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The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 13, 2025

Day 111

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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New Democrat: 36

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, take a seat.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 53

Compassionate Intervention Act

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would rise first to ask for unanimous consent for the Assembly to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening sitting, including the first bell in the Committee of the Whole.

The Speaker: I'll ask only one question. Does anyone object? Going twice?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that. I'm very pleased to rise today to move third reading of Bill 53, the Compassionate Intervention Act.

This is an important piece of legislation this province is considering, one that requires diligent consideration by this Chamber because its consequences are far reaching. I understand the concerns that members opposite have. I understand the concerns that members of the public have around the public addiction crisis and, of course, around making sure that we balance the legislation appropriately.

In previous debate I've spoken both publicly and of course in this Chamber surrounding the balances that we believe we put in place in government to make sure that this legislation continues to consider civil liberties of individuals while at the same time considering the human dignity of those who are affected personally themselves by the consequences of a serious, devastating, and potentially life-threatening and potentially harmful addiction or commitment to their substance use, that is driving the likelihood of that to continue and cause significant harm potentially to the community or themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I've spent lots of time speaking about the bill, and I think it's important to recap that this is one piece of legislation in a broad set of tools that we have within the continuum of care within the province of Alberta. Since 2019 this government has been building the Alberta recovery model, and I'm incredibly proud of the work that we have done in my nearly two years since being appointed to this role around mental health and addiction on the public addiction crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I use the term "public addiction crisis" on purpose because though, yes, it often takes place in the quietness of a home, a family, it's unfortunately also made its way into public display and the carnage that we see of life in absolute tragic freefall, in full-fledged addiction without recourse to recovery because the recovery capital of that individual in question has been so depleted because the threat of that addiction continues day after day for themselves and others.

Examples I've mentioned before, worth reiterating in this third reading of debate, would be a shelter operator here in the city of Edmonton, an Indigenous shelter operator who told me that one individual that she and her team cared for overdosed 30 out of 31 days in the month of December of the year 2024.

The heartbreaking reality of that is hard to fathom. I ask only that members and members of the public considering this debate put that in the first person and consider that perhaps their own child or husband or wife is the one that is overdosing 30 times in a month.

I've often cited as well that individual, the young woman in the province of Alberta, who overdosed 186 times last year from opioids. That's 186 times that we've collected a provincial health care number. That's a far cry from the number of times, likely, Naloxone or an overdose reversal has happened in that young woman's life within a calendar year. Again it's hard to fathom what that means personally, the tragic likelihood of permanent brain damage that can come from cerebral hypoxia on end, over and over again, starvation of oxygen from your brain.

I've also cited, of course, Mr. Speaker, the First Nation community, the chief who told me that they have gone to 400 funerals from opioid deaths in the last three years. For context, the communities of Indigenous Albertans when you look at reserve nations are in the thousands, most communities under 7,000 people across this province. And 400 deaths in a year: the scale of that, the disproportionate absolute devastation is difficult to explain in a Chamber like this or to put on paper. You can only imagine the grieving and the lamentations that happened, that have now become dry tear ducts because they cannot find any more tears for the tragic loss of those individuals.

That is the context in which introduction of this bill has come. That is the context in which we face in front of us this question and a difference of opinion between different sides of this Chamber.

Up to now I have not seen members opposite willing to support compassionate intervention. I hope and pray by the end of this debate, we will see some support it, because I believe it is what is called for in this time, a caring, compassionate, health care oriented response. This is not a criminal justice response, and this is not the only tool in the tool kit that the province of Alberta has, but it is an important and essential health care response, and to do without it is a choice as well.

Thomas Sowell said often that in politics there are no solutions, only trade-offs. I know that the trade-off of not passing this legislation, of not enacting this legislation, of not allowing these lives to be saved, and some of that carnage and the flow of blood and death that continues on our streets to be reversed, would be an immoral one. I believe there's a moral quality to this, and it's because we care about every single individual who suffers from addiction in this province, especially those who are so far along this addiction that they have no recourse through the voluntary means.

And, yes, Mr. Speaker, compassionate intervention means there is secure treatment. I believe that is a part of the solution. It's not the only solution. It cannot be done on its own. There is lots of evidence to show in best practices, when you look at safety-sensitive industries where the literatures have been abundantly clear and abundantly clear for decades, that consequences for those suffering from addiction to get into recovery works. It works in the airline industry to a higher rate than almost any other data that you can see. It works in safety-sensitive industries, like physicians themselves, who often start with a much higher recovery capital, who have family and friends and workplaces and bosses and clients and others that want to see them get healthy and stay in recovery.

Mr. Speaker, if you're the one that's speedballed methamphetamine on the streets of Edmonton or Calgary, perhaps in a community, in Fish Creek or in Haysboro, if you're that individual that has overdosed hundreds of times in a year, that recovery capital is depleted, and you have to ask yourself as a society, what is the responsible intervention? Is it compassionately to intervene, to reach in as a society and find a health care response to a health care

pandemic and crisis, or is it to say: hands off, it may not work; I'm afraid that this might be challenging?

I want to partner with those who want to partner with this government to find health care, whether that be Indigenous, whether that be people in lived recovery, whether that be people working in the health care system or family members, police officers, law enforcement. You name it, Mr. Speaker; if you want to be on the coalition of saving lives, of caring for those in addiction in a compassionate way, you're on this team. It should not be colour striped and colour coated on orange or blue.

I call the members opposite to consider what it means if we don't do this, with the thousands of lives lost every year. I know there are consequences and challenges in implementing important pieces of legislation, but this is done with the intent of health care. It is done with the intent of fitting into a wider continuum of care. It's done with the intent of intervening for those who have no option other than, compassionately, for the society to step up and do so.

Mr. Speaker, I think the consequence of the legislation is meaningful, and I can tell you that it's not until very recently that mental health or addiction was talked about that often. It was not a sexy topic a decade ago. There seemed to be unanimity that it was just harm reduction, and this philosophy taken to its logical conclusion would provide the ultimate societal cure to the addiction crisis. I think there are many, many parts of what people call harm reduction that I support, and I'm happy to say I do, but taken to its logical end, it leaves no space on the continuum or in its ideology for recovery, which needs to be the heart of an addiction response from any province that cares about the health care of its citizens who are in free fall.

Mr. Speaker, addiction run its course has one of two outcomes and two outcomes only. If you believe otherwise, I'm happy to tell you the addiction anthropology is abundantly clear. It either ends in pain and misery and, given enough time, the tragic end of another life in Alberta, or on the other hand there could be an intervention, there will be recovery and the ability for a second lease on life for a mother and a brother and a community member to return again to their loved ones, to contribute again in ways that are meaningful, to enjoy the spring rain as we all have today as we came in to this legislative sitting.

When someone is seeking their addiction high, the rest is all details, and if they're consumed by the nature of this addiction, shackled to it going forward, we have to ask ourselves: what is our role if not to intervene for those most dramatic of cases, the very, very few who have no alternative, have no loved ones, have no recovery capital?

7:40

I will always consider legitimate criticisms and concerns when it comes to legislating consequential legislation like this. I hope to goodness that all members of this House consider what it means to vote against it, what it would mean if it were not to pass.

I'm happy to hear the rest of the debate and happy to close debate as we finish our conversation, hopefully, in endorsing, supporting, and passing this important piece of legislation today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his comments as we approach the end of this particular bill, Bill 53.

Let's just get right into it, Mr. Speaker. The minister and the Premier both have raised the example more times than I can count about the Albertan who's overdosed 186 times. The minister has

referenced this young woman once again this evening, but for all of those times what we haven't heard is what supports that person has had but failed to kind of gain traction, that make us believe that the only option left for her is forced treatment. Here's a long list of options that I hope we've offered to this particular individual, given her interface with the institutions and public systems.

Has she been granted psychiatric services and trauma-informed care at a location and cost that are accessible to her? Has she been provided with permanent supportive housing that doesn't insist on abstinence, but rather a harm reduction approach that helps her taper her drug use, and use in a safe place under supervision? Has she been provided access to voluntary treatment centres with door-to-door service, from medical detox to bed-based care, where she can stay longer than six weeks. And when she's been discharged, has she been provided with a continuity of mental health supports, health care, housing, and income supports, or was she discharged right back into homelessness?

Someone with that depth of substance abuse, Mr. Speaker, may very likely have interactions with the criminal justice system. Was she provided with treatment and therapeutic care while in remand or corrections? Was she ever considered a candidate for drug treatment court or mental health court? Has she had support to manage bail conditions, arrest warrants, and outstanding charges with the support of pro bono legal support like Legal Aid? Has she ever been assessed for mental illness, cognitive abilities, brain injury, or capacity concerns? Has she ever been committed under the Mental Health Act or been referred to the opioid dependency program, the narcotic transition services program, or for a community treatment order?

Was she ever prescribed a reliable source of Suboxone, or Sublocade, methadone, hydromorphone, or Kadian, prescriptions, I should add, that the government currently approves for treatment of opioid use disorders, but some of which the ministry has made so hard to access, I wonder why they even bother.

Because these are all things that are currently available in Alberta, and if she hasn't had access to them, then I think we have to ask why. If we haven't exhausted all of these options, then why are we claiming that the only thing left for her is forced treatment? The government repeats this one woman's tragic circumstances over and over again as justification for their forced treatment legislation, but if they just enhanced and resourced the programs that we already have, forced treatment wouldn't be required. I fundamentally believe that. If this government chose to lead with evidence rather than ideology, we'd be having a very, very different conversation.

There is an unequivocal truth about substance use disorder, Mr. Speaker, that I have come to learn since coming into this role, and that is that there is no one way to get healthy. If a person goes from smoking a dangerous cocktail of illegal drugs 10 times a day down to two times a day while visiting a health professional for their regular prescription, I would consider that resounding progress. If a person was able to stop using methamphetamines because they finally secured permanent supportive housing, that meant they didn't have to keep themselves awake for fear of dying from the cold, I would call that a success.

As much as the path out of active drug use is a deeply personal and unique one, I've also come to learn, as I'm sure the minister has, that there are several consistencies for people with substance use disorders and addiction. Those consistencies are: trauma, mental or cognitive disorders, poverty, alienation, and one thing that looms over all of it is a great sense of shame. Forced treatment alone won't address any of these things, but they are at the heart of the issue that both sides of this House deeply want to resolve. I don't think the government necessarily agrees with me. If they did, they

wouldn't be insistent on funnelling people from all over the province to stand before commissions, to be housed in locked facilities, community-based facilities, or for their recovery plans, they'd recognize and invest in a wide array of options so people can get the help they need when and where they need it. Albertans care deeply about those in our communities who are struggling.

I'll take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of people with whom I have engaged over the last two years on this campaign promise from the UCP that has now culminated in Bill 53: the AA sponsors – worth noting here that alcoholism remains the number one drug of choice for Albertans with addiction – the volunteers, the street outreach teams, the advocates and activists, the people who use drugs or who used to use drugs, for giving me a glimpse into your days and your nights, your strengths and your struggles. This one's tough. Thank you to the parents who wrote to me out of fear of losing their kids or out of grief for having lost them already. Thank you to the police officers, the researchers, the physicians, the addiction specialists, psychiatrists, and psychologists, nurse practitioners, social workers, and one particular mental health clinician whose expertise has shed invaluable light on this highly stigmatized, misunderstood, often overcriminalized issue that hasn't left a single community unscathed.

I put forward four reasonable amendments, that are worth repeating and that were informed by so many of these conversations: to remove addiction counsellors until they become regulated; to insist that a client, their legal counsel and/or their guardian be present during hearings where decisions are being made about them, about their person; to require consideration of a person's unique experiences as an Indigenous person and to provide culturally appropriate care when requested; and, lastly, to legislate a review of the UCP's Compassionate Intervention Act and implementation three years following it being sworn in.

Mr. Speaker, there is very little evidence that forced treatment will achieve what the UCP claim it will. In fact, there is more evidence that proves it will not. But here we are. Bill 53 will very likely pass this evening. At the very least the UCP could have committed to a fulsome independent review of the program in three years' time. The Premier has said that we won't know if it, quote/unquote, works if we don't try. Well, we also won't know if it works if we don't evaluate it.

Government is forging ahead with a bill and a brand new program that will cost, at minimum, \$400 million, though I think the cost will eventually be significantly higher. Imagine if that money were spent on increasing drug seizures by law enforcement or building permanent supportive housing, even long-term care for people who have been permanently disabled as a result of their drug use. Imagine if it were reinvested in prevention and early intervention so we could begin to staunch the flow of people starting to use drugs in the first place.

I think we could do so much better by our communities, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry I couldn't do more to amend the bill on behalf of the people who will be most likely impacted by it. They certainly deserve better.

Thank you.

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

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in hope that Albertans and Indigenous peoples receive the care that they so rightfully need when it comes to addictions and mental health. I worry, though, and I've raised my concerns and worries at various times during the debate on this bill relating to how Indigenous peoples will be unevenly affected by this act when it

comes to force. The minister knows this, we know this, and all people in Alberta know this.

I put forward an amendment that the minister did not rise to speak to and which the UCP voted against. This would have required the commission to consider the lived experiences and realities of Indigenous peoples in this province. It would have taken into consideration, following an apprehension, the lived realities of individuals that would appear before the commission prior to sending them to the recovery prisons.

7:50

Mr. Speaker, we know that Indigenous peoples are suffering from this drug poisoning epidemic. We are disproportionately dying because of this epidemic. First Nations, Métis communities, urban Inuit, and Indigenous peoples want relief from this crisis. They want real relief to the harms these substances cause in our families. We want funerals to lessen. We want our people to grow old and teach our next generation about our proud culture.

But we also want to be respected. We do not want our agency to be taken away from us. In Nehiyaw culture my elders have taught me that our spirit leaves us when we use substances, but it does not leave us indefinitely. I worry that removing the agency of individuals through this regime will rob these individuals of their spirit, just like when our babies were taken away from us and from our communities under the residential school system. Many of our people are still reeling from that system and I worry that they will under this as well.

We need a future where our young ones grow up to be elders. We want them to share that knowledge. We want them to take that experience that they've learned from this dark place that they're at to help change the world, to help change Alberta, to bring levity and laughter and joy back to our communities, to help raise our babies, to help make our nation stronger.

Mr. Speaker, this is the future that I want. This is the future that I'm sure many of us want in this House. At least on this side of the House I can speak on behalf of my colleagues, but perhaps even the minister as he's very passionate on this topic. While we disagree on the way we should support Albertans, our job in this House is to entirely support Albertans.

We tried putting forward amendments based on what we heard from our experts and Albertans that wanted to bring their experiences into this House. We heard from families. We heard from direct members of this Assembly who have experience. We've heard from many walks of life. What we have heard was that we need to make sure we look after every single one of our family members in this province.

I know that I'm just one Indigenous voice and there is a chorus of voices moving in a multitude of directions. I brought my heart to this discussion, as did my colleague from Calgary-Currie. We owe a debt of gratitude for bringing in candour and respect during these debates. Our intentions were to make this bill stronger, to enhance the rights of Albertans under this intense piece of legislation which will apprehend Albertans, which will force additional job duties to police officers in this province to act as social workers, an addition to their job duties that they did not sign up for.

Mr. Speaker, this side of the House is not against recovery. This side of the House stands with Albertans who want an end to the nightmare on our streets, in our communities, and in our homes. Albertans also deserve to be treated with dignity, and I worry that the way this legislation is drafted, it may not result in dignity being served.

Had the amendments the New Democrats put forward been adopted by the UCP, we know that dignity would have been extended to Albertans who are extremely vulnerable because of

these substance abuse and mental health concerns. We do need robust mental health supports, and in this province Indigenous peoples are far too often forgotten in this conversation. We are still reeling from trauma after trauma. We are still reeling from successive attempts of genocide, and we are still reeling to be seen as human.

It is for these reasons that I urge this Chamber to vote against this bill not because recovery is not important. It is. It truly, truly is. I urge this Chamber to vote against it because it will cause more harm than good. This side of the aisle offered the UCP a chance to make this bill better, and we could have supported it, but here we are.

To the people that will be affected by this bill: please use your voice to speak up if this affects you. You have agency. Use your voice, because the only person that will stand up for you is you.

To the workers in these institutions, please take into account the lived realities of the people you serve. Respect those individuals' lives. You have their futures in your hand. Many of these people do not want to be in this place, but they deserve your respect, and they deserve your dignity. Please grant them that last bit before their lives change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the time on this bill.

The Speaker: Are there any other speakers on Bill 53? Would the mover like to close debate?

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first mention: thank you to the debate, especially to the members, my critic, the member opposite from Calgary-Currie, and the Member for Edmonton-West Henday for articulate speeches, thoughtful commentary, and, yes, I appreciate amendments were brought forward, unfortunately not brought forward in advance to this government with a grand total of two minutes and 22 seconds to consider before the vote happened, not the most productive way for us to consider the amendments. That said, I think they were sincere, and I appreciate deeply that members on both sides of this House do care for those who are suffering from addiction.

I believe I may have made some rhetorical mistakes, Mr. Speaker. I think I may have focused too much on the statistics. I think my mistake was citing an anonymous 186 overdose, and I think that seems to have created an abstraction that is less helpful for some of the contextualization of this debate. In the chorus of voices that I've heard from, whether it be the Alberta chiefs of police, a chief from Enoch Cree First Nation, a chief from Tsuut'ina First Nation, Chief Ouray Crowfoot from the Siksika First Nation, who all support this legislation along with many, many other Indigenous colleagues across this province who have words to share with us like Chief Crowfoot, who says: "Our way is to intervene. We are not raised to sit back and let someone self-destruct. We know if somebody is habitually suffering. Why would we stand back?" This sentiment is repeated over and over again by Indigenous leadership and, of course, by individuals.

I'm going to finish by telling you three short stories, Mr. Speaker. These are not statistics. These are not abstractions. The first one is about a young man from southern Alberta who suffered from addiction for 10 years. He started with marijuana, developed into cocaine, crystal meth, and wound up on the streets of Calgary, unfortunately, eventually turned to opioids and, as is the case, escalated to fentanyl. Parents supported this young man going to treatment multiple times to the point where, even after multiple apprehensions under the Mental Health Act where they attempted to have mandatory forced treatment for concurrent mental health issues, he could not be held. Over and over again, unfortunately, not able to get the care that he needed for his addiction treatment. The family paid for private treatment in British Columbia and he

ended up leaving that treatment and living in East Hastings, overdosing, as far as the family knows, five or six times.

