, Heather.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo will refrain from using proper names in the Assembly. [interjections]

Ms Sweet: Oh, dear. Albertans should be seriously worried sometimes, I think, Mr. Speaker, like, honestly, if they saw what happened in this Chamber sometimes.

I mean, it's serious. The government has a responsibility here. I mean, freedom of information, what they're doing, what they're choosing to discuss with Albertans or explain to Albertans or just be transparent and honest about, is their responsibility. It isn't anybody else's fault. But what we'll see with Bill 34 is that when FOIP requests will be put forward and requested, now the government's response is going to be: it's not our responsibility; you have to go to the public body first. You'll have to go to Alberta Health Services to get that information, or you'll have to go to Justice and ask Justice first, or you'll have to go to the Ministry of Education to get that information first.

Then six weeks later – not 30 days, but now it'll be six weeks later – maybe you'll get a response. If you don't like that response, then maybe you can try to go to the Privacy Commissioner and see if you can prove that there's more information that you're not getting, that you can maybe try to do an appeal.

Again, the government will have an ability to say: "It's not us. It's not us denying access to your information. It's not us that's saying that you can't have it. It's the public body that is supposed to be at arm's length from us, and therefore it's their fault." It's not really how it works, but that will be the narrative that this government will create. The government is very good about trying to say: look over here or look over there; don't look at us.

I really need to understand from the government why it is that this legislation is in front of the House right now and why it is that they're circumventing the investigation by the Privacy Commissioner and why they're not waiting until that investigation is completed and why they're not waiting until the committee that currently has work in front of the House, a committee that was referred to by members of this Chamber, can also look at what they're doing and the work that they're doing. Then we can align all of the different work that's being done currently and make sure that it makes sense.

What is the urgency here? The minister will say, "Red tape reduction," which is also another catchphrase that government really likes to use, but in reality what this piece of legislation does is create a whole bunch more red tape. It extends time periods. It makes Albertans have to go through two or three different processes to get access to their information. It creates an opportunity to deny and just basically put an Albertan or an organization in a place where they're just constantly having to appeal a decision to gather any information. It's almost like the government is trying to drown the third-party applicant who's trying to request this information in so much red tape that they stop asking for the information.

So it's actually opposite from red tape reduction except for the government. It decreases the government's red tape because they can just deny it and just not do anything with it and hope that the person just eventually goes away or the body that is trying to get the information just goes away, or the government can just say, "It's not us; go to whatever organization you want the information from and ask them," and hope that they just get exhausted and stop trying to get the information through them, so the government doesn't have to deal with it.

I mean, it's much easier to redact a FOIP request. We just saw today a document that an Albertan requested that the whole page was just black. It was all redacted except for the date of the document. That's really effective FOIPs. Really effective. It's really sharing a lot of... [interjection] It's working, the minister said. Oh, great. At least the minister acknowledges that this is the purpose, and it's working. Thanks, Minister. I love it when the government really engages in my debates. It's always helpful. It's been quite enjoyable already so far.

But yeah. The government is right. It's working, which means they don't want to share any information. They don't want people to know. They don't want people to know where the Premier is

travelling to or who she's travelling with or what hockey games she's attending and how much those tickets are. Let's not talk about those things, right?

Mr. Getson: There's a safety concern, too.

Ms Sweet: There's a transparency thing around Albertans understanding and knowing what is being spent when taxpayer dollars are being used, to the member opposite who also is speaking across the way to me. Everybody is engaging in this conversation.

When public members of this Chamber travel and they're using public dollars, you don't have to say what location they're going to be in, but you sure have to say how much their flight is and you do have to disclose what you're paying on food costs and you do have to disclose travel expenses. That is openness and transparency because you're using taxpayer dollars, and if the government doesn't want to disclose that information, well, the first question is: why? Like, what are you up to that you don't want Albertans to know?

I mean, if you're proud of the fact that you're travelling to the United States to engage in trade conversations around potential upcoming tariffs, why would you hide that information, and why are you worried about how expensive it is unless that's not what you're doing? Unless you're doing something else or there is a perceived conflict because you're not just meeting with a statesperson to talk about tariffs; you're meeting with Turkish Tylenol. Then that maybe is a problem, right? Like, is that... [interjections] I mean, the government is laughing about it, but I feel like that's where the issue is, that the government has gotten itself into a couple of pickles lately in doing things that maybe aren't perceived as appropriate, and now it's a matter of: well, let's just not share that information.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, honestly, like, I've even noticed it with correspondence at this point, where I'm advocating on behalf of a constituent to a minister's office, requesting information to support a constituent, and the response I'm getting back from the government now is: "Your information has been received. We will contact the constituent directly." We used to get correspondence that would be like: "These are the things that we've done to support this constituent, and this is the referral that has been made to the appropriate organization. Here's a little bit of a casework summary of what the government has done on behalf of your constituent," because we sign releases and we're allowed to that information. Now it's three lines: "Thank you for your letter on behalf of your constituent. We will reach out directly, and a referral has been made to the appropriate department." That's fascinating. That hinders my ability to do my job, which could be another reason why the government is doing some of the things they're doing, right? Like, let's prevent the opposition from being able to be strong advocates and be able to support our constituents.