His parents flew back and forth from Vancouver to Calgary often. In Downtown Eastside, they would look for their son. They put up posters. They'd solicit friends in the area to help scour the streets and the back alleys in the corners, looking for their son, their Albertan son who found his way into addiction and, tragically, into East Hastings, overdosing. The pain of that mother fearing that every single day might be the day that her beloved son passed away.

After a year and a half back at home in Alberta, when they had found their son, he eventually succumbed to his addiction. This young man at 41 died, April 28, 2025, whilst this bill was being debated, Mr. Speaker. Just today my office was on the phone with his mother. She's asking if it will pass tonight.

Mr. Speaker, Ceileb, another young man, started using at 14 years old in the province of Alberta. Later diagnosed with concurrent mental health issues, struggled with addiction for over a decade. A smart young man lost to addiction. As it continued to worsen he was remanded, drug treatment courts, treatment orders, Mental Health Act, the Alberta Hospital Edmonton, the Royal Alex Hospital emergency room, more times than the mothers and parents can count. Despite everything, this young man Ceileb wanted to get better. He wanted recovery and would seek it out.

8:00

Ceileb's mother reached out to my office in 2024. My staff worked multiple times to get Ceileb into treatment. Ceileb repeatedly said that he wanted to get treatment. He didn't want to keep living this way, but the shackles of that addiction pulled him in. His mother took time off work. She would spend money to rent hotel rooms to keep him safe. She would also often sleep in the bed next to him so that he wouldn't go out and continue using.

Ceileb died April 2, succumbed to his addictions. On April 3 at 7 a.m. his mother wrote to my office saying that her baby died last night. Ceileb is not a statistic, Mr. Speaker. He was a good man. He played guitar. He had loving parents. His life was taken by this disease while we debate this. I understand it's important, but these lives, they shouldn't be lost.

Another young, young, young girl, four years old today, was born addicted to fentanyl. Every two hours immediately after birth the physician had to do an injection of morphine into Willow to continue keeping Willow alive, to save her from the withdrawal symptoms that come with the nature of being born in this original way to addiction to fentanyl, to a drug 500 times more powerful than heroin, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that Willow's mother died six weeks ago while we were moving this forward, just before we introduced it. Her father is in jail. Her grandfather died of an overdose.

Mr. Speaker, I sometimes read the Psalms, and they say that every emotion is contained within the Psalms. I think of Psalm 88.

Imprisoned, I cannot escape;
my eyes are sunken with grief . . .
Wretched, close to death from my youth,
I have borne your trials; I am numb . . .
Friend and neighbor you have taken away:
my one companion is darkness.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't have to be.

There's another young man that I know. He was a fentanyl addict from the prairies: lacrosse injury, began down opioids, lived on East Hastings and overdosed more times than he or his family can count. Attempted recovery four times. Thank goodness he's alive today. He's working in my office as a policy adviser on this piece of legislation.

These lives have incalculable value. The alternative to compassionate intervention is to allow more of these lives tragically to lapse and succumb to addiction. Indigenous Albertans and the broader community together suffer from the tragic disease. I don't want Willow to succumb to the same consequence that her grandfather has or her mother or in jail like her father.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, members opposite: support this legislation. Whatever we disagree on, we must give this a try. The alternative and the consequence – I think even just one more lost life that could have been saved is too dire to consider.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 53 read a third time]

Bill 46

Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

[Debate adjourned May 13]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Government Motion 69, agreed to earlier this afternoon, not more than 20 minutes remain for further consideration of Bill 46, Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, in third reading.

I think the hon. member has spoken. Is there anyone that looks to speak to this? Yes, indeed there is. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise to speak to Bill 46, the Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. I speak to this as well as a member that was reviewing much of the privacy legislation through committee over the last, you know, few months, many months it felt like. We heard from many experts in regard to concerns around: as our world progresses with technology and innovation, what that means for privacy for Albertans, whether or not it aligns with Canadian legislation, and other potential risks around cybersecurity and different factors like that.

Today I think I would like to stay with the theme around supporting Albertans. The reason I'd like to talk about this is that over the last little bit we've seen repeated bills being introduced into this Chamber – I would speak to even the last bill that was just debated under the Health Act – and the significant changes that are coming through through the Ministry of Health, through Service Alberta, looking at Municipal Affairs, all of these different ministries and all of these different pieces of legislation that have come forward that speak to our elections, that speak to our democracy, that speak to Albertans' information. There is a consistent theme, and that theme is that the more the government introduces legislation, the less transparent the legislation becomes.

We have seen that over and over and over again this session, and we are seeing it within this piece of legislation specifically. The concern I have around that is that this legislation speaks to what used to be referenced as the FOIP Act. What it's allowing to happen is the government to arbitrarily through cabinet, through council to decide what information Albertans have a right to have access to that the government may hold.

Now, if we think about the bill that was just passed, that was just being debated around the recovery model, there will be a lot of information that's going to come out in the next I would say year around whether or not the recovery model is a success or not a success. We will start hearing about what happens to individuals that may be required to access the treatment. We will start being able to find out how many people are being forced into forced treatment through this legislation, how many people are able to access recovery, and what the success rate of these recovery models look like, bed access, whether or not we're at full capacity, whether

or not there needs to be more. All of those questions will be coming out as this Bill 53 starts to be implemented more thoroughly through the health care system.

What I'm worried about is that that piece of information specifically is about Albertans' lives. It's about being able to prevent further potential harm or death. I don't know if I can trust this government to be honest and transparent around that information. The government may be like: oh, come on, Heather. Oops. Sorry; I used my name. "Come on, people." Like, let's be honest here. You're going down a deep end here.

Ms Hoffman: Sweet recovery.

Ms Sweet: Thanks. Speaker recovery. Like I know the rules.

I think the issue that I have with it is that we also just saw a piece of legislation come forward that was going to remove information around children and the Child and Youth Advocate and how much information Albertans were going to receive and be able to have access to under the Child and Youth Advocate. Now we're seeing a recovery model that just passed. Albertans are going to want to know information about what the outcomes of that service are going to be, and I think Albertans should have a right to that information. But what this piece of legislation does specifically to FOIP, under Bill 46, to be clear, because I am speaking to the bill, is that it allows cabinet to say: well, we're not going to share that information. It is a theme. I'm still quite irritated around the Child and Youth Advocate not being able to provide information to the public around ways that we can keep young adults healthy and alive, to be blunt.

8:10

I am concerned that the recovery model will not be the success that the government thinks it is and that we will still have deaths and the government won't want to be honest about it, so FOIP will be adjusted to prevent that information from being shared publicly. I think that the government might want to be a little concerned about, you know, where their procurement practices are and who they're sharing that information with and who they are signing contracts and RFPs with, and all of a sudden procurement practices may no longer be subject to FOIP.

There's a lot of ability here for this government to just arbitrarily shut the door on information, and when there are feet under the fire, there will be no mechanism here for Albertans to say: hold on a minute; you need to change that back. There will be no sunlight on the changes to FOIP. It won't come to this place. It won't be debated here. Albertans won't be notified that those changes are being made. It will all be done with council. And let's be clear. We can't trust this government. They've demonstrated that over the last four months specifically, longer than that, but it's becoming a little hot in this place over the last couple of days around information and what's actually going on on that side of the House. There are a lot of things that I think Albertans are going to be wanting to have information and want to know about, and this looks like the government is trying to put as many walls in place to ensure that that doesn't happen.

I think the government – again, as much as I like to go down history lane on many things to demonstrate that history repeats itself, Albertans don't particularly like entitlement. They don't like entitled governments. They don't like governments that use their power to benefit themselves when they forget that they actually need to work for Albertans. Redford did it. It didn't go well. Didn't go well with Klein when he tried to do it. It sure didn't go well when "look in the mirror" happened. That was us over here, that one-time thing.

I would encourage the government to really start thinking about: the more you keep doing this, the more likely Albertans are going

to start losing their patience. They are going to start asking a lot more questions, and you are going to see a lot more investigations through the other tools and mechanisms that are being used. What will eventually happen is that Albertans will figure it out, that all this government has done with their pieces of legislation this session is to block transparency and to hide their decision-making processes because things are not being done the way they should be and they just don't want Albertans to know. Members of the government caucus, I would encourage you to reconsider messing around with FOIP and maybe reconsider being honest and open with Albertans.

Thank you.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 46. The title the government gave it is the Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, but a far more fitting title would probably be A Bill to Make Hiding Information Legal and Then Hide More Information Later through an Order in Cabinet Passed by Cabinet.

I say this, Mr. Speaker, because while it is a very small bill, five pages, it has very deep implications. Probably the biggest is the government's ability, which many have talked about in this House, including the sponsoring minister – although he didn't like the term, it is absolutely a Henry VIII clause because the government is taking the power that is currently reposed to all of us as members of this Assembly around the legislation, and the government is saying: "Just the front bench, please. Nobody else needs to know how we're going to be changing many, many laws." Specifically, bills 33 and 34 that were passed last session will have implications on the existing FOIP Act, and the front bench wants us to trust them. They want us to trust them. They want to be able to go into cabinet, make whatever changes they want to this legislation, other legislation, anything that has to do with information and privacy, and for it to be passed by order in council. Nothing to see here.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I will say that when I had the honour of serving as the first Alberta NDP Health minister in our province's history, we didn't staff up very quickly. We had a very lean staff. I think I had a chief of staff, borrowed a scheduler and a person to help with the phones and information requests, and one other assistant in my office for the first three weeks. I had many FOIPs come through my office. A lot of people wanted to know who I was meeting with, what I was doing, what my staff were saying to one another about the meetings that I had. That is fair. I think it is fair for people to know that the government that they've elected and entrusted to make decisions on their behalf is having – what their meetings are, who they're with, and how they're communicating about them.

The government has decided that that isn't the way this current government wants to operate. I'll remind you that a government that was given awards by the media multiple years in a row, national media, for being the most secretive government in Canada has now decided to bring in a five-page bill to repeal lots of transparency and to make the ability to repeal even more transparency legal, should this bill pass.

I have to stop and reflect, Mr. Speaker, whether this is your first term or your fourth term . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, you shouldn't include the Speaker in debate, but I appreciate that you say that in the most friendly way. Nonetheless . . .

Ms Hoffman: Or the fifth for the Member for Edmonton-North West, let's say that; whether it's your first term or your fifth term or somewhere in between, Mr. Speaker.

I think all of us, when we ran in the last election, ran because we wanted to do great things for the people of Alberta. I know that the former Speaker definitely talked about that in his farewell speech, that every one of us wants to find a way – when you go camping, you leave the campsite better than the way you found it. This bill does no such thing, friends. This bill makes secrecy the norm and getting information about what's happening, particularly on the political side of a minister's office, more covert than ever. I don't think that's why any of us ran, and I definitely know it's not why any of us were elected. People did not vote because they wanted more secrets, more cover-ups, and more closed-door conversations.

I talked at the beginning about when I first served as Health minister, taking care of my own FOIPs. Yes, it was cumbersome. Yes, I went through my own notebooks. Yes, I made photocopies. And, yes, we staffed up. We staffed up so that I'd have more hands on deck. We didn't bring in legislation to make it more secretive. We brought in more people to help increase accountability and transparency. That is what I think we should probably be thinking about tonight, instead of bringing in a bill to give more unilateral power to those who happen to be in the Premier's graces and sitting around the cabinet table, I think we should be thinking about the responsibility that all of us have here to seek to improve the condition of all, and that includes having better and more forthcoming sharing of information, not more secrets and more covertness.

I think I'm going to keep it short and sweet, Mr. Speaker, because I know other colleagues have things they want to add to this legislation. A final opportunity to urge all members of this Assembly to consider the long-lasting negative implications that this bill will have on this Legislature but also future Legislatures and future governments.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member Irwin: Perfect. Can I get a time check? About six minutes, is that right?

The Speaker: Time check. Six minutes, roughly.

Member Irwin: Perfect. That's what I thought. What a good whip we have over here.

Ms Hoffman: Nice math.

Member Irwin: That's right. Thank you. I am shocked at my . . .

The Speaker: It's now five minutes, not six.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Now probably more like five, which is great.

You know, I do want to speak briefly to Bill 46 as well and echo some of the comments of the previous members on this side of the House. I was also looking back. I didn't necessarily get a chance to see all the debate of the other members who've spoken, but I do want to give a shout-out to our colleague from Edmonton-South West, who actually gave a really strong argument against Bill 46. I found it really interesting.

I'm not going to lie. There were a number of elements that are not areas of expertise for me, I'll be quite frank. He brought up a lot of really important questions around privacy in the sense of he talks about AI regulation and generative AI, again, areas that I'm

certainly not an expert in. But I think we have to, you know, acknowledge, as Bill 46 does, that in this province things have shifted dramatically. Of course, no one will disagree that our privacy laws need updating. I think we can all agree that, you know, this Chamber should be one that's nimble and should be one that's adaptable to the changing times. However, we can appreciate that Bill 46 is trying to modernize privacy laws and is trying to address that, but really what we see in Bill 46 is that it does not go far enough. I think the concerns that my colleagues have raised are incredibly fair.

8:20

If we were – and I hate to hearken back to this again, but I will because a number of my colleagues have in debate in this Chamber on a lot of bills. You know, we're not dealing with the government of the 1990s. We're not dealing with my dad's Progressive Conservatives. We're dealing with a UCP government that is completely embroiled in scandal, and we've raised many times in this legislative session the concerns around the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability. So when this UCP government asks us to just trust them when it comes to this privacy legislation, Bill 46, the Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, I think you can understand, and for the folks watching at home, of which I am assured there are at least two tonight, that it's quite reasonable that we would be skeptical that we could trust this UCP government to update privacy laws, especially at a time when we see concerns from, you know, people who all of us in this Chamber should be respecting.

We know that, you know, the Chief Electoral Officer has raised concerns about this government. We know that the former officer has raised concerns about this government, and we know that even people within this UCP government have raised concerns, so much so that they're now sitting on this side of the House, including the former minister, now the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane. The pile of evidence mounting against this UCP government when it comes to any sense of trust that Albertans can have in them is growing greatly.

So we come at Bill 46 with a lot of credible concerns. I did some reading, too. I know that some legal experts have weighed in as well, and they have concerns, too. We've raised in this Chamber many times on the record a number of questions that we didn't get specific answers to. You know, we asked about what role cabinet will play. Is it necessary that cabinet have such broad powers, as outlined in this act? We didn't get a lot of clear answers. Again, when you've got a cabinet on that side that's got such a shaky foundation . . .

Mr. Cooper: It's great.

Member Irwin: Pardon me?

Mr. Cooper: It's great.

Member Irwin: Wow. Okay. That's the former Speaker, for those watching at home, with an interjection that made my heart leap a little bit because I wasn't expecting such vigour when it comes to privacy legislation. I don't know if he's wanting a point of order or what, Mr. Speaker, but I feel like he's needing something.

Ms Hayter: Maybe it was an intervention.

Member Irwin: Yeah. If it's perhaps . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, I know all of our hearts sometimes leap when we hear from the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and I do hesitate to interrupt; however, pursuant to

Government Motion 69 agreed to this afternoon, one hour of debate is now being completed, and I am required to put to the Assembly all necessary questions to dispose of Bill 46, Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, at third reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:25 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Hoffman	Shepherd
Batten	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Boparai	Irwin	Sweet
Calahoo Stonehouse	Kayande	Wright, P.
Eremenko		

Totals:	For – 43	Against – 16
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[Motion carried; Bill 46 read a third time]

8:30

Government Motions

Time Allocation on Bill 47

66. Mr. Williams moved on behalf of Mr. Schow:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 47, Automobile Insurance Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This marks, I believe, the 72nd time allocation motion introduced by this UCP government since 2019. It also marks a milestone in that fully more than half of all time allocation motions that have been ever issued in Alberta have now been issued by this UCP government. The province has existed since 1905. Since time allocation was first brought in in 1937, 142 time allocation motions have been introduced, not including this one. It is now 143. This is the 72nd. That makes at least this government a squeaker of a majority, which, you know, they love.

This is profoundly undemocratic, Mr. Speaker. Bill 47 is going to materially alter many, many Albertans' lives. Nobody thinks

about what can happen if they get into a traffic accident, but the fact is that collisions and accidents are common, and injuries are common. There are many people on both sides of this House who have had a traffic collision with injury, who have had a loved one impacted by a traffic accident with injury, and they deserve a full hearing of all of the consequences of this piece of legislation on their lives.

To the minister's credit, there has been significant and fulsome consultation over a period of over a year on auto insurance, but unfortunately what the minister has chosen is an auto insurance scheme that exists nowhere else in Canada. As a result, it is incumbent upon this House to ask all of the questions required, especially here at Committee of the Whole, when the bill can be amended, when the bill can be improved. Unfortunately, this government is taking the opportunity now to cut off debate at Committee of the Whole and prevent any further discussion after one hour of making changes to actually improve Albertans' lives. It's really sad. A bill that is strong and works for the people of Alberta, I feel, should be a bill that the government is willing to debate, yet here we are.

There is such a vast suite of issues with this bill that can be addressed at Committee of the Whole. It makes no guarantee, for example, of whether insurance rates will actually come down or not. There's no guarantee that that will happen. There's no statement for insurance companies to actually pass on their savings to the people of Alberta, and these are the sorts of amendments that the Committee of the Whole should be willing to consider.

There are a multitude of stakeholders who have not yet been heard from. They are busy people, Mr. Speaker. We, of course, know that the advocates for victims' rights have had an incredibly terrible time of being heard by this government. Providers of medical services, physiotherapists, chiropractors, doctors: they may want an opportunity to say more about this bill now that it's in committee. It's only been in committee for a day or two, and these incredibly important stakeholders have not been able to get over here and witness the debate, leaving aside the most important constituency of all, which are those who have been injured in traffic collisions. They may have something to say about the no-fault insurance legislation that's being brought forward. Unfortunately, they're going to lose their opportunity because the government would rather cut off debate and go on vacation sooner. I think it's a terrible disservice to the injured people of Alberta.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 66 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:36 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Johnson	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Sawhney
Bouchard	LaGrange	Schow
Cooper	Loewen	Schulz
Cyr	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
de Jonge	Lovely	Singh
Dreesen	Lunty	Stephan
Dyck	McDougall	Turton
Ellis	Nally	Wiebe
Fir	Neudorf	Williams
Getson	Nicolaides	Wilson
Glubish	Nixon	Wright, J.

Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen
Jean		

8:40

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Hoffman	Shepherd
Batten	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Boparai	Irwin	Sweet
Calahoo Stonehouse	Kayande	Wright, P.
Eremenko		

Totals:	For – 43	Against – 16
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[Government Motion 66 carried]

Time Allocation on Bill 49

67. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 49, Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

The Speaker: From the opposition, the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the work we do is difficult. It's demanding physically: some long days, exhausting schedules, too little sleep, too few days off. It's exhausting emotionally and mentally. We deal with a lot of difficult issues. We hear some hard stories. We work under significant scrutiny. We can be judged pretty harshly. We all experience some pretty big highs and some pretty low lows.

But I'd say, Mr. Speaker, it is most challenging, most demanding for us in terms of our morality. Every day we're asked to make some of the most profound decisions that are going to have enormous impacts. When we sit in government, we're given an incredible power over the law itself, billions in the public purse. We face, as a result of that, significant pressure from lobbyists, partisans, frankly, powerful people that are looking out for their own advantage. It's our job to stay focused, to maintain integrity and perspective, to not let power and partisanship, in fact, contempt for those who hold other views get to you, your heart or your head. It's a constant battle. I think it's one that takes enormous commitment and consistent effort to avoid falling prey to the temptations of corruption, to selfishness, to thinking only the worst of those who disagree with you, to take advantage and believe that your ends justify all means.

That's a choice, Mr. Speaker, I'd say that each one of us has to make every single day, but it seems to be a choice this government stopped making a long time ago. They are a pretty long way down an incredibly slippery slope. I would say that this is a government of unprecedented dishonesty, unprecedented abuse of the systems that safeguard our democracy, a government that's done more than any other to unashamedly, unabashedly change our laws and the rules of this place to favour themselves. The government, frankly, gets a little drunk on power.

This bill that they just moved closure on, Bill 49, is the second of two pieces of legislation to establish an Alberta provincial police force, forcing through something a majority of Albertans said they do not want. Now, they started this last year with Bill 11.

Mr. Schow: It's time allocation, not closure.

Mr. Shepherd: I'm speaking to the reason for time allocation, Government House Leader. Thank you.

The reason this government is invoking closure is because this is a bill they are ashamed to . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre and only the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has his five minutes, and he will be heard.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, this strikes a little close to home. This government failed to consult on this legislation in any way, neither Bill 11 that went before it nor Bill 49 that's in front of us now. They did not campaign on it. It was not in the minister's mandate letter, because the vast majority of Albertans made it absolutely clear they do not want what it contains.

In the period between their promise during the provincial election that they were dropping this and when they came forward, they did not talk to anyone; not a municipal leader, not everyday Albertans, not even Alberta sheriffs. Stakeholders across the province have been absolutely clear about their opposition. They called on this minister to consult, to actually just go out and talk to people, to actually put out details and costs. He didn't. Didn't bother, and after a year of silence from the minister, they have a lot of questions that would be answered in debate, which this government is calling closure on and limiting time on. The Rural Municipalities of Alberta put out a whole analysis, a list of questions, multiple issues with this bill. This government is giving one hour to consider any of it after refusing to consult on a single bit of it.

Since 1937 closure has been invoked 144 times, 144 times over the course of 88 years. Over half of those instances, 73 of them, have been in the last six years under this UCP government, so it's no exaggeration, Mr. Speaker, to say this is the most heavy handed, the least democratic government in Alberta's history. Again, multiple issues. Rural Municipalities of Alberta: a 17-page analysis of this bill, 25 significant questions, 10 issues they'd like to see addressed. The government is allowing one hour to do it after refusing to talk to them over the course of a year.

This government has no respect for democratic process or engagement and, apparently, endless disregard if not utter contempt for anyone who disagrees.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 67 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:47 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

8:50

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Johnson	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Sawhney
Bouchard	LaGrange	Schow
Cooper	Loewen	Schulz
Cyr	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
de Jonge	Lovely	Singh
Dreeshen	Lundy	Stephan
Dyck	McDougall	Turton
Ellis	Nally	Wiebe
Fir	Neudorf	Williams
Getson	Nicolaides	Wilson

Glubish	Nixon	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen
Jean		

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Batten	Hoffman	Shepherd
Boparai	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Calahoo Stonehouse	Irwin	Sweet
Eremenko	Kayande	Wright, P.

Totals:	For – 43	Against – 15
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[Government Motion 67 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 47 Automobile Insurance Act

The Chair: Are there any members that would like to join this debate? Seeing the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Madam Chair. Bill 47, the Automobile Insurance Act, is the worst of all possible worlds. It's a bill that delivers no-fault, privately delivered insurance. It's a system that doesn't exist anywhere else in Canada. It is an experiment, an experiment akin to the UCP government's experimentation with taking us out of the CPP, for example. It's one of these special projects for which there is no evidence it will work in its stated purpose of reducing insurance rates, but will almost certainly leave injured Albertans out in the cold.

The reason is – see, this is very simple. Insurance companies blame the benefits that injured people receive for the high cost of premiums, which is kind of funny because, of course, the purpose of collecting insurance premiums is to be able to compensate people who have bad things happen to them. The people responsible for making sure that injured people can navigate an extremely complex system are lawyers, and insurance companies blame lawyers for high payouts.

Now, sometimes I very rudely ask insurance representatives: if they don't like the lawyers so much, why don't they just pay claims and they can put the lawyers out of business tomorrow? Unfortunately, that ends the conversation.

The issue with this plan – every other no-fault system in Canada is publicly delivered, and that at least offers some level of political accountability. The other thing that it does is that it reduces brokerage commissions. Of course, I'm not privy to cabinet confidential discussions, as the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane was, but I would imagine that there was probably a discussion in cabinet about whether to throw trial lawyers or insurance brokers under the bus.

Let's face it. Insurance brokers are generally, you know, people who are highly respected in their small towns. In many cases they sponsor the local peewee hockey team, pillars of the community. They do good work, because they make sure that people get the insurance products that they need. Now, in a no-fault system, you don't actually have to sell the right kind of insurance product. It's more of a one size fits all, and in B.C. the brokerage commission for insurance is somewhere around \$35. It's like something that you pay along with your vehicle registration. Under this system the

brokerage commission is still going to be about 12.5 per cent, so it's going to be, on a \$2,000 policy, roughly \$250.

I suspect that what happened is that the UCP government decided that they needed to protect someone, and who they protected were the insurance companies and the insurance brokers. Who they left out in the cold are injured people. It's really a shame, Madam Chair.

No-fault insurance, in all of its iterations, basically means that injured people don't get the economic benefits that they deserve when somebody has hurt them. It lowers the cost of insurance. There's no question that no-fault insurance in a publicly delivered system lowers the cost of insurance, and it lowers the cost of insurance by reducing the benefits that it provides. It means that everybody in society gets a little bit of a haircut in how much they pay for insurance, but the people who get injured don't get compensated for those injuries. It is lowering insurance premiums on the backs of people who have been hurt.

That's in a publicly delivered no-fault system. A privately delivered no-fault system, which I must emphasize exists nowhere else in Canada, it is hard to argue that the savings in payouts won't be snapped up by insurance companies themselves in the form of higher profitability, and there is nothing in this bill that mandates a particular payout ratio. There's nothing that says that premiums must be used to pay out claims or that mandates the level of insurance company profitability. There is a regulator that is responsible for this, but there are nuances in how those numbers are calculated, where the 6 per cent profitability is actually not.

See, what you can do, as an insurance company, is you can buy up brokers. Every single year, according to the data from GISA, which aggregates all of these statistical data from insurance companies on where revenues go and how claims are paid out, roughly, almost exactly, 20 per cent of the premium dollar every year goes to pay for marketing expenses and brokerage commissions. Twenty per cent every year. Every year is 20 per cent. It's regular like clockwork.

Payouts for claims are all over the map. They could be 56 per cent one year, 110 per cent the next year. It's hard to say; it's variable. And when you have a large, multiline insurance company that also owns a broker channel, it is hard to say that that 20 per cent is not actually embedded profit.

Again, when I asked the insurance companies, "Is that 20 per cent just embedded profit?" Because there are a lot of insurance companies that own a broker channel. They sell direct. They don't have a broker they pay 12.5 per cent to. You know, they have some marketing costs. And the answer is some flavour of, "oh, I'll get back to you," and, you know, I never hear from them again.

9:00

Madam Chair, this highly experimental bill produces no guarantee that it's going to reduce insurance premiums. People of Alberta don't want it. We are a freedom-loving, independent people that believe that when somebody hurts you, they should make it right. This bill takes that away. It's fundamentally un-Albertan. It is incredibly unconservative. We have not yet heard from the Minister of Justice why he supports this bill.

I mean, I'll wrap up my comments now and just say that ... [interjections] Oh, okay. Yeah. Apparently, I'm not wrapping up my comments because I still have more to say.

I kind of skated a little bit over this 20 per cent transfer pricing thing. You know, this is something that pharmaceutical companies do, actually. What they do is that they sell an entire patent portfolio to Ireland, and then they sell the royalties from that patent portfolio. It creates a transfer pricing mechanism where they can move their tax payable to Ireland, which has a very low tax rate, and not pay taxes in more expensive jurisdictions like the United States and

Canada. That's what transfer pricing is, and that's what transfer pricing does.

The challenge here with the brokers that are directly owned – and by the way, Intact Insurance, largest insurer in Canada, is going on a brokerage buying spree right now, unleashed by this government's insurance legislation. They believe, clearly, that the prospects for their profitability in the future are significantly higher than they are today, so they are buying insurance brokers in anticipation of this legislation coming in. They're one of the largest property and casualty insurers in Canada. Intact Insurance has seen as of today a 117 per cent five-year return. Doesn't sound like they're crying poverty to me. You double your money in an insurance company over five years, that's a pretty good trade. That's Warren Buffett kind of money.

I have nothing against insurance companies making money. I think that if you provide a service that's socially useful, you should be making profit on it. Is the profit excessive? That's the question. This is a product that Albertans are required to purchase. By buying these insurance brokers, what Intact is I believe likely doing is taking that 20 per cent marketing fee that they, you know, are allowed to deduct as part of their expenses and actually taking that back in on the back end. I haven't heard anything from anybody that doesn't suggest that this isn't just another form of embedded profit for direct writers. When the government says, "Oh, yeah, we're reducing a profit from 7 per cent to 6 per cent," great. What are you doing with those marketing dollars? I fear that this worst of all worlds insurance scheme is actually going to make the whole system even worse and even worse for policyholders, who have an expectation that when they pay for the policy, they will actually receive the benefit.

Now, let's talk about that a little bit and why the courts are so important. It turns out that the negotiating strategy of many insurance companies – by the way, I want to be clear; this is not all insurance companies – what they do is that when you have been injured, they offer a settlement amount. For many people the settlement amount is wholly inadequate, but they're in a vulnerable situation, so they'll take it. I was just talking today to somebody who, tragically, lost an unborn baby in a traffic accident and received a settlement from an insurance company and was in such a state that they decided: "You know what? Whatever it is, we'll just take it because we just want to move on," whether it covered their loss of work or not, whether it covered their medical care that they're allowed or not. I know myself that there was somebody in my family who was entitled to more physiotherapy than they received because their benefits were cut off, and I didn't know until I started working this file that, oh, they were actually statutorily entitled to more coverage than they received.

There are so many flaws with this bill, so many challenges, so much uncertainty on whether Albertans will be able to actually recover the benefit that they are owed, and they won't be able to question. Madam Chair, unfortunately, it just seems as though there's very little that can actually improve this bill, and I won't be supporting it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there others that would like to debate Bill 47? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Tonight I rise to speak to Bill 47, Automobile Insurance Act, and I think the government could maybe consider a new name for this one as well. If they want me to help title their bills next session, that's certainly a skill I'm happy to do. Bill 47 is really An Act Where Corporations Get Richer and Ratepayers Get Adversely Affected. Yeah.

[interjections] Think of other words – feel free there, members – but adversely impacted is definitely a parliamentary way to refer to what this bill is doing.

The government really did a lot of spin and public promotions when they first introduced this concept. People like the constituents I have the honour of representing are rightfully deeply concerned about the impacts of: if somebody causes an accident and you are the victim in that situation, the person who was at fault not being held responsible and, in turn, the insurance company for the person who was the victim of that accident being on the hook and what that could do down the road to that person's insurance.

The government went out with their big promotion song and dance: don't worry; this is great. They said that there's no fault in other jurisdictions. They even pointed to a couple of NDP jurisdictions, Manitoba and British Columbia. The difference here, Madam Chair, is that in Manitoba with the Manitoba Public Insurance, MPI, no lawsuits are allowed for personal injury, but it is a public system, so there is that safety net that the Member for Calgary-Elbow spoke to so eloquently about the government having liability and responsibility at the end rather than it falling on individuals or a corporation. In B.C. they talked about and there is a no-fault system, called enhanced care, managed by the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, ICBC. There it limits lawsuits for injury claims except for in cases of criminal negligence. And then in Saskatchewan, which hasn't had an NDP government for a very, very long time, the Conservative governments there rightfully have never rescinded the public automobile insurance there because they know how deeply popular it is.

In fact, I was at Western Premiers' Conference in 2016, and I remember visiting with Brad Wall, Brian Pallister, and Christy Clark, pretty conservative Premiers of the west. We were talking about the different types of privatization that were embarked on in Saskatchewan, and it was made very clear that "don't touch the telephone and don't touch the auto insurance if you want a hope of ever having seniors vote for you" because they are two so popular programs there.

So, again, for the government to say, "Don't worry; other provinces have a no-fault system" – it is very different than what is being proposed here by the Conservative government in Alberta. It really is focusing on achieving the lobbying efforts of so many insurance lobbyists, who have really been pushing this government to find ways to make their already profitable corporations even more profitable.

It's not their fault for lobbying. That is definitely the job of some of the people that they've employed. Whether it's a private lobby firm, whether it's in-house government relations representatives, their job is to make a business case and to present that to the government and try to make their business more profitable. That's literally their job.

The government's job, however, is to stand up for the folks who elected us, for ordinary ratepayers, for people who are struggling to make their bills this month. Madam Chair, there are a lot of those people in the province of Alberta right now. The number of Albertans who are within \$500 – there was a report in the paper, I think it was yesterday, the *Journal*, that said the number of Albertans that if a \$500 bill crept up, they don't know how they would pay it has more than tripled this year compared to last year. I believe that was in the *Journal*. I'll have to confirm that.

9:10

It is a very difficult time for a lot of Albertans. What most Albertans, when I spend time door-knocking and at community events in my riding, want to talk about are health care, affordability, potential impacts on affordability and jobs as it relates to the

pending trade war that could cripple a variety of industries in our province; of course, the biggest industry, oil and gas, but the second-biggest industry, agriculture, and the third, forestry. Then now we've seen most recent accusations that they are going to be bringing forward 100 per cent tariffs on potentially film and television out of country as well. That would also impact a large and growing segment of our industry.

Madam Chair, they want us to focus on affordability, but when you actually look at the recent survey data from Nanos – the governments and others have done polling around this. Nanos Research interviewed Albertans about this idea of no-fault insurance, and only 19 per cent of Albertans believe that this could result in their insurance going down. Understandably, because we keep seeing our bills go higher and higher and higher. We keep seeing the government put their hand on the scale so that large, highly profitable corporations, many of which operating are international corporations with international shareholders, make more profits off ordinary folks paying higher premiums and having smaller payouts when it comes to injuries or accidents that they've had.

Many, many options were available to the government. They could have put in other provisions. They could have looked at maybe the hybrid system that they have in I think it's Quebec, where you can choose if you want to be in the no-fault or if you want to have full coverage. They could have looked at ways that they could expand basic public options for folks who are in need of that, like the neighbouring provinces that they talked about.

Instead, they've really focused on taking the worst scenario, which is taking the liabilities on for these corporations. If people are significantly injured, now instead of being able to go after the insurance company of the person who was at fault in that situation, their only recourse is to go after the government for things like AISH or PDD and other types of supports. Definitely not the best case scenario. And we, of course, don't envision any of us ever needing to access these types of programs or these types of insurance supports, and I hope that none of us ever do. But we need to govern in this place as though it was us, as though it was our family members, as though it was our neighbours who suffered these horrific, potentially life-changing injuries or even fatalities or the loss of a pregnancy, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow mentioned.

I want to thank him and the Member for Calgary-Foothills especially. I've spent much time listening to them in this Chamber and reviewing *Hansard* of their debate, and they have brought forward many excellent points for reflection. One that was tabled earlier today by the Member for Calgary-Foothills that I think is worth us taking a few minutes here to ponder is around a post that was up about Former Insurance Industry Insider Exposes the Hypocrisy of Insurance Lobby Demands. He didn't have a chance to speak to this in depth, so I want to take a few minutes to highlight some of the sections that are identified here.

"Today's post," it talks about, is from a

skilled Senior Litigation Assistant, who [has suffered] from injuries as a result of being involved in a rear-end motor vehicle accident exactly [one] year [earlier].

And they go on to talk about who they are.

A 40 year-old mother of two ... lifelong Albertan ... former insurance adjuster with over a decade of experience working [in the] motor vehicle accident bodily injury claims [area]. As an ex-industry insider, I can advise that the keenly competitive Alberta auto insurance business, like many industries, is cyclical. When profitability is high, new insurers enter the market and premiums remain relatively flat, as companies compete for market share. As competition inevitably intensifies, weaker players are exposed and either [have to] raise their rates

or lose consumers. I'm trying to paraphrase here rather than reading everything.

So when there is an especially hard market, it pays for the consumer to call around, obtain quotes, and get information from a number of insurers, if they have the time, of course, Madam Chair, to do this, but of course we know that it is very difficult for people in such a busy time right now to be able, when so many people are working multiple jobs, struggling to make ends meet, to take the time to do these call arounds and try to make sure they're getting a competitive rate. But this person says it does pay when you're in a really difficult market like that.