5:30

Don't worry. They still call us after they get the letter back that says that the government didn't do anything, and then we just keep doing our work and we support our constituents. But, you know, why not put some roadblocks and barriers in place just for fun? The government likes to not help Albertans but hide information, make it more difficult, not really support Albertans in being able to access education or health care, and definitely doesn't want them to know what the decision-making processes are to get to where they need to get.

So I'm concerned, for sure. I think this is a weird game. I would like the government to put this on hold and wait until the investigation is disclosed to all of us in this Chamber so we can find

out what the real story is behind Bill 34. I'd like to hear from the Privacy Commissioner directly and be able to have that report. That is the benefit of independent offices, and they're very good at what they do.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I think the government needs to be open and transparent one last time before this bill passes and tell Albertans what they're actually hiding.

The Speaker: On Bill 34, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 34, the Access to Information Act, today in the Legislature. One wonders always: what is the motivation of a government when it brings forward legislation, when it is making decisions on any matter? The public has a right to know upon what information the government is relying in order to come to those decisions. A government that simply refuses to abide by the disclosure requirements or, in this case with Bill 34, attempts to close the door on the public, who wishes only simply to understand what the government is relying upon to make decisions, is a government that is quickly losing trust. A government that doesn't trust its own public is one that doesn't deserve trust in return.

Frankly, I can't wait until the next election. It's a while away from now, Mr. Speaker, but a pattern of government mistrust of its own public, of its own electorate is something that we see repeatedly in legislation that keeps coming forward to this House. This Bill 34, Access to Information Act, is no exception.

Of course, it's been mentioned by other speakers that this piece of legislation separates the privacy act from the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, from the FOIP portion, where we're looking at accessing information that the government is now trying to keep from the public view. One wonders why the government has chosen to split this legislation into two pieces, Bill 33 and, of course, Bill 34, which is now in front of the House. Of course, the answer, Mr. Speaker, is because it suits their purpose, and it's not a fundamental purpose that is in the public's interest. It's in their own self-serving interest.

Unfortunately, that's the pattern that we see regularly in this House from this government, a sort of a fundamental conservative ideological perspective that has been somewhat warped by this government. The perspective I talk about, Mr. Speaker, is the one where conservatives see themselves as preserving the status quo, yet in fact what this government seems to think the status quo should be is an eternal Conservative government. Indeed, that's not how democracy works. [interjections] Of course, the members opposite are applauding that.

We had that system from 1935 to 1971 in this province and then from '71 to 2015, when finally that juggernaut was broken, Mr. Speaker. Part of the reason that we had that unbroken Conservative rule in this province was because of self-serving legislative measures like Bill 34, which attempts to close the ring of information and attempts to deprive the public of its right to question the government. In days gone by there were less visible legislative tools that were used by previous Conservative governments – and I'm talking Social Credit and then, after '71, the Progressive Conservatives – but nonetheless effective tools to shut down debate and certainly to deprive the public of its right to make inquiries about the government's motivations and methodology of arriving at decisions.

We hope in this province that this attempt by the government, that we see in Bill 34 once again, to strangle the flow of information is something that will be halted after the next election. Don't expect, Mr. Speaker, that this government will any time soon do anything that would open the doors to information and provide any opportunity for the public to attempt to embarrass this government into admitting

exactly what they're doing when it comes to information flow in this province.

The government thinks that Albertans are asleep at the switch in this province, Mr. Speaker, but you know what? They're very much alive to this issue and what the government is actually doing. I've been calling constituents on a regular basis. Just yesterday night I was speaking on the phone to constituents that I was calling. They are very, very much alive to this and other government actions which prevent them from opening the curtain on the window of government operation, the government that appears to want to operate in the shadows.

The response I got from one constituent in particular, who was a fairly recent politically active constituent: she told me that she deliberately has avoided politics in her past adult life. To quote her, she said: I just had to get involved; I couldn't stand aside and witness quietly what this government was doing. She actually joined the New Democratic Party, somebody who has not been an active participant, and she joined because, she told me, she figured the measure of competence of a government is how indeed the government makes decisions. What information is the government relying upon to make decisions? She had no trust that the government was making decisions to favour and benefit the public interest. She felt that she was now subject to a government that was looking after their own interests.