Each time a hard market returns, insurance representatives for poorer performers must explain to [their] shareholders and policyholders why their bottom lines are not as robust as insurers with superior profit margins, and why their premiums are consequently rising, often . . . as much as 15 to 30 per cent more than other competitors in the marketplace. Yet, and this is crucial, even in years [where] some industry players post underwriting losses, auto insurance companies still register ample after-tax net profits from the massive revenues earned investing premium dollars and accumulated capital.

Something that I hadn't actually thought about is that money that we each pay out at the beginning of the year or the beginning of each month: of course they're investing that money. They don't just sit on that money and use it to pay out claims. They're making money off the money that they're holding while we're driving with insurance but not needing to access it yet.

She goes on to talk about how the Insurance Bureau of Canada – some folks like to try to blame the Insurance Bureau for the “cyclical premium spikes on ‘skyrocketing’ injury claims costs” that can “be an extremely effective and lucrative political strategy, even in the utter absence of any factual basis to support this strategy.” This is a cyclical industry. We know many are like that in this province. We've lived through it with our probably largest industry for my whole life, and when the commodity goes down, the industry wants help. I get it. I really do, but it's not the job of government to make already profitable corporations even more profitable on the backs of ratepayers and particularly on the backs of those who are injured in automobile accidents. That, Madam Chair, is something that I think is – the Government House Leader likes to say unconscionable often, and I try not to use it, but it probably is fitting in this situation.

So there's been a big “‘blame the victim’ campaign in the hopes of hoodwinking our,” at that time, “new provincial government into revictimizing more innocent individual Albertans (mostly women and children)” who were “injured [in] distracted or drunk or stoned and/or reckless vehicle [accidents],” something that I didn't know, but of course, that makes sense.

To quote Ronald Reagan, they go on to talk about that the most “terrifying words in the English language are ‘I'm from the government and I'm here to help.’ ” Yeah. “It is queer,” she says, how positively some free enterprise conservatives in our Legislature seem to be . . .

Mr. Lundy: When I think NDP, I think limited government. That's right.

Ms Hoffman: I've said some funny things in here today, but I wouldn't say that's one of them.

I would say that one of the things that she speaks to here is that the government here is helping take on the liabilities of corporations and passing them off as an opportunity to try to convince ratepayers and/or ordinary Albertans that they're doing this in their best interest, but, of course, they're not being fooled, Madam Chair. That's why the government's PR campaign has been so abysmal and has resulted in only 19 per cent of Albertans thinking that this might possibly help them because it won't.

What this does is it takes the responsibility that belongs to the person who caused the accident, the person who victimized somebody else, off their insurance company's mind and off their ballot sheet, and it puts it directly on the victim as well as the government.

I'm going to try to sum this last part up. The person goes on to say that they're aware of how painful it is for those who are wrongfully injured in accidents and have traumatic injuries in auto accidents that involve chronic pain conditions, and they talk about how they're one of those Albertans, and

whether I eventually recover from these injuries or end up with a permanent clinical impairment remains to be seen, but either way it's common sense and [it should be] common law that I should be compensated by the negligent driver's insurer for my persistent ongoing pain at a figure [that was] well in excess of the minor injury cap.

How wrong it was that within 90 days or so the government made that decision.

9:20

Madam Chair, I think we've heard a lot of good points from many speakers, and I'm sure that there are many more. I do want to disagree with one thing my colleague from Calgary-Elbow said. He said that this is the worst legislation in this session. I think it's probably in the top three worst pieces of legislation, maybe top five. But it is certainly a very bad bill, and it would make good sense for us to stop it from proceeding or at least try to make it less bad. I again want to thank the members from Calgary-Elbow and Calgary-Foothills for putting forward a number of amendments to try to make that a reality.

I know there was a government member on a previous bill, who said: Well, if you give us the amendment and then expect us to either vote yes or no very soon after, that's not fair. I will say that there were times when I was in government where I'd ask government members to step up and speak so that I could go in the back room and analyze an amendment and make sure that I knew I was comfortable with how I was voting on it, yes or no. There was even a time where we voted no on an amendment, and I changed my mind, and I brought it back to the Legislature later. It isn't something that happens commonly. But I do want to say that it is absolutely a possibility for us to do that if the government has a sober second thought. I certainly hope that they do because there are a lot of really great ways that we can make this bad legislation less bad.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

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

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Madam Chair. Nice to be able to stand and speak to Bill 47. That's a tough act to follow, though. I will say that much. The Member for Edmonton-Glenora is always a tough act to follow.

A little known fact. Once upon a time I worked in employee relations and in benefits for a very large Canadian company for a couple of years, and I did have to manage and deal with a large number of different benefits, claims, and insurance concerns. I had the challenging task of having to deal with life insurance claims. Then there were just a few instances over three years where I had to deal with accidental death and dismemberment claims as well.

As I was reading through the legislation and seeking to better understand the Automobile Insurance Act, Bill 47, I was kind of reminded of the incredible challenge that those kinds of programs offer to their members. You have to put a dollar rate, a maximum dollar amount to things that are incredibly hard to quantify. You know, I probably couldn't recite it to you now, Madam Chair, but I

knew what a toe was versus a thumb and what the different costs were for each. That's just how AD&D goes. Of course, it was a very important element of our employee benefits plan. I was certainly happy to do everything I could to make sure that people had access to that program.

One of the things that Bill 47 and the new Auto Insurance Act introduces is that the legislation will in fact do something very similar to the AD&D plan that many of us employees, if we're fortunate enough to have a benefits plan, have actually come to understand. The legislation prescribes what people injured in a collision could expect to have covered by their insurer, including medical and rehabilitation expenses. Now, that's going to be a schedule that we will eventually have the opportunity to see in the regulations.

Of course, this is an opportunity to identify and remind folks of this very consistent theme of just how much information and detail is going to be reserved for the regulations. It's not actually contained in the legislation itself so that it can be debated in this Chamber. It's a point of growing frustration for myself. Sometimes, you know, we try to come to these conversations with as much information as possible so that we can do our very best to inform our constituents about what's coming down the pipe, but when we're basically told it'll come in the regs with the signature, with just the flick of the pen of the minister, it's hard to know where some of this stuff ultimately is going to land.

We don't know what the prescribed amounts are going to be in the schedule in the case of a collision.

Frankly, if you are a labourer, a tradesman who works with his hands all day long, injuries to certain extremities are going to have a bigger impact than they will for other people. Will the schedule and the prescribed coverage amounts take into account the kinds of work that a person is doing? That really comes to the heart of where this legislation can do the greatest harm, that, as my colleague from Calgary-Elbow so eloquently pointed out, it's the drivers, it's the victims, it's the injured, it's the workers who don't know about their future earning capacity that are going to be most impacted and that are the least represented in this legislation.

Now, if passed, the bill also dictates that victims could also expect a permanent impairment benefit if their injuries prevent them from working or attending school. Now, I understand that that permanent impairment benefit on an annual basis is actually quite generous, but the legislation currently: it's not a guarantee, Madam Chair. It is a maximum, much like the prescribed cost of what an injury might cost a person, but it's not assured, and it's precisely this that currently works in our tort-based system. Now, I'm not saying that our auto insurance system currently is perfect, not by any means. But, my goodness, are we ever replacing it with something a whole lot worse.

It's the tort-based system that we currently have. I am no lawyer, so I had to confirm what this in fact meant. The tort-based system is that you do in fact need to employ a lawyer to defend your rights to what you are owed, to what you are due in this process. Though there is, in fact, a permanent impairment benefit, there's no assurance that this will in fact be honoured, and it's exactly what lawyers will do.

Now, the legislation in Bill 47 does allow a provision for an Alberta automobile care-first tribunal. I'm not sure this is in fact going to be providing what the minister seems to have shifted from when he calls it a care-first model, you know, named because of a desire to somehow suggest that this is providing compensation in an expedient way. It sure sounds like an automobile care-first tribunal is going to get awfully bogged up very, very quickly given the number of appeals that people are likely going to be putting forward.

Now, I've heard it argued that this is simply an issue between the insurance lobby and the lawyer lobby. Much to my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora's points, you know, lobbyists are going to lobby. That's what they do. One group has an interest in trying to maintain the system at a certain level of status quo; another has an interest in wanting significant change. Clearly, we know which of those lobbies have ultimately won the day, but who gets lost in the midst are regular, everyday Albertans, whether they've been injured or not.

I have a couple of pieces of correspondence here from constituents in Calgary-Currie that I'd like to read to you. The first one here is somebody who was, unfortunately, injured in a vehicle collision, and she said she's writing to express her concern about Bill 47. She says:

Some time ago, I was hit by a car. It was a difficult and confusing situation, and I did not know where to turn or what steps to take to protect my rights. Fortunately, I was able to find a legal representative who guided me through the entire process, explained my rights, and helped me achieve a fair resolution. Without this professional support I would have struggled to navigate the system on my own.

I can certainly echo that, and I'll get to that later.

Another one is from a former health care provider, Madam Chair, who says that she is not in favour of such a bill. No savings promised by the insurance companies can compensate for the losses that she has seen in the patients that she supported as a career-long health care provider. She had seen many, many injuries, lots of kind of soft tissue damage, lots of chronic injury, lots of issues that didn't present themselves until later on in a person's recovery and, of course, all kinds of discrepancies around the ways that insurance companies would define recovery or the ways that they would define the new normal therefore giving themselves a way out of actually providing adequate compensation in settlement to the individual who's actually impacted. She says that these individuals have lost. She assumes that with Bill 47 individuals like the clients that she has supported would lose many benefits such as no litigation and the ability to sue for future costs of care and loss of income due to injuries. She says no to no-fault.

9:30

The last one is a local constituent who's an Albertan of 65 years of age so I assume is very likely near or living on a fixed income in his retirement. He drives a 2005 Chevy Colorado. Coming up here pretty soon, he's going to have to renew his insurance, and he was quoted close to \$2,000. Squeaky clean record – squeaky clean record – Madam Chair. It's up. That number is up \$568 just from the year before. He says – and I think there's something to this – that there will be a flood of people not ensuring their vehicles hitting the roads of Alberta, and that is certainly echoed in other commentary related to Bill 47.

When it comes to some of the affordability issues and some of the big cost concerns that people are having to deal with right now, unfortunately, I worry that there are going to be a lot of people who are just willing to take the risk. Though there have been some limits in the extent that there will be an increase, we're entering into really dangerous territory, frankly, when it comes to what the insurance rates are ultimately going to be in the long term and what people can in fact count on when it comes to a settlement in the unfortunate case that they're in fact in a collision.

I mentioned something that I wanted to get back to. You know, knock on wood, Madam Chair; I've never been in an accident. I've never had to deal with... [some applause] Yes. Thank you, everybody. Yes. I've never had to deal with an insurance company around injury or loss to employment earnings or wages. I realize

I'm very fortunate in that regard. I'm sure there were times when I was an older teenager and my stepdad was not sure I was going to do very well in that regard, but we've made it here and – knock on wood – still doing okay.

What I think is really unfortunate about Bill 47 is that it assumes a level of kind of literacy for the average Albertan when it comes to navigating insurance that is really unfair and, I think, frankly exploits a kind of lack of attention or lack of familiarity with how the system currently works to be able to push this through in a way that ultimately makes people far, far more vulnerable in a private, no-fault system.

Insurance should be relatively straightforward, right? I pay my premiums. You know, you do what you're supposed to. You follow the rules, you pay your premiums, and in exchange you expect that if there is, in fact, an incident or a collision and you do have to require some compensation, those commitments are respected. Currently lawyers have a part to play in ensuring that those commitments are in fact respected and assured and that they will fight on your behalf. When we're talking about a person's ability to care for themselves, to care for their families, to go to work and come home every day safe and sound, to be able to do it the next day, when that has been compromised, we should not be denying people the ability to access all avenues to keep them whole. Unfortunately, in this current system that is precisely what's happening.

Legal representatives will fight for what you're entitled to, and they will challenge you to consider. This is in conversation with a couple of lawyers that have their practices just up the street from my office in Calgary-Currie, who I was really thankful to for taking the time to kind of orient myself to their work every day. They said that, you know, they have a fundamental role both of navigating the system with a client but also challenging the client to make the sometimes uncomfortable assessments of what their time is worth, what their health is worth, what their future earnings might be worth because that, ultimately, is what needs to be taken into consideration when we're talking about holding the person who caused the accident accountable for what they did. The tort-based system may seem cumbersome, Madam Chair, but much like red tape reduction, what's done in the name of expediency may in fact compromise future well-being and security.

As has been mentioned multiple times, the only way that no-fault insurance can really be effective is in the case of provinces like Saskatchewan and Manitoba and B.C., who have public single-insurer systems, so then there isn't the profit-making motive. There isn't the kind of built-in antagonism between one insurance company and the other, nor is there therefore the competitive drive to bump up premiums and reduce payouts to maximize profit. In the same way that lobbyists are going to lobby, Madam Chair, insurance companies are going to be out to be making money. That's no fault of insurance companies. That's the way the system works. I think that, given the arguments that can be made in other provinces, where there is a real testament to the value of having a single public-insurer, no-fault system, I really would have liked to have seen the government take greater consideration in that particular regard.

Lastly, some of the commentary from people who know the system far better than I is that it really – and I think this really kind of hits the nail on the head – removes the fundamental right of Albertans to hold at-fault drivers and insurance companies accountable through the courts. I think that really synthesizes in a single sentence what it is that we're looking at with Bill 47. I'm not sure why people would want to support a system where the at-fault driver is not held accountable, where, you know, premiums seem to increase for individuals like the gentleman I quoted here. A 65-

year-old on a fixed income with a pretty clean driving record: his premiums are going up, but who knows if the kind of reckless driver with a whole bunch of issues on their registry would see the same kinds of increases.

This will be expected to be in place in January 2027, and I look forward to a more fulsome debate with constituents across this province on this very important issue as we learn more about this new system that we're going to have to be managing.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there are others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Al-Guneid: You got it. Thank you, Madam Chair. It's the incredible riding of Calgary-Glenmore. Here I am. I rise again. This time I speak on Bill 47, the auto insurance bill. This bill might, when you look at it and what it does at face value, you know, in the name of affordability and stability, come across as benign. In reality this bill not only makes life more expensive for Albertans, but this legislation proposes a significant overhaul of insurance in Alberta, and that's an important point. Yet not all the details are shown. We still have to wait for regulations.

It's also important to remember that Albertans are already paying some of the highest auto insurance premiums in the country – the Member for Calgary-Currie has shared a lot of stories from her constituency – and this is on top of the fastest rising rent, the highest inflation, the fastest growing unemployment rate. Yes, we do need affordability measures, and this bill claims that it is introduced to make life more affordable. Correction: it will not make life more affordable for Albertans any time soon.

The UCP government calls it a care-first model, but it's important to highlight that this is a no-fault system that prioritizes insurance companies first and not injured Albertans. You can name it whatever you want, Madam Chair. You know, shift, change, rename it, change it: putting lipstick on a pig is still a pig. I'm not too sure where the care is, and there's a lot at stake here.

9:40

Injured Albertans will have their treatment and benefits controlled entirely by insurance companies. I'd like to remind the minister and the Premier that these companies are for-profit companies, and these for-profit companies will determine the nature and extent of the care and benefits that Albertans will receive, not health care providers. One more time – I want to be clear – the decisions about health and compensation will rest with insurance adjusters, insurance-selected doctors, and a new insurance-funded tribunal here, all of which have the power to override recommendations from the personal medical providers for Albertans.

And then there is no legal recourse. Albertans will have no ability to dispute insurance companies or tribunal decisions in court or to sue at-fault drivers for compensation. On top of all that, there will be no consequences for insurers. To be clear, insurance companies will face no repercussions for unfairly denying benefits for treatment.

KMSC Law shared a real-world scenario. Let's imagine this. Today if you're injured, Madam Chair – we do not want that.

The Chair: No, we don't.

Ms Al-Guneid: We do not want that.

Today if someone is injured in an accident caused by someone else's negligence, you have choices. You can work with your insurance company to ensure your medical treatments such as physiotherapy or massage therapy are covered. You choose your

own health care providers, often private clinics you trust and feel comfortable with. You can pursue a claim against the at-fault driver for compensation, and if you find a settlement offered unfair, you can hire an injury lawyer who will advocate for you, ensuring you continue to receive essential treatment while pursuing the compensation you deserve. If a fair settlement cannot be reached, you have the right to have your case heard by an impartial judge. The current system provides fairness and accountability, holding negligent parties responsible.

But now, with this shift to a no-fault system, it will lead to broad, negative impacts across Alberta communities. Without legal accountability negligent drivers face fewer consequences, potentially increasing reckless or careless driving behaviours. On top of all that, the insurance industry's promise of reduced premiums lacks a clear definition and enforceability, making any actual savings highly uncertain here.

Madam Chair, this bill will take away rights from Albertans, the rights to sue and take people to court when they feel they have been wronged. Where are the freedom-loving UCP MLAs? This really takes rights away, truly.

Madam Chair, every Albertan deserves to feel protected by their insurance, and many Albertans right now are uncomfortable about this bill. The Canadian Bar Association of Alberta commissioned research by Nanos Research to present how Albertans feel about this bill and how it takes the rights away. The results are interesting, actually. Only 1 in 5 Albertans believe it is likely that auto insurance premiums will go down if the government of Alberta implements a no-fault system that is run and administered by for-profit insurance companies. In fact, the survey reveals that Albertans place significant value on legal rights and personal accountability.

The survey continues to have – I was looking at it – three-quarters of Albertans, 75 per cent – that's 75 per cent – consider the right to sue someone for compensation when they cause harm or injury to be important. Another data point: 82 per cent of Albertans emphasize the importance of holding people legally and financially responsible for their actions when it causes injury or harm. By the way, this study by the Canadian Bar Association is consistent with the government of Alberta's own research. The government of Alberta conducted a survey in June 2024 by the Strategic Counsel on behalf of the government of Alberta. It showed 73 per cent of Albertans strongly agreed or agreed that the ability to sue an at-fault party is important to hold them accountable. This is on slide 20 of the government's report, by the way, in case the minister wants to see it. It's in the accountability section.

So here we are. We have two studies, one from the Canadian Bar Association in Alberta and one from the government itself, that affirm and show that Albertans want their rights respected and protected. So why is the government going against Albertans' wishes?

In fact, this is very consistent with e-mails my office has been receiving, and I'd like to read some of them for the minister and the UCP cabinet here. Dana Russell is a constituent of Calgary-Glenmore, and she e-mailed my office saying:

I'm writing to you as a concerned constituent to express my strong opposition to the no-fault insurance system. This policy, while intended to streamline the claims process and reduce litigation costs, ultimately disadvantages responsible drivers and removes essential legal avenues for individuals seeking fair compensation for injuries sustained in accidents.

She continues to say:

No-fault insurance often leads to increased premiums, lower quality care for accident victims, and inadequate compensation for those who suffer serious injuries due to another driver's

negligence. By restricting the ability to seek damages in court, this system can unfairly shield reckless or negligent drivers from full accountability. So I urge you to advocate for a fair insurance model, one that prioritizes justice for responsible drivers and allows accident victims to seek proper compensation. Please consider supporting reforms that provide stronger protections and legal avenues for those affected by roadway incidents.

This was a Glenmore constituent, and I hope the minister listened with an open mind and open heart to Dana's concerns.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Member Boparai: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to speak on Bill 47, Automobile Insurance Act. I, with all my colleagues, strongly oppose this bill. As we know, in this time Albertans are already paying some of the highest auto insurance premiums in the entire country on top of fastest rising rents, highest inflation, fastest growing unemployment rates, and higher utilities as compared to the other provinces in Canada. Everywhere you look, it's getting more expensive to live, work, and raise a family in Alberta. Families are feeling squeezed from every direction and struggling just to keep the lights on.

9:50

While door-knocking in my constituency, I have met lots of seniors and my constituents who struggle and have to choose between a prescription or food. That's what is going on at the ground level. Every Albertan deserves to feel protected by their insurance. That's what we buy insurance for, but due to the rising insurance costs it's very unbearable at the moment. Instead of addressing this affordability crisis and giving Albertans the relief they desperately need, the UCP is making life harder and making it more expensive by allowing auto insurance rates to rise by 15 per cent over two years.

Madam Chair, I moved to Alberta in 2011 from B.C. Our insurance was really low at the time, and affordability was the main reason I moved here, but look today where we are. Our house insurance is double and our car insurance, auto insurance, is quadruple and with fewer benefits, and with this the right to sue is feeling like taking Albertans' rights away.

Today I was talking to someone, received a call . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 66, agreed to earlier today, one hour of time has been allotted, and I must now put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 47 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:52 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For:

Amery	Jean	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Johnson	Schow
Bouchard	Jones	Schulz
Cooper	LaGrange	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Loewen	Singh
de Jonge	Long	Stephan
Dreeshen	Lunty	Turton
Dyck	McDougall	van Dijken

Ellis	Nally	Wiebe
Fir	Neudorf	Williams
Getson	Nicolaides	Wilson
Glubish	Nixon	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Rowswell	Yaseen
Against:		
Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Batten	Hoffman	Shepherd
Boparai	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Calahoo Stonehouse	Irwin	Sweet
Eremenko	Kayande	Wright, P.
Totals:	For – 42	Against – 15

[The remaining clauses of Bill 47 agreed to]

The Chair: I have two more questions for you on Bill 47.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? That is carried.

Bill 49 Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

The Chair: The time to begin is 9:57. We have one hour of debate. Any members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 49, public safety amendment act. Given that we have limited time, I would like to move an amendment. I'll give that a moment to reach you.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. To read the amendment, myself to move that Bill 49, Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, be amended by striking out section 2(6).

What this is, Madam Chair, is about the question of appointments to the oversight board. What we have right now is that in Bill 49 the minister is changing language in the Police Act, language that states that the oversight board for the independent policing services agency, the IPSA, will consist of his deputy minister and eight other members that he appoints. What the minister is changing in Bill 49 is that he's instead proposing that it would be his deputy minister and up to eight other members that he would appoint.

Now, that might seem somewhat innocuous. But here's the thing. Technically speaking, with that change that language would allow the minister to appoint no one other than his deputy minister. You might also say: well, that seems highly unlikely, that the minister would choose to do that, to appoint only his deputy minister and no other members of that oversight board; it's just there to give him a little flexibility in the composition of that board. The fact is that we know that in recent memory this government does have a track record of doing exactly that, twice in the last six months.

10:00

Just last November this government suddenly chose to fire the full board and CEO of AIMCo, an ostensibly independent agency in charge of billions of investments on behalf of Albertans. They installed the Minister of Finance as a one-man board. Then they replaced the CEO with a high-level provincial bureaucrat. That certainly raised some concern at the time. In the words of one individual, Sebastien Betermier, the executive director of the International Centre for Pension Management, quote, that goes against the whole independence, the ability of the funds to work at an arm's length from government.

Of course, we also have a more recent example of this, Madam Chair. Just a few months ago this government fired the CEO and the entire board of AHS and replaced them with a single bureaucrat, the Deputy Minister of Health. In the weeks that followed we heard extremely credible allegations that this was because the CEO and board had both stood up to pressure from the Minister of Health to end their investigation into bloated, overpriced contracts with private surgical facilities that were related, connected to close friends and supporters of the UCP. What we have is a pattern of this government directly interfering in what are supposed to be independent agencies of government by firing entire boards and CEOs and replacing them with a single bureaucrat.

That's without even going into some of the smaller scale examples. I mean, we've got our minister of energy and his interference with the Alberta Energy Regulator when it comes to coal mining. We have the Minister of Affordability and Utilities and his interference with the Alberta Electric System Operator on the renewables ban. In this case it really does appear that the minister of public safety wants to ensure he has that option, too, should he choose, to eliminate an entire board and have only his deputy minister serve as oversight.

To be clear, you know, it's bad enough that this government has already shown the level of arrogance and entitlement that it did in terms of that issue with AIMCo, with billions in public investments, and the situation with AHS and the entirety of our health care system, and in that latter case it seems largely out of their own political interests in trying to protect themselves against what could be the worst scandal that Alberta has ever seen. In this case what we're talking about, Madam Chair, is essential control over the entirety of what's supposed to be an independent policing agency.

Now, it's deeply disturbing, especially when you consider that in her personal history we have a Premier who was ruled to have breached the Conflicts of Interest Act by attempting to interfere in an ongoing criminal case, trying to get the charges dropped for what certainly appeared to be political reasons. This is a government that contains multiple ministers who made direct calls to Calgary's chief of police following an unprecedented action by Calgary police on the University of Calgary campus. This is a government that does not seem to understand or have respect for the rule of law and certainly not the boundaries of independence of agencies within government.

Regardless of what the minister's intent might be, this is a very real concern. It's not just me raising this, Madam Chair. This was raised by Rural Municipalities of Alberta in their analysis of Bill 49, multiple issues that they brought forward, an extensive list of questions and concerns that they have not had the opportunity to speak with this minister about because the minister has not deigned to consult with them. They are the ones who flagged this, and they are raising this concern on behalf of municipalities across Alberta. If indeed this government is intent on bringing in a provincial police force despite the clear opposition from Albertans and organizations like the RMA and others, well, at least we should ensure that we

have every possible safeguard against political interference by this government or any future government.

That's why I'm bringing forward this amendment. Maintaining a requirement of eight members on the oversight board ensures there is actual oversight from Albertans from outside of the government and that an organization that is going to hold significant power, the significant power that is afforded to police, can't end up under the watch of a single individual who depends directly on this or any other future minister for their job. It's a basic amendment to maintain accountability.

Certainly, I would welcome if the minister wants to explain why he feels it should be necessary to have the power to appoint only his deputy minister and why he feels there should not be some other check and balance to ensure that we have this coverage here, why this concern from the RMA is something that should be dismissed. If not, I hope we would have his support for this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members to speak on amendment A3? The hon. minister of public safety.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah. The legislation refers to up to eight members.

I would like to take a moment here to thank my folks within the department. I'm going to take a moment to thank my current acting deputy minister, who was the former deputy commissioner of the RCMP. He certainly has done a fantastic job and certainly believes in public safety and ensuring that people within Alberta, you know, remain safe.

You know, there are a lot of things that the member opposite said, many of which, I'm afraid, I'm just going to have to respectfully disagree with. This is a recommendation within the legislation that certainly has been recommended by the department, coming from the folks that helped to put this piece of legislation together. That being said, I certainly would like to thank all the folks that have worked on putting this bill together. I certainly thank them for all of their recommendations in ensuring that that is achieving what needs to be achieved within this particular bill.

I, respectfully, am going to have to say that I encourage all members not to support this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Are there others to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

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

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise again to continue to speak to Bill 49. I'm disappointed that the minister is not able to provide a reason for that particular change. Indeed, he may contest what I had to say, but the fact is that the facts are the facts. Those are all actions that were taken by his government. They have repeatedly chosen to remove independent boards, CEOs and replace them with single individuals, members of government or high-placed deputy ministers and bureaucratic staff. That is the factual record of this government. Again, by choosing to deny this amendment, the minister is choosing to make that an option for himself and any other future minister of public safety in the province for something as significant as an independent policing agency. That is a concern, but we will move on.

I have another amendment I would like to present, Madam Chair.

The Chair: This will be amendment A4.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. To read the amendment, myself to move that Bill 49, Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, be amended in section 2 as follows: (a) in subsection (5) by striking out the proposed section 33.73 and (b) in subsection 7(c) by striking out subclause (i) and (c) in subsection (9) by striking out the proposed section 33.95(g).

Now, to clarify, Madam Chair, this is another amendment about oversight. In this particular case last year the minister brought forward Bill 11, again, a bill on which he did not consult, a bill to enact something that this government had promised they did not intend to do. In the provincial election previous they said that they were not going to pursue an Alberta provincial police force. When the minister's mandate letter came out later that year, it did not contain any reference to an Alberta provincial police force, but in the legislative session last spring the minister brought forward Bill 11 to begin the process of establishing an Alberta provincial police force.

10:10

In doing so, he set up a particular provision of how the budget of such an independent police force would be enacted. Under Bill 11 the minister of public safety had given the responsibility for financial oversight of that independent policing agency to the prescribed arm's-length oversight board. Now, in Bill 49 he's reversing himself. He's essentially taking that oversight away and giving it to himself instead. Now, that's concerning. I'd say this is an issue that could significantly impact the independence of the independent agency. In fact, it runs counter to the common practice in policing in Alberta and what the minister himself seems to support and endorse at the municipal level.

This is something that was noted in a study, a Police Budgeting Review. It was commissioned by the Edmonton Police Commission, the Peel Regional Police commission from the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance, the CSKA, an organization the minister may be familiar with. One of the directors on that board is his personal friend Dale McFee, former chief of police here in Edmonton, now working for Executive Council. In that study, that Police Budgeting Review, they state:

Section 29 of The Police Act limits Council's involvement with the police to providing it an appropriate budget. Council is not able to enumerate which services could be reduced to accommodate budget reductions. The provisions of the Act ensure appropriate independence of the police commission and the police service.

That's the standard that's set for municipal governments and the police services they fund to look after their communities. The council, local council: their only jurisdiction is to provide the funds needed.

The study goes on to note that it's the local police commission that retains full control over that funding, how it gets allocated and disbursed. They are the body that does that review, so there is that separation. That's the model in community, again, to ensure appropriate independence of the police commission and the police service from the government involved.

Now, that independence is something that I've seen this minister very eager to defend, at least at the municipal level. I mean, right here in Edmonton certainly the minister has been very quick to insert himself in discussions between Edmonton city council and the Edmonton Police Commission, between Edmonton city council and the Edmonton Police Service. He's very quick to assert and clarify their independence from the local municipal government that funds them, to clarify and to strengthen and to defend the essential role of the Edmonton Police Commission as the buffer between them to the extent that he's taken an unprecedented step of

launching a third-party investigation into the process – the open public process, the application process – by which Edmonton city council appointed members to that police commission.

Yet here in Bill 49 the minister seems to be doing somewhat the opposite. When it comes to this government and the police service that they're looking to create, that they're planning to fund, he wants to remove the buffer, take the financial oversight away from the independent oversight board, and take direct control himself, move that into his office. He's dismantling the independent budget review process that he instituted just last year, before this police agency even has a chance to be stood up, before that process even has a chance to be enacted and get to see how it operates.

I'm concerned, Madam Chair, that that is eroding the independence of that oversight board and the independent policing agency before they even get a chance to get going. Again, this is an independent budget review process that exists for every other police service in the province. One has to question why the minister does not think it should exist for this independent policing agency that they are creating, this provincial police force.

Now, again, this comes from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta. They are the ones who are flagging this concern. Now, perhaps the minister would have had a chance to catch this if he had spoken to them before introducing Bill 49, if he had engaged in consultation. Regrettably, he didn't. At various points in their analysis the RMA flag a significant amount of power in Bill 49 that's being concentrated in the minister's office. They talk about an incredible amount of detail that's being left to regulations. One of them, for example, is the possibility that this independent police service could take on a greater role than just a locally contracted policing service for municipalities, take a larger role in specialized province-wide policing responsibilities currently conducted by the RCMP, even to have a police presence in municipalities, regardless of whether they have an agreement with the independent policing agency as a contracted partner.

They note that the actual powers duties and functions of this independent policing agency and their committees are all to be determined through regulations. They flag multiple provisions that they feel blur the line between the minister's authority and the role of the oversight board and even the chief of this police service.

Quote: "The list of regulation-making authority is excessive." Second quote: "It is concerning that there is not more accountability to Albertans, other policing service providers, municipalities, or the [independent policing agency] itself prior to expanding its scope."

To bring this back around to the amendment in front of us, this is just one change recommended from community and, I think, a sensible one to try to curtail the enormous amount of power that this minister is looking to grant himself over this independent policing agency. One, again, on which he has refused to consult and which a majority of Albertans still oppose. Just trying to curb that power he's giving himself over this, keep it in line with the systems of financial oversight that are already in place to protect the independence of other police services in our province, we're just asking for consistency here, Madam Chair, the kind of independence that the minister himself seems to vigorously support for other policing agencies.

It's my hope, Madam Chair, that the minister will agree with myself, with the RMA, and accept this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Are there others to amendment A4? Seeing the hon. minister of public safety.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Chair. The member opposite says a lot of things with a lot of confidence, and he certainly talks a lot about facts. Unfortunately, I would argue that he is very much ill

informed on the facts. He keeps talking about lack of consultation. I have spoken to well over 50 municipalities. I have spoken to over 40 First Nations organizations, a lot of which has to do with, of course, the members and their support of Bill C-75, which has wreaked havoc across Canada, a lot of which had to do with the lack of policing in many rural communities. Not my words. Not my words. These are the words that are coming from rural MLAs, the words that are coming from municipal leaders in rural Alberta. What they have asked me very clearly is about options.

Madam Chair, I have spoken at AM. It's no secret. I've spoken at RMA. I talked about Alberta independent police service. I talked about fairness. I am perplexed why the members opposite seem to be opposed to equal pay for equal work. The member opposite keeps on talking about: it's not in your mandate letter; it's not in your mandate letter. Well, let me just talk about a few points here.

Let's talk about this for a second, reviewing the education and training curriculum for sheriffs so that they can assist in a broader scope of policing, right? So Peace officers: now we're going to talk about policing, broadening the scope. We talk about them doing police-like functions. We talk about them doing police duties. Again, equal pay for equal work. I'm not entirely sure why the members opposite would be opposed to that. Working with Indigenous and mid-size and rural communities to address rising crime rates in these areas. Madam Chair, in 2023 the police-reported crime rate was 34 per cent higher in rural communities than urban centres. The same year the violent crime rate, which includes homicides, intimate partner violence, and assaults, was 1.7 times higher in rural areas. Madam Chair, we have First Nations communities saying that sometimes it's taking up to six days when they're experiencing calls to service in their communities. Other First Nations are saying: we've actually just given up, quite frankly, on calling the police. That's unacceptable.

10:20

Madam Chair, modernizing and reforming Indigenous policing programs to address chronic underfunding and gaps is in my mandate letter. That's precisely what we're doing. First Nations communities have indicated to me that not only some of them are looking for their own policing service, which we're happy to help them – I don't know why they would be opposed to that, quite frankly. Some are looking to contract out to the new independent police service. Why would you want to deny First Nations people the choice that they want to have for their community to police their community? Why do they want to force a one-fit solution, which is the RCMP, when some of them have said: Hey, we don't want the RCMP anymore? That's fine. It's their choice. I need the members opposite to respect that choice from those First Nations communities.

Continuing to work with local communities to support them with the community policing options that they believe will best serve their populations: that's precisely what we're doing. We're providing options to the town of Hardisty, to the town of Coaldale. These are policing options other than their current contract service provider. Madam Chair, I am leaving the choice to the municipalities. I can tell you that we have well over 35 municipalities that have indicated to us that they would like another option other than the RCMP, not to mention – I will say this one more time for everybody here – that this is not just municipalities that are supporting this is.

This is not just the provincial government who wants to support those municipalities. We have the federal government. I quote, "Canada's role in supporting provinces in their delivery of policing services must evolve. The federal government should be committed to working closely with Provinces to support a transition away from

contract policing.” Madam Chair, this is the same government that the NDP have been propping up for the last four years. This is an all-parties committee consisting of Conservatives and Liberals and NDP that support this. This is not the UCP going on some crazy wild ride here. This is supporting municipalities. This is supporting the federal government to make sure that the policing needs are met in their communities.

That being said, and I certainly would love to say a few things more, Madam Chair, I reject the premise of this amendment that is being brought forward right now. Nothing can be further from the truth. This is not about any additional powers. I thank again the public service for making these recommendations. I certainly have a lot of faith in my deputy ministers and my ADMs and all the great people that are helping to put this bill together.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Chair: Any other members to speak to Bill 49? The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

Member Boparai: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to Bill 49, the Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. At face value this bill may appear as a routine update to legislation concerning emergency response and policing in Alberta, but in reality this bill is a smokescreen. It is another misguided and deeply political initiative by the UCP government. It is yet another attempt to manufacture credibility on public safety while ignoring the real urgent needs of Albertans. Instead of delivering real community-driven solutions to rural crime, addiction, and mental health crises, the UCP is pouring time, energy, and taxpayers’ money into creating a provincial police force that Albertans have consistently and clearly rejected. At the same time, they are going back and changing disaster relief rules, risking the livelihoods of Albertans who have already faced disaster and are waiting for support.