This is a widespread feeling, Mr. Speaker, in the province. When one speaks to constituents who express these things, it's disconcerting, to say the least. People are losing faith in our own democracy. This is not a government that is interested in promoting democracy or exercising the democratic freedoms that we wish to be proud of in this province. The elements that we are hoping to preserve are not found in Bill 34. The FOIP legislation, Bill 34, Access to Information Act, is a prime example of what the government is doing on a regular basis.

I think that I may at this point ask others on this side of the House who wish to add commentary to the bill to stand and bring their comments.

The Speaker: For clarity's sake this is not an intervention?

Member Ceci: No.

The Speaker: You've completed your comments?

The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for clarifying that.

I, too, along with my colleagues will oppose this legislation. It comes to us from the government to update the FOIP, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which has been long standing in this province, and breaking that bill into two separate acts. The one before us today is Bill 34, and later tonight in evening business Bill 33, Protection of Privacy Act, will be debated in second reading.

5:40

Second reading for this bill. I had the opportunity to listen to our current Information and Privacy Commissioner, Commissioner McLeod, on the radio last week when she was speaking to the CBC afternoon host, and Commissioner McLeod allowed that, you know, you do need to update FOIPs and other things like that on a regular basis, but she did not seem like she was a fan of what's before us in bills 34 and 33. I've had the opportunity to read her 13-page letter, both the letter and comments and recommendations from the commissioner dated November 20, 2024. Commissioner McLeod says in part of that letter that "in general, my view is that there are many grounds for concern regarding Bill 34's impact on Albertans' access to information rights and more generally the functioning of the access to information system in Alberta."

It's not a very glowing kind of letter to receive that the hon. Minister Nally received on November 20 . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo will know that the use of a proper name is wildly inappropriate.

Member Ceci: Red tape reduction. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Member Ceci: . . . the hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction. Not a really glowing letter to receive, Mr. Speaker.

Commissioner McLeod goes on about potential amendments, et cetera. "The cornerstone of ensuring," she says, "'good governance' of public institutions as recognized by the OECD" – the thrust of that comment is that we need good legislation to "build public trust [and] enable Albertans to meaningfully engage and participate in our democracy."

I think the overall sense I get from their comments about Bill 34 is that there are expanded exceptions and carve-outs that go beyond what other jurisdictions compared to similar Canadian or international legislation – these carve-outs are the broadest that the commissioner has ever seen. She speaks long and loudly about section 27, cabinet and Treasury Board confidences, and she says that the use of the carve-outs in that case is far too broad.

Mr. Speaker, this government, like my colleagues are saying, are doing the most they can to be as secretive as they can, and Albertans are suffering and will suffer in the future as a result of their inability to get information about what this government is doing, and that's a tragedy. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. minister to close debate. It appears to be waived.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:44 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For 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.
Hunter	Pitt	Yao
Jean	Rowswell	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Dach	Hoyle
Arcand-Paul	Eremenko	Renaud
Brar	Goehring	Sabir
Ceci	Haji	Sigurdson, L.
Chapman	Hayter	Sweet

Totals: For – 45 Against – 15

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a second time]

Bill 35

All-season Resorts Act

[Adjourned debate November 27: Ms Sigurdson]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has eight minutes remaining should she choose to use it.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At this point in time I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:50 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	2235
Indigenous Land Acknowledgement	2235
Dr. Stanley Bernard Cassin, February 19, 1935, to October 2, 2024.....	2235
Introduction of Guests	2235
Members' Statements	
Federal Impact Assessment Act.....	2236
Health Care System	2236, 2245
World Nuclear Energy Day	2236
World AIDS Day.....	2237
Alex Janvier.....	2237
Oral Question Period	
Affordability Measures.....	2237
Private Health Services Delivery.....	2238
Government Policies	2238
HIV/AIDS Prevention	2239
Automobile Insurance Reform	2240
Wildfire Prevention and Control	2240
Photoradar Use in Alberta	2241
School Construction and Modernization	2241
Anticrime Initiatives	2242
New Child Care Spaces	2242
Rat Control.....	2243
Continuing Care Standards.....	2243
School Construction in Northwest Calgary	2244
Promotion of Alberta's Energy Industry.....	2245
Notices of Motions	2245
Tabling Returns and Reports	2246
Tablings to the Clerk	2246
Orders of the Day	2246
Government Motions	
Oil and Gas Sector Greenhouse Gas Emissions Cap Regulations	2247
Division	2259
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 34 Access to Information Act.....	2259
Division	2266
Bill 35 All-season Resorts Act	2266

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