Bill 49 is not about making communities safer. It’s about laying the foundation for an expensive and unpopular political experiment. It’s about giving more unchecked power to cabinet ministers, and it’s about eroding trust in the systems that should protect Albertans, not ones that complicate their lives further. As the Official Opposition, Alberta’s New Democrats stand firmly opposed to Bill 49. It’s a costly, confusing, and unnecessary piece of legislation that fails to address the actual safety concerns facing families, farmers, and front-line workers across the province.

First, let’s take a look at what Bill 49 actually does. The bill amends the Emergency Management Act, the Police Act, and the Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act. These are not minor technical adjustments. These are wide-ranging structural changes that open the door to significant consequences for how we handle disasters, crime prevention, and law enforcement.

Under the Emergency Management Act the bill introduces new powers that allow cabinet to go back and change the rules on disaster recovery assistance even for disasters that occurred before April 1, 2025. That means that if you lost your home to a wildfire last year and applied for financial relief, the government could now rewrite the rules and deny you that support. This is profoundly unfair. Albertans made critical financial and personal decisions based on the rules as they were presented. Now those commitments could be ripped away with no warning, no consultation, and no grandfathering clause to protect existing applications.

The bill also changes the wording from payment of compensation to provision of financial or other assistance, which might sound harmless, but it drastically broadens the government’s discretion. It

removes any guarantee that support will actually come in the form people need or that it will come at all. It leaves vulnerable Albertans at the mercy of an increasingly secretive and centralized emergency management system. On top of that, Madam Chair, the bill adds more cabinet oversight on to emergency decisions, potentially bogging down response times with political interference. While the bill claims to promote respect for individual rights during emergencies, let’s not forget that this is the same government that has moved decision-making power away from public health experts and into the hands of cabinet ministers, ministers with no medical training and clear political agendas.

Then we come to the changes to the Police Act, which are nothing short of alarming. Bill 49 establishes the legal framework for a brand new independent police agency, a Crown corporation that would effectively be a provincial police force in all but name. The UCP government claims this isn’t a provincial police force, but let’s be honest. This is exactly what it is. This bill sets up the governance structure, the financial and reporting mechanisms, and the municipal agreements needed to roll out such a force, yet it doesn’t include a single line about cost, timelines, or implementation plans.

Madam Chair, Albertans are being asked to take this on faith, faith in a government that’s already admitted it hasn’t completed a feasibility study, faith in a government that continues to withhold the true cost of this plan, and faith in a Premier who told Albertans before the election that the province wouldn’t move forward with a provincial police force only to backtrack now behind closed doors with legislation like this. The truth is that Albertans don’t want this. The UCP’s own Fair Deal Panel showed that. Poll after poll confirms it: 86 per cent of Albertans want to retain the RCMP, 84 per cent say there are far more pressing priorities than creating a new police service, and 87 per cent want a full cost breakdown before any changes move forward. But has the government provided that? No. Not in this bill. Not in Budget 2025. Not in public consultations because there weren’t any.

10:30

Madam Chair, municipalities have been left in the dark. The Alberta sheriff’s branch officers association, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, and Indigenous communities have not been meaningfully consulted. Even the Rural Municipalities of Alberta have said clearly that they need more information before this goes ahead.

Instead, this will go ahead with the restructuring that will cost hundreds of millions, displace sheriffs, and do nothing to address the most pressing issues rural Albertans face, like response times, local knowledge, and community trust.

Let’s not forget the government has set aside just \$6 million in startup costs even though the total transition to a provincial police force could cost well over \$1.3 billion, including a \$170 million annual loss in federal funding. This is a financial black hole, and the bill gives municipalities the ability to opt-in without giving them the resources to do it. That’s not choice. That is downloading responsibility without support.

Madam Chair, finally, Bill 49 also amends the Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act despite a recent Alberta Court of Justice ruling that parts of the law are unconstitutional. The court found that the identification requirements violated Charter rights and that the data collection scheme was unjustified, overly broad, and intrusive. Instead of fixing the law or pausing to consult legal experts and industry stakeholders, the UCP is doubling down. This bill expands identification requirements to business-to-business transactions and repeals exemptions for corporate sellers. It ignores the court’s ruling and increases the risk of further legal challenges that Alberta taxpayers will be forced to fund.

What are the real impacts of Bill 49? For Albertans recovering from disasters it introduces retroactive uncertainty and weakens their right to reliable recovery support. For local governments it creates a risk of massive new policing costs with no clear structure and no funding assurances. For law enforcement professionals it introduces chaos, poor communication, and job instability during a period when public trust is already fragile. For everyday Albertans it shows that the UCP is more concerned with political branding than with real safety or fiscal responsibility.

Madam Chair, this is a government that is currently under scrutiny for corruption, secrecy, and poor management across multiple ministries. While Albertans deal with rising crime, long EMS wait times, and increased anxiety about their families' futures, the UCP is focused on creating a new police force and giving itself more power to rewrite emergency support rules. It is an outrageous misplacement of priorities.

Albertans deserve better. They deserve a government that listens to communities, respects their needs, and invests in the things that actually work, things like mental health support, addiction recovery, and community-based policing.

Madam Chair, Bill 49 is not a solution. It is a distraction from a government that has lost touch with the people it claims to serve. The NDP as Official Opposition stands strongly opposed to this bill. We will continue to fight for public safety that's rooted in local knowledge, accountability, and fiscal responsibility. We will continue to demand transparency, fairness, and consultation for the people of Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Madam Chair, I rise today, not just in opposition to Bill 49 but in absolute frustration, outrage, really, at yet another cynical attempt by this UCP government to bulldoze over communities, dismantle public trust, and replace evidence-based governance with chaos, cuts, and cronyism.

Bill 49 is the legislative embodiment of the UCP's greatest hits: secrecy, arrogance, waste, and reckless political opportunism disguised as reform. Whether we're talking about emergency management, policing, or metal theft, it's all the same pattern: legislate first, consult later if ever, and let the people pick up the pieces and the bill. Here we are again, another massive UCP omnibus bill rushed over, bloated, and politically motivated. Another round of performative consultations where the public speaks and the Premier ignores them. Another so-called public safety bill that doesn't listen to the communities but forces a deeply ideological and deeply unpopular agenda.

Bill 49 is not about making Albertans safer. It's about making headlines. It's about feeding the Premier's obsession with picking fights with Ottawa, with the courts, with municipalities, with First Nations, with Métis settlements. It's about control, and in that pursuit this government is trampling over rights, destabilizing trusted systems, and writing blank cheques to Albertans. Let's be crystal clear. This bill was not asked for by the people of Alberta. It's not what rural communities are crying out for, and it's certainly not what First Nations, municipalities, or public experts have actually called for. This is political theatre paid for by the public for the benefit of the Premier, who in fact promised she wouldn't pursue a public police force. Until now. Surprise.

This bill makes sweeping changes, some of them subtle but nonetheless dangerous, changes like swapping the term "compensation" for more discretionary financial or other assistance. What does that even mean? It means you're giving yourselves carte blanche to decide behind closed doors whether Albertans recovering from disaster get real support or not.

And worse, this bill introduces retroactive changes to how disaster recovery assistance is administered. This means that Albertans who applied for help months ago, maybe after tragically losing their homes to wildfire or flood, could suddenly find themselves with the rules changed on them. No notice, no warning, no justice.

Let's begin with the amendments to the Emergency Management Act. The UCP wants us to believe that these are just administrative tweaks, but what they're actually doing is dangerous. These changes are not an accident. They are a calculated move to limit the government's obligations to Albertans during their most vulnerable moments. And even more concerning, now they're making these changes retroactive all the way back to November 2018. That means Albertans who have already submitted applications under the existing rules can now be denied after the fact. That's not just unfair; it's morally wrong. You do not change the rules on flood or wildfire survivors after they have already been devastated and applied to their government for help.

All of this nonsense is based on the Manning report; Preston Manning, a career politician with absolutely no emergency management credentials whatsoever. He told the Premier what she wanted to hear: centralize control, ignore the experts. This is not evidence-based policy-making. This is ideology dressed up as reform. It is evident when one asks if consultation occurred with a disaster-affected community before proposing these retroactive changes. Of course, the answer is that they have not. This is not how responsible government acts in a democracy. This is how authoritarian regimes function, by rewriting the rules when it suits them best.

Albertans have repeatedly rejected this plan for a provincial police force. Let's look at the centrepiece of this bill, which is the changes to the Police Act. Madam Chair, I say this as clearly as possible. The people of Alberta do not want a provincial police force. Full stop. Survey after survey show that Albertans are satisfied with the RCMP; 77 per cent of Albertans are satisfied with RCMP jurisdiction, and they say they trust the force; 86 per cent say they want to keep the RCMP; 87 per cent of Albertans say they want full costing and analysis before any change is made. And what does this government do? Push forward anyway. No costing, no business plan, no meaningful consultation. Just a shiny rebrand, independent agency police service, but Albertans know exactly what this is. It's an Alberta provincial police under a different name, again, that no one asked for.

10:40

Let's talk about money. The transition plan estimates \$366 million upfront costs and \$200 million yearly increases, totalling \$1.3 billion over six years. We'll lose another billion dollars from federal RCMP funding. Honestly, Madam Chair, this is fiscal madness. While schools are underfunded, ERs are closing, roads in rural Alberta are crumbling, this Premier is launching an unwanted, unaccounted, unaccountable, unproven police experiment.

All the while municipalities have been crystal clear. The rural municipalities of Alberta have repeatedly said no. Alberta municipalities surveyed their members, and not one single municipality asked for this. In fact, many fear being forced into this new police model because this bill gives this government sweeping powers over the province, over local autonomy, local jurisdiction and authority, and completely disregards the work. And who gets left behind in all of this? Small towns, families, First Nations, Métis settlements. You're not building capacity; you're creating confusion. Alberta municipalities say they don't want any town switched from the RCMP. What they do want is more officers,

faster response times, local knowledge. This bill gives them none of that. Just more confusion, more bureaucracy, more chaos.

Ironically Albertans have made their position very clear. The stats speak clearly. But what does the UCP do? Plow ahead anyways because apparently public opinion doesn't matter to government. Democracy is an inconvenience when you have an ideological crusade to wage. Let's not kid ourselves here. Bill 49 is the scaffolding for a provincial police force that no one wants or asks for.

This bill will hand over policing duties from trained sheriffs to a brand new agency with no defined mandate, no public trust, and no accountability framework that we can verify. The Alberta sheriffs branch officers association has not been consulted. AUPE is raising alarms about pay, training, safety, but the UCP is not listening.

If you want to improve safety for Indigenous people, fund First Nations policing through First Nations and Inuit policing program. Support restorative justice work with Indigenous governments, not over them and around them. This bill writes Indigenous and Métis people completely out of the conversation along with the rural jurisdiction.

We can look at examples around the world where we see officers have not killed a citizen. If we look at Iceland, Denmark, Switzerland, St. Lucia, Norway, Finland, Hong Kong, Portugal, Sweden, Japan: these police services have not killed one single person. Yet Edmonton alone has the second-highest involved deaths than anywhere else in this country. For two years in a row Edmonton has had the most fatal shootings in Canada, and this is the model we are going to scale out in the province? Shame. Madam Chair, this isn't reconciliation; it's regression.

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

Ms Hayter: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am thankful for the opportunity to rise and join the debate in opposition to Bill 49, the Public Safety Emergency Services Statute Amendment Act, 2025. Public Safety is something every Albertan should be able to count on. You know, whether we live in a city or a rural community, you should be able to trust that when something goes wrong, when you call for help, someone's going to show up. Now, safety isn't a partisan issue. It's something we want for all of our communities and all of our constituents.

I want to start by acknowledging the work of my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre. He has been consistent and thorough in engaging with people across the province on this file, and I know that this member is actually listening, something that this government clearly isn't doing. That's what keeps coming up for me with this bill, the refusal to listen. We've seen several amendments from my colleague brought forward in good faith with real thought behind them, only to be rejected out of hand, not because they're unworkable but because this government seems to be allergic to collaboration.

Tonight I want to talk about what's really at stake here, about who this bill is actually serving and what gets lost when public safety becomes a political project instead of public good. This isn't just about policing. It's about priorities. It's about whether this government is willing to focus on what actually makes communities safer or whether they're too busy chasing headlines and ideological legacy pieces to notice that Albertans are asking for something completely different.

If this government truly cared about public safety, especially in rural Alberta, they wouldn't be putting time and money into creating a new police force. They'd be investing in what actually works: housing, mental health care, addiction treatment, access to primary care, employment opportunities. And we'd be opting into sex education because we know that talking about consent is a tool

for prevention to gender-based violence, the thing that makes our communities stronger and safer from ground up. You don't reduce crime by rebranding a police service. You reduce crime by reducing desperation, by meeting people's needs before crisis turns into chaos.

We're not denying that rural crime is a real issue. The fear is real, and the impacts are real: people feeling unsafe, unsupported, and unheard. This government is using that fear not to solve the actual problem but to sell a political project. They're not listening. They're not leveraging. They're using real community concerns to justify a massive top-down overhaul that doesn't actually address the root of the problem. Instead of providing real solutions, they're offering up a project that's costly. It's vague, and it's designed to check a box of political wish lists.

We've seen this play out before in health care when the government dismantled the lab services and handed them off DynaLife. People were told: it's going to be faster, better, and more efficient. What happened? Missed appointments, hour-long, wait times, doctors scrambling to get test results, and then after everything fell apart, the government quietly took it all back at a massive cost to the public.

Now, we're seeing the same story in public safety: undermine confidence in existing services, sow division, and then rush in with a plan that gives the appearance of action without the substance behind it. If the government truly wanted to be tough on crime, they'd be investing in prevention and culturally appropriate supports and community-based policing models that actually build relationships and reduce harm to the RCMP, the municipal police forces, to the sheriffs. They'd be sitting down with people who have been clear about what they do and don't need. Instead, they've chosen to ignore all of that in favour of a billion-dollar restructuring that no one asked for, not because it's what rural communities want but because it fits a political narrative they're determined to sell.

It brings me to the bigger question, Madam Speaker. Why won't this government listen to Albertans? It's not just this bill. It's part of a long-familiar habit. Alberta said no to coal mining in the eastern slopes, no to changes in our insurance, no to privatizing more of our health care, which the government is now charging ahead with anyway under Bill 55, and now 86 per cent of Albertans said that they want to keep the RCMP. Alongside that, 84 per cent said that they actually want the government to focus on what actually matters, and that's not complicated. People are asking for family doctors, sustainable class sizes, for mental health supports, for stable housing, for real investment in public safety and prevention, not another expensive restructuring project with no clear benefit. Yet here we are again with this government pouring money and political energy into something no one asked for while the basics continue to fall through the cracks.

10:50

We also need to talk about who is being impacted the most when the basics are ignored. Let's be clear. How people experience safety and what it takes to feel safety isn't the same for everyone. For many women in Alberta, especially in rural and remote areas, safety means having real options when things go wrong. It means knowing there's support not just after harm has happened but when you're trying to prevent it. It means being able to leave a violent partner and know there's a shelter bed waiting. It means knowing you won't be turned away because the local facility is full or it's closed. It means calling for help and not having to convince someone that stalking or coercive control is a real danger.

Gender-based violence is rising in Alberta. We all know it – the front-line workers, police, advocates – yet shelters are turning people away. Crisis lines are overwhelmed. Prevention programs

are underfunded and shutting down. In some parts of Alberta there is no local service at all.

While women are facing this reality, what is this government doing? Spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a costly restructuring of police services; one that hasn't been clearly explained, one that isn't backed by front-line consultation, one that doesn't respond to the safety needs that many women are calling for. It diverts attention and resources away from the services like shelters, crisis support, and trauma-informed care. If this government were serious about public safety, they'd be investing in the services that actually save lives. They'd be listening to the people who run those shelters and work in sexual assault centres. They'd be ensuring that women have the support they need when they're at risk, not funnelling public money into a vanity project meant to serve political image over public need.

Beyond the cost and the confusion there's another layer of concern here. How would the new agency actually be governed? One of the most troubling things about the bill is how little detail is actually provided. This new structure is being created with almost all of its governance left to regulation. We don't know who will appoint the board, what qualifications those members will need, whether communities will have a say, or if it even matters to this government given their track record of ignoring local input, and how public accountability will work.

When it comes to public safety, something that relies on trust and transparency, this kind of ambiguity is dangerous. Albertans deserve to know who is making decisions about policing in their communities. Municipalities deserve to know how or if they'll be consulted and what kind of oversight will be in place. Front-line officers deserve clarity about the structure they'll be working under, especially when the government claims that they've been doing it for their own benefit. Instead, this bill offer is a shell.

Public safety isn't something you fix by restructuring from the top down; you build it from the ground up with stable funding, with trusted relationships, with communities at the table. That's the real missed opportunity here. This government could have used this bill to strengthen public safety in a real, lasting way. Instead, they've chosen political optics under public trust, and communities across Alberta will be left to pick up the pieces.

I'll close with this. Albertans deserve a public safety system that is built with them, not around them; one that listens, one that responds, one that's rooted in community, not political calculations. We don't need more political theatre. We need real solutions. But Bill 49 doesn't offer them, and I will not be supporting this bill.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in full opposition to Bill 49, Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. As someone who has family members who have served in some of the highest ranks of law enforcement across Canada for decades, including other provincial police, and as someone who also has family members living rural who do not support this idea of removing the RCMP, and as someone who values deeply public safety as of the utmost importance for our communities, I simply cannot vote in support of this bill.

The minister stated this evening that he wants to pay sheriffs more, and I absolutely agree. Let's make sure we show them their value to our communities. My question is: why hasn't the minister done this already? He can pay sheriffs without needing new legislation.

My colleague from Edmonton-City Centre offered a couple of amendments this evening that were not even considered, which has

been a pattern for this UCP government to not take constructive feedback or collaborate. As I've read and reviewed Bill 49, it became very clear to me that the UCP government has zero credibility on public safety and takes rural Albertans for granted.

Madam Chair, it's important to be clear on what Bill 49 really is. This UCP government is taking another step towards giving municipalities the option of ditching the RCMP in favour of a new provincial police service, yet Alberta Municipalities stated that they are not aware of any municipalities that are asking for alternatives to the RCMP. This is only the latest in a multiyear and ongoing effort to misrepresent facts, foster public fear, and push a narrative to justify the replacement of Alberta's provincial police service without evidence, need, or deep consultation.

This bill could force massive and unpredictable financial obligations on local governments, yet despite enormous push-back this government is forcing through massive police restructuring that absolutely no one in Alberta has asked for or wants. Albertans have been abundantly clear. They have no interest in this government wasting taxpayers' dollars to reform and set up a provincial police force. It's unclear who's asking for this when so many issues are top of mind for Albertans. If passed, Bill 49 will ensure that any new police service will be a Crown corporation that will be ...

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 67, which was agreed to earlier, one hour of debate has now been completed, and the questions must now be put on Bill 49, Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 49 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:57 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For:

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

11:00

Against:

Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Batten	Hoffman	Shepherd
Boparai	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Calahoo Stonehouse	Irwin	Sweet
Eremenko	Kayande	Wright, P.

Totals:	For – 43	Against – 15
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[The remaining clauses of Bill 49 agreed to]

The Chair: I have two more questions for you.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? That's carried.

Mr. Williams: Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report bills 47 and 49.

The Chair: May I suggest we rise and report on Bill 49 with amendments and rise and report on Bill 47.

Mr. Williams: I believe there are amendments. Yes. So moved.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 47. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 49. I wish to table all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official record of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading (continued)

Bill 47 Automobile Insurance Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill 47, the Automobile Insurance Act.

This legislation is the start of a big change for auto insurance in Alberta. Our primary focus is for Albertans to have the best auto insurance benefits in Canada while lowering rate costs. A care-first system will accomplish those goals. I encourage all members to help Alberta improve how auto insurance is provided to Albertans by supporting this important legislation.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:05 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Johnson	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Schow
Bouchard	LaGrange	Schulz

Cooper	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Long	Singh
de Jonge	Lundy	Stephan
Dreeshen	McDougall	Turton
Dyck	Nally	van Dijken
Ellis	Neudorf	Wiebe
Fir	Nicolaides	Williams
Getson	Nixon	Wilson
Glubish	Petrovic	Wright, J.
Horner	Pitt	Yao
Hunter	Rowswell	Yaseen
Jean		

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Batten	Hoffman	Shepherd
Boparai	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Calahoo	Stonehouse	Sweet
Eremenko	Irwin	Wright, P.
	Kayande	

Totals:	For – 43	Against – 15
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[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 50 Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and move third reading of Bill 50, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025.

Now, I'd like to begin my speech by thanking the previous Minister of Municipal Affairs for all of his diligent work on this bill and everything else he's done in the file of the Municipal Affairs minister to serve this province diligently.

11:10

Madam Speaker, this bill is about making local government work better for Albertans, strengthening its fairness, transparency, and accountability, the core principles of good governance. There are a lot of great things in this bill that we could talk about. We are ironing out some of the rules for the upcoming fall municipal elections by making timely amendments that would ensure that the voting rights of Albertans with disabilities are protected while allowing for the use of elector assist terminals. It would also enable the residents displaced by last year's wildfires in the municipality of Jasper to take part in the democratic process by allowing them to vote and run for office if they intend to return to their community.

We're also making amendments that are essential to strengthening local governance and ensuring that council members act and make sound decisions that are reflective of the communities and residents they serve. We have seen municipal codes of conduct work; however, some municipalities have seen them become a weapon used when councillors disagree with one another. Codes of conduct would pause to allow us to work with municipalities on establishing standard procedures for council meetings and committees to minimize dysfunction between council members.

We will also explore the creation of a municipal ethics commissioner with our municipal partners. Our government's proposed amendments also act on feedback from partners by streamlining intermunicipal collaboration to bolster economic opportunities and deliver effective intermunicipal services for residents.

Our proposed legislation also recognizes that we must protect the investments of hard-working Albertans. This would be done by ensuring homes are built to meet construction and safety quality standards so that they are protected if construction defects do occur. Further amendments will streamline the construction process for owner-builders by simplifying permit applications. Our government's amendments to get this done are based off extensive consultation with home builders, expanding the province's housing supply, and are responsive to the needs of hard-working Albertans who invest in new homes.

Madam Speaker, Bill 50 delivers practical, focused reforms that respond directly to the challenges facing Alberta municipalities, voters, and homeowners. It cuts red tape, strengthens transparency, protects homebuyers, and clears the path for more effective local governance. Quite simply, this bill is about making local government work better, fairer elections, smarter collaboration, stronger accountability.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 50, and I move to adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:12 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Batten	Hoffman	Shepherd
Boparai	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Calahoo Stonehouse	Irwin	Sweet
Eremenko	Kayande	Wright, P.

Totals: For – 43 Against – 15

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

(continued)

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

Time Allocation on Bill 47

70. Mr. Williams moved on behalf of Mr. Schow:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 47, Automobile Insurance Act, is resumed, not more than one

hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move Government Motion 70, on the Order Paper, on behalf of the Government House Leader.

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

Member Irwin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I want to start my response to the limiting of debate by just sharing a short story. I was visiting a school earlier today, M.E. LaZerte high school, a fabulous school in the riding of Edmonton-Decore, which is an area represented by an incredible MLA. They'd invited me to be their very first guest on their new podcast that their GSA has set up, and one of the first things they asked me was how I deal with tough days, knowing that it can be hard in here sometimes. And I said: "You know what? There are 5 million. We've just hit 5 million people in this province – 5 million – yet there are only 87 of us who do this job." What an incredible privilege. Why wouldn't we come to this House every single day wanting to do our best, wanting to do our jobs as we were sent here to do?

Why wouldn't we want to have fulsome debate on giant pieces of legislation that impact the communities that we represent? I think about Bill 55, I think about Bill 54, I think about all of the legislation that this government has brought in, and they're limiting debate on some of the most consequential pieces of legislation we've seen in this province. I'd say that, you know, maybe we could forgive it a little bit if it weren't a trend for this UCP government, but it very much is a trend. Since I've had the honour of being one of the 87 people who get to do this job, since 2019, the UCP has introduced 71 time allocation motions. Seventy-one. [interjections] Members opposite are kind of laughing a little bit, heckling. That's their response to respecting democracy.

11:20

I remember, actually, multiple times standing here trying to compel this government to do the right thing, to be less antidemocratic, and I worry very much that again our calls fall on deaf ears. Ramming through, using time allocation, cutting short any sort of opportunities for fulsome debate, ending sessions early, refusing to support private members' bills: it's shameful. Students at that school I visited this morning: they see it. They deserve better, our constituents deserve better, and Albertans deserve better. Better is possible.

Thank you.

[The Speaker in the chair]

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 70 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:21 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Dreeshen	Lunty	Turton
Dyck	McDougall	van Dijken
Ellis	Nally	Wiebe
Fir	Neudorf	Williams
Getson	Nicolaides	Wilson
Glubish	Nixon	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen
Jean	Rowswell	

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Batten	Hoffman	Shepherd
Boparai	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Calahoo Stonehouse	Irwin	Sweet
Eremenko	Kayande	Wright, P.

Totals: For – 44 Against – 15

[Government Motion 70 carried]

Time Allocation on Bill 50

75. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Stephan: Oh, another good motion.

Mr. Schow: Yes, Madam Speaker, I do believe it is another good motion, as stated by the Member for Red Deer-South. I do rise to move Government Motion 75, on the Order Paper, moved by myself. [interjections] I see that others find that amusing.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Democracy isn't meant to be convenient. The whole system that we have of government exists with checks and balances that are built-in – speed bumps, as it were – ways to keep governments from running roughshod over their citizens. The whole purpose of us being here, of the standing orders, of everything that's in place is intended to ensure that we have real democratic engagement.

Now, the challenge with that, Madam Speaker, is that those rules, those processes that are in place to protect the public and to protect democracy are only as good as the respect from the folks that are wielding them. The government does have the power to choose to override those systems, to abuse those systems, frankly, to change those systems to its own advantage. The challenge is that when you treat democracy as inconvenient, you open the door to corruption, to increasing arrogance, entitlement, hubris. It leads to what we've got with this government today, led by a Premier whose own arrogance led her to actually try to interfere in a criminal case, led by ...

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Mr. Schow: Yes. Madam Speaker, I was listening with great intent as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre was talking, but I think the most recent comments suggesting that actions that are against the law by the Premier would be certainly out of order and create unrest. Certainly, they'd be abusive language and insulting, would impute false motives or unavowed motives against another member, make allegations against another member.

I understand the hour is late. The Member for Edmonton-City Centre is upset. It happens. It's too bad, but it doesn't give the member licence to start casting aspersions against the Premier and attributing false motives against her, particularly ones that are illegal in nature. So I would ask the member to apologize and refrain from using that kind of language ever again.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did not opine on the Premier's motives in the actions that were taken, and I did use the word "attempt". I would note that this is based directly on a ruling from the Ethics Commissioner, who stated that the Premier breached the Conflicts of Interest Act in attempting to interfere with the Minister of Justice in the oversight of a criminal case and charges that were placed against the individual Artur Pawlowski. That is not an allegation; that is fact. I understand that the Government House Leader is upset with the exercise of democracy in the House, but this is not a point of order.

11:30

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, man. It's very late for this sort of thing. Hon. members, look, we've got a job to do. Let's do this job. Let's be as helpful as we can in the language that we use in this Chamber and be as *Kumbaya* as we can sitting two sword lengths' across from each other. I don't know what to say. It's very late. That's what I'm going to say.

Please, member, just watch the words that you say in the words that you have left in the three minutes in your part of this closure debate.

Debate Continued

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that this government does not like to hear the truth of its own record. This government does not like to hear the actual facts about its actions and its choices. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: This government can't even stomach to listen to a member of the opposition. This government can't stand to actually hear the truth about where they are. [interjections] The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland in particular can't stand to hear the truth, Madam Speaker.

The fact is that this is a government that has exercised closure more times than any other. This is a government that does not even truly believe in consulting with Albertans. That is the height of arrogance and hubris this government has reached. For this government the idea of consultation is for people to sit and be told what they're going to do.

This is a government that is working to hide more information from Albertans than any other before, making actual changes to the legislation governing freedom of information to do so. This is a

government that is changing elections legislation to give itself more advantage.

This is a government that is utterly unashamed of their arrogance and their entitlement, and that is reflected again in the fact that we are sitting here doing batch motions for closure on legislation that this government introduced, 19 pieces of legislation in eight weeks, Madam Speaker. [interjections] Some of the most significant pieces of legislation dropped with only two weeks left in this session, and they applaud because they are arrogant and they are entitled and they have lost their bearings.

Mr. Cooper: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Cooper: Hon. Madam Speaker, in the last four minutes of the remarks from my good, learned colleague, friend, the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, just prior to the point of order that the Government House Leader rose on, he specifically and intentionally referred to the Premier as being arrogant, and then now moments after your correction he has referred to members of the government as being arrogant. I would suggest that when such a fair and lenient ruling came from the Speaker with respect to his remarks and language that's likely to create disorder – I've given my fair share of time allocation closure speeches in this House. It can be done in a way that isn't going to create disorder, and I encourage you to remind him of the same.

Mr. Shepherd: I'll apologize and withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. You may proceed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Shepherd: But I will not back down from my assertion that this is a government that is arrogant and entitled and continues to demonstrate that in this House. [interjection] Speaking of the government broadly, Madam Speaker, which is not any particular individual in this House.

I will say that the actions of this government demonstrate that they have no interest in debate. They have no interest in democracy. They choose to repeatedly shut down debate. The record of this government is clear in that they have done so more than any other in the history of this province. That is a sign of disrespect to Albertans, who have elected us to come to this place and be their voice. It is a sign of disrespect to every Albertan that they continue to refuse to consult, to every Albertan they ignore as they force through legislation that Albertans have made it quite clear they do not want. They think that if Albertans aren't watching at this late hour of night, it doesn't matter.

To be absolutely clear, Madam Speaker, we are against this motion. We are here on behalf of Albertans. We will continue to argue on behalf of Albertans. We will continue to hold the mirror up to this government so they can see the reflection of who they are choosing to be. I think this government is well aware. They may choose to mock, they may choose to jest, they may choose to heckle tonight, but I hope at some level there is a modicum of shame.

[Government Motion 75 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 47 Automobile Insurance Act (continued)

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

Member Kayande: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are now at third reading. This is the worst of all possible worlds of an insurance bill. No-fault insurance, privately delivered. So what are my issues with this? I had at Committee of the Whole the opportunity to talk about Intact's five-year shareholder return of 117 per cent. Let's talk about their executive compensation because this is very material to how a privately delivered no-fault system of insurance will work.

[The Speaker in the chair]

See, the compensation of the management team of Intact, based on their proxy circular, which I'm happy to table tomorrow, is based on the combined ratio. It's basically an accounting term that includes – it's the sum of the payout ratio, which is how much revenue they bring in that's actually paid out as claims plus all of their operating expenses. That's called combined ratio.

Now, insurance company executives aren't compensated for paying claims. They're compensated for not paying claims. So a good combined ratio, a lower one, results in higher executive compensation. You can see the issue with this, especially with somebody who's making \$14 million a year, as the CEO of Intact is. If I were lucky enough to make \$14 million a year, I sure wouldn't want that pay to be at risk. I would want it to be at risk as little as possible, and one of the things that I can control is how quickly claims are paid out across the entire organization. That's what I fear when judicial oversight is taken away.

This is probably a compensation plan – I call out Intact simply because they are the largest property and casualty insurance company in Canada, essentially a pure play in property and casualty, I believe. I could be wrong. I call them out, though, because most executive compensation systems should be based on pay for performance. If shareholders make money, management should make money. What do shareholders make money on? What does management make money on? More efficient operations. Insurance companies that bring in revenue and slow down the paying of claims.

Now, they'll say: look, there's market discipline; ultimately, insurance companies that don't pay claims won't be able to get policy renewals. But the policy is today, and the potential for claims is down the road. So this creates a problem, which is why insurance regulation exists, to make that problem a little bit easier for consumers of insurance to handle. Companies are actually required by regulation to make sure that they do pay claims, and where regulation can't solve the entire problem, that's where people need to rely on the courts.

I want to digress for a minute here and talk about a very important intermediary between ordinary people who have been injured – maybe they have concussions. Maybe they have very limited ability to understand an extremely complex system of rulings and appeals and decisions. Maybe they are overwhelmed by technical conversation from a claims adjuster. Maybe they have been required to see a medical professional employed by the insurance company who has an incentive to keep his relationship with the insurance company so that he or she can continue to get more business from them.

11:40

This is a difficult-to-navigate system, and that's why lawyers exist. I joke a lot of time with some of my lawyer friends that, you know, everyone hates lawyers until you need one. So I want to speak directly to the legal profession here in Alberta. What you do is important. You look out for victims. You make sure that the little guy gets what they're due.

I haven't had, like, a recent conversion simply to oppose Bill 47. I've not been somebody who thought that, you know, public no-fault insurance is the right way to go, and because that's now being delivered by a UCP government: that's not why I'm opposed to no-fault insurance, privately delivered. Oh, no. I'm opposed because I believe that if we are lowering insurance premiums on the backs of injured and vulnerable people, we need an authentic societal conversation about that. We need to be clear that that's what we are doing.

Regardless of what the Minister of Finance has said, that this is the richest benefit suite of any auto insurance program in Canada, which, if it's true, means the premiums won't go down, the fact is that a rich benefit suite on paper that people cannot access because they can't hire somebody who has only their best interests at heart does not actually exist.

I want to tell all of my lawyer friends that I know this is tough for your businesses, but I know that you're also thinking about all the people that you won't be able to help anymore. I want to tell you at least that I'm on your side here because what you do is important and valuable and creates value for society.

Insurance companies also create value for society. They spread risk. That's why we need a proper insurance regulatory scheme and proper insurance regulatory system that makes sure that everybody in this very complex system performs their role.

I understand that there are costs that are embedded in the system that could come out. I don't understand, though, why this government couldn't try doing some minimal stuff. Let's look at hail damage. Let's look at other forms of just some moderate changes that all insurance stakeholders have been in agreement on over the last two years and bring those in, and then try that out, and then see if that works. Instead, what has happened with six years of UCP government is failure after failure after failure.

The minister has said correctly that you can't keep caps on forever. That is true. Yet at the same time, this is a government that took the caps off, watched premiums skyrocket, and did nothing for six years. So here we are. We're in a mess of this government's making, and what they have chosen to do is the same thing that they chose to do on health care, which is blow everything up. Blow it all up and let God sort it out. The people of Alberta are going to face the consequences of, frankly, some very lazy decision-making by this government both in health care and in insurance.

How are the people of Alberta going to know that this is working or not? One thing that they can point to is: are your premiums actually going down? We'll ask that in a year or two. Have the premiums actually gone down? We'll see if the government has lower premiums or if they have excuses. Will people be able to actually get the treatment that they need and that they deserve?

What I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that I really, really wish that the government had taken the fulsome consultation that they had done, that they had talked to victims more. I wish that they had actually put together a good piece of legislation that could help people lower their insurance costs while still maintaining their ability to have benefits if somebody does something wrong to them. This isn't it. This is the worst of all possible worlds, where people don't get benefits and insurance costs keep going up.

Mr. Speaker, I can't support it.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this bill with a little bit of frustration only in the sense that we haven't had a lot of time to really get into the bones of where the government is planning to go with this. I would say that in a typical way the government hasn't done a great job on communicating this out to Albertans, consulting with Albertans, and trying to figure out what it is that this is actually going to look like.

When we hear the government say that, well, there'll be a suite of services . . .

Mr. Shepherd: Sweet?

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Sweet. A suite of sweets. A suite of services. I did not misuse my name this time, I must say.

. . . that offer hasn't really been put out. I don't see in all of the changes that the government has made a clear direction as to how these programs and services are going to be better than what Albertans get now and how it's going to minimize people having to have to still go through some form of a court process to be able to actually get the reimbursement in the services that they want.

I mean, they say in the bill that that's what's supposed to happen. They say it happens in other jurisdictions, and I appreciate that, but in other jurisdictions where it happens, it's a public system, not a private system. The only person insuring the individuals is the government, so you don't have to fight with anybody else and you don't have to negotiate with anybody else for benefits because it's the public holder that is providing the insurance company. If it's in B.C., then it's ICBC. If it's in Manitoba, you know, it's the government of Manitoba. That removes a significant complication that exists in Alberta in being able to provide this type of model.

I don't hear from the government the agreement that has happened with providers around how this negotiation is going to go forward in a timely manner that is not going to impact the quality of life for Albertans that may need these services if they are in an accident. That is what bothers me the most.

I do think that there is some weird language in here as well, in the bill, where you see the government using language like "not likely to contribute to the further functional improvement of the insured." "Not likely" is a very vague and open to interpretation statement. It is a weird one to have in legislation. Usually it's "you shall" or "you must." "Not likely" is not normally the term that we legislate with, so it seems like it's creating an opportunity for some loopholes or some interpretation to allow an erosion, I guess, of services over a period of time.

11:50

I'm still not sure I totally buy how it's going to reduce insurance rates. My worry is that it will actually inflate services for those people who have been impacted by having to access supports whether they be the person that didn't cause the accident, but they are the one that has to receive some sort of benefit. I don't see where the protection is that says that this isn't going to impact on their side. You've taken out the fault, so it does open up an opportunity, and the government really hasn't responded to that piece around the protection of the other individuals and what that means. I do think, as well, that I just don't think it's going to do what the government thinks it's going to do.

It's also kind of an interesting definition in section 57, that requires a claimant to undergo medical exams when and as often as the insurer reasonably requires. I guess my question is: is this going to be under regulation about what would be reasonable?

I mean, I can speak to – before I was elected, I was in a pretty serious car accident, and it wasn't my fault. I was bedridden for

almost six months because of it. I didn't have to continuously keep going back to get more documentation. I had my initial assessment. My assessment was pretty clear. I had to go to physio. I had to do some other rehabilitation stuff. I did all of it. I couldn't get out of bed. It was not great. But after the initial assessment was done, as long as I was following through on my treatment plan, the insurance company was satisfied with that because they knew that – they were probably getting updates from the providers, which is fine, because they were providing billing and there was some communication happening there. But there was no requirement to undergo further medical examinations. Eventually the decision was made that I no longer needed treatment. My medical team decided that, and away we went. I mean, I got better, and things happened.

I'm not sure why this is in here outside of a traditional practice. Like, why are we saying that this piece has to be put back in here and expanded, that it's when and as often as the insurer reasonably requires? What is reasonable? What is the definition of reasonable? Will this be under the regulation to say that it's expected once and then reasonable would be three months later, or reasonable would be if the individual does not follow through on medical advice? What are we determining is reasonable?

You could easily have someone, a company say: "Well, your one doctor said this. We don't agree. We want you to go to another doctor and get another opinion." Then you have countering opinions, and all of a sudden they say: well, now we want you to go to another doctor because now you've got two different opinions, and we need to figure out which one is right. You're sending someone repeatedly to go get reassessed because the insurance company is trying to find a way to not have to provide the basic benefits, yet you've got someone who could potentially be in serious pain and unable to drive or access or be able to get to those appointments.

The language in here is odd. I would be curious to hear from the minister what the insurance company's rationale is, because apparently consultation happened on this, for using this language and then why the government chose to build it into the legislation the way that it is. It's very vague.

Now, my colleague did mention, too, that he'll be curious in a year and a year and a half from now whether or not we see an impact or a reduction in insurance costs. I would be, too. My hope is that we're not going to see the government decide that it's not FOIPable or that now all of a sudden the regulation has been changed and this information doesn't have to be publicly disclosed and, in fact, the insurance company owns it; therefore, the government can't publicly let individuals know because, in fact, it actually hasn't worked.

I'm going to leave it there. Again, I do believe we need some reassurance from this government. We keep debating bills, and it just keeps going back to transparency and trust for me. At this point I don't trust a word that's coming out from the government to be able to tell Albertans what's actually happening, and I think that their legislation just continuously keeps coming forward with a lot of unknown answers and not a lot of communication with Albertans. I have a hard time understanding why we are where we are with this and also what the reporting mechanism is going to be by the government so that in a year from now my hon. colleague's questions around transparency and if it worked will be answered.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 47, the Automobile Insurance Act. This act introduces privately delivered no-fault auto insurance to Alberta. As my colleague from

Calgary-Elbow stated earlier, this bill is the worst of all worlds, and I couldn't agree more.

In Alberta basic automobile insurance is required by law, and this is a good thing. To be clear, the purpose of insurance is to provide financial security against unexpected losses, helping individuals and businesses manage risks that could be otherwise financially devastating. By paying regular premiums, policyholders transfer the burden of large and unpredictable expenses to an insurer in exchange for coverage when needed.

We all know that Albertans are already paying some of the highest auto insurance premiums in the country in the country – in the country – on top of the fastest rising rent, highest inflation, and the fastest growing unemployment rate. Since rates are so variable from driver to driver and vehicle to vehicle, it's difficult to get reliable and meaningful numbers on province-wide averages.

Over the past five years prices have risen by double digits for almost all goods that power our daily lives, and in that time shelter costs and food costs in Alberta have risen by 26 per cent. Rent, utilities, tuition, groceries, insurance have all skyrocketed in the past six years, since 2019, under this UCP government, and the harsh reality is that these inflationary increases are here to stay. Everywhere you look, it's getting more expensive to live, to work, and to raise a family here in Alberta.

12:00

Instead of addressing the affordability crisis and giving Albertans the relief they so desperately need, this UCP government is making life more expensive by allowing auto insurance rates to rise by 15 per cent over two years. Rather than stepping up and finding ways to give people real financial relief, the UCP is letting insurance rates climb even higher exactly at a time when Albertans can least afford it. Currently, rate increases for good drivers are capped at 3.7 per cent. The UCP wants to raise this to 7.5 per cent, effectively doubling the allowable rate increase.

Ultimately, insurance should protect Albertans, especially those who get into accidents, providing the support they need and when they need it most. Young drivers and families with kids that drive are among those who pay the highest premiums. Among all the provinces Alberta tops the list as the most expensive place for car insurance premiums, having increased by \$300 since 2015. There was a time some years ago when Alberta decreed that they would have a limit to car insurance rate hikes of up to only 5 per cent a year, but this was removed in 2019 when the UCP became government.

Following the removal of the cap, insurance premiums skyrocketed, and in January 2023 the UCP enacted a rate pause. In November 2023 the UCP announced an end to the rate pause and, instead, shifted to a good-driver rate cap as a short-term solution, and at the same time they commissioned a study exploring scenarios for long-term reforms to the auto insurance system, which was released in April of 2024.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this UCP government sure talks a good game on affordability. Meanwhile Alberta is becoming harder and harder to live in and much, much more unaffordable. Families are feeling squeezed from every direction, struggling just to manage the basics of day-to-day living. In addition to families and young folks already feeling the affordability squeeze, Alberta's auto insurance rates continue to fluctuate between the highest and second-highest in the country. For many driver profiles Calgary and Edmonton are the two most expensive cities in the country.

Alberta's current insurance system offers modest compensation for medical expenses, wage loss replacement, death, grief counselling, funeral benefits under section B of a driver's motor vehicle insurance policy, and this compensation is limited, but Bill

47 changes all of this through its care-first model, which would remove the ability for motorists to sue at-fault drivers.

In contrast to public no-fault systems across Western Canada, Alberta's new no-fault system would be privately delivered by insurance companies. This is relatively uncharted territory, which leads me to think: has this government fully and thoroughly thought about the real impacts of this legislation to Albertans and at a time when they're the most vulnerable? Will this actually become more affordable in the long-run? My colleagues this evening have spoken about that, and that is of great concern to me.

My questions for this government are: how will the UCP strike a balance between keeping costs down while still ensuring Albertans have adequate protections? And how will we know whether these changes are really working for Albertans? Would it be a predetermined system that runs by for-profit insurance companies as opposed to the government? As we've seen with so many of the bills brought forward by this government, the UCP is short-sighted and willing to put Albertans last in many of the decisions they make.

Mr. Speaker, of all the options available the UCP has taken the worst possible route. Albertans will pay more in premiums only to receive fewer consumer protections and lose their rights to challenge insurance companies in court. The UCP has given insurance companies the green light to jack up our rates for the next two years and then rip away our long-standing consumer protections in 2027. Bill 47 locks Albertans into a system where insurers call the shots, and it seems that the UCP has really thrown out the baby with the bathwater here. How does this government stand knowing all of this with this bill?

Mr. Speaker, Albertans want a government focused on them and tackling the real challenges they're facing, and time and time again we see this government leaving Albertans behind. Albertans don't need more cuts, chaos, and corruption from this UCP government. If affordability really does matter to this government, they wouldn't be pushing Bill 47 through.

Albertans deserve better than this, and better is possible. They deserve a competent, ethical government. Albertans deserve a judicious government that actually cares about needs when people are most vulnerable. It's deeply frustrating to see bill after bill like Bill 47 being pushed through and not being focused on being fair and accessible and designed to protect people over corporate interests.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 47, the Automobile Insurance Act. I agree with my colleagues who have spoken before me that this is one of the worst bills. I wouldn't say that it's the worst bill. I would rank Bill 55 as the worst bill. Nonetheless, I will speak to this one today.

If we had a health system that met the needs of Albertans, we wouldn't need to come up with bad insurance legislation and market the legislation as a way to get health care. If a person that is injured in a motor vehicle collision could get access to management of their concussion and the person who became a paraplegic could count on the rehabilitation and the personal care that they need, we wouldn't need to market a bad insurance system as a way for people to get medical care.

Now, that said, I would really like to know how this care is actually going to be offered. Are we going to create another silo within our fractured health care system where those who declare that the injury resulted from a motor vehicle collision can go to a different lineup?

This kind of happens right now with the Workers' Compensation Board. I know as a physician you could do work directly for the Workers' Compensation Board that was often done beyond the hours of usual work and paid better than the regular public system. Now, of course, we want workers to get back to work quickly, but we want workers needing care for any reason to also get the care they need, so will this bill work out a way that people injured in a collision are going to get their care separately, or will the people that are injured get their care through the same limited access that other Albertans are desperately struggling with?

12:10

There are a lot of costs that come with a disability. Just getting through the day can require help to get out of bed, help to get dressed, help to brush your teeth, to wash, to use the toilet, preparing meals, eating, and now that's only to breakfast time. What about child care, getting children up and ready for school or daycare, and then getting them to and from school and other activities? If the need for these services is due to someone else's error or negligence, will the injured person actually receive the funding needed for these new required services? With this new legislation, which removes the right of those harmed to sue for their losses, this is probably not going to be possible. It's going to be too bad, so sad, very unfortunate what happened to you.

Every Albertan needs to be protected by their insurance. Several years ago I had the pleasure of caring for a young man that had been injured in a motor vehicle accident and had become a paraplegic from that. Not only did he suffer from loss of income, but the care that he needed was well beyond anything that would have been provided through our health care system. It was through a lawsuit that he was able to claim the benefits that covered his damages. Every person needs the protection and the ability to sue for what they are going to need.

Automobile insurance rates are high in Alberta, but they're going to get higher over the next two years, and yet we are losing our basic right to recover the losses that can be removed due to the actions of others. While there are times that we do need to invest a little bit upfront for future savings, in this case we're being asked to trust this government, this government that is bringing in a totally experimental auto insurance system, and this government that says that this will solve the cost to these people in the future. We have seen that we're not even getting competent implementation of other parts of our system, including health care. Look at the experiment that happened with our public labs and what the whole DynaLife experiment is costing us. In this case, the experiment is going to be largely borne by individuals rather than balancing that cost across the whole health care system. Albertans are not getting better health care because of these experiments, and I do not expect they're going to be getting better safety from their insurance.

A major concern with the plans of this government is that the insurance companies themselves will decide what they pay out. That in itself is a problem, but this program will have set amounts paid for certain injuries. But people are not average. People really are never the average. Most might not need child care coverage, but others will need different aspects of care. Losing a hand is different for a person that's a plumber or a housekeeper than it would be for me. But, wait; insurance companies can also offer packages where the payouts are higher. Okay, so all of those savings are going to be gone because if you want to be adequately protected now you can pay a higher rate so that when someone else injures you you get more coverage. I just cannot see that this bill is going to protect Albertans, and I simply cannot support it. We need the ability to be able to stand up for what our rights are to recover the costs of injury to us by people that are at fault. We should not be depending on a

system where the person who pays out that cost for your injury is the one that decides how bad it is and how much you're actually going to receive.

With that, I will close my discussions on this bill, but I hope that this government will consider all of these concerns and truly look at what the costs are to individuals in this new system.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 47 and talk about some of my concerns and worries about the passage of this particular bill. We are told that this bill – and we've been told just this evening – will reduce premiums for Alberta. Certainly, all of us, I'm sure, on both sides of the House could agree that right now automobile insurance rates are too high. We also know from some recent statistics that just a couple of years ago Alberta had the second-highest rates in the country. In 2022, as one example, the average annual auto insurance premium here in this lovely province of ours was \$1,587. What we also know is that in 2023 that amount of money had actually risen to \$1,669, and I'm sure that in the intervening couple of years between 2023 and in 2025 it's gone up commensurately as well.

We also need to understand, Mr. Speaker, that that's an average. We know that there are people who will do things like – and this is what my colleague from Calgary-Varsity was alluding to. There are some people who will only be able to afford just the very basic of personal liability insurance, that bare minimum that they are required to hold, while there are others, as well, who will take that personal liability insurance and perhaps raise it to \$2 million, \$3 million, or \$4 million or more, depending upon their needs for their work perhaps, and in addition perhaps have a whole lot of comprehensive insurance. So that average might be a little bit misleading. Nonetheless, I'm going to use that average to sort of bring things down a wee bit.

That \$1,669 per year works out to about \$139 a month, Mr. Speaker. That monthly charge, for instance, could equate to a year's worth of field trip fees for an elementary school student. It could be how much one textbook costs for a student, say, in the department of education at Concordia University. It could be the monthly bus charge that a person who takes Edmonton or Calgary transit might be looking at. It could be that that yearly cost could equate to how much you're paying in rent every single month for your two-bedroom apartment in either Edmonton or Calgary. What that means is that's actually a substantial amount of money. It's not an inconsequential amount of money.

We also know that for many folks, particularly those who are new drivers or who might be disadvantaged or who have more than one vehicle, the total cost can be much higher.

Now, the yearly cost for auto insurance in Canada a couple of years ago, we also know, ran the gamut, and that's because other provinces have got different systems of auto insurance, a few of which, of course, we've already heard about, having a public system. Certainly, those provinces which are our neighbours, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, are routinely hundreds of dollars less than we are.

12:20

Putting aside for the moment the reality that this government, in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, has seen fit to allow a 7.5 per cent increase in this year and the next as we wait for all the regulations to come, as we wait for further consultation, as we wait for provisions and processes to be set up, that means that Albertans are looking at a 15 per cent increase over the next couple of years in terms of what's already an extraordinarily expensive piece of a

required suite – I'll use my colleague's "suite of services" – that they simply must have if they're interested in driving in this province. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't sound like a government that's truly interested in making life really affordable, particularly for everyday Albertans.

You know, we've heard talk over the last couple of weeks that the bill has been beside us that folks are worried about the time it will likely take for regulations to come. Folks are worried about the length of time it might take to make sure that all the different formal processes are followed. Folks are worried about: will Albertans actually see a real reduction in their premiums? When you consider what inflation may or may not do, particularly in the face of the tariffs that we're going to be faced with, when you consider that we are indeed looking at, at the very least, a 15 per cent increase for every Albertan, I'm thinking probably not. I know that we've heard folks on the other side talk about, "Oh, everyone should see a \$400 reduction right off the top in a couple of years, when everything comes into fruition," but honestly, I'm not quite as confident about that.

Albertans are faced with a bill that doesn't do anything to address affordability. It would have been lovely to have been presented instead with a bill that truly protects Albertans, particularly when they need that protection the most and when they are at their most vulnerable.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think about a time all those years ago, too many years ago to count, when I was a single mom of two kids in elementary school. Of course, for anyone who's had children or people that they love who are little people who need to be ferried back and forth a car is an absolute essential in your life. However, if you're a single mom and you're going to school at the same time, the quality of the car probably is a wee bit suspect. In the 10 years that I was ferrying my kids back and forth to all sorts of things, I had a 20-year-old Mazda, a Dodge Ram truck, and a \$1,000 beater special. It was my Chevy Corsic. It was a Corsic and not a Corsica because when I bought it, it had lost the "a." None of them were worth much; however, they were all that I could afford. They were all that I could afford. I was really proud of each one of them. Also proud of learning how to drive stick. That was good, too, although I hated going up and down hills. That was the worst.

However, all that aside, because I was a new driver – I didn't get my licence until I was that mom of two elementary school kids – that meant that my insurance rates were amongst the highest. It didn't matter that I was a responsible human being of two kiddos. All that mattered was that I was a new driver within the system. I was moved over to Pafco, and my insurance rates, Mr. Speaker, at the time were, like, half of what my entire university tuition was for a year. It was an extraordinary amount of money. Extraordinary amount of money. Folks at the time even said, "It's okay; you know, you can just shop around," but shopping around is really hard to do when you're a student, when you've come out of a marriage, when you don't have good credit. It is really hard to shop around. You really don't have the opportunity that other folks have.

Insurance providers also, of course, consider age to be a significant indicator of risk. We know that younger drivers, particularly young male drivers who have less experience but also less likelihood to be given any sort of preferential rate – even though some of those rates will probably decrease, one hopes, as you become a better driver over time.

You know, for much of the folks in Alberta, regardless of what this bill purports to do, we know that the reality of those insurance costs will simply keep on rising higher and higher and higher. If we consider, for instance, a 17-year-old female driver with a class 5 licence, a graduated licence, here in Alberta, depending upon the nature of why she's driving, how long she's driving, how far she's

driving, if there's work involved and that sort of thing, the type of car she's driving, if she's driving a beater like my Chevy Corsic or if she's driving something a little bit nicer, she could be looking at anywhere perhaps of \$472 and \$846 per month. Again, \$846 per month is more than many folks spend on groceries, and that's if a No Frills is close to their home.

You know, again, thinking back to who I was all those years ago, that single mom of two young kids, a relatively new driver going to school using my beater of a car, I was one of those folks who only added public liability insurance because I couldn't afford anything else despite the fact that I knew that if I got into an accident, I wouldn't be able to replace my car. That was just the reality of my life at that time. But to know that each year for the next two years I can expect an additional 7.5 per cent on whatever my insurance is costing me now as a new driver, that's an awful lot of money. That's an awful lot to ask Albertans to bear, Mr. Speaker.

When we consider that the government's own report talked about switching to a public no-fault system like B.C. or Manitoba would save drivers somewhere between \$750 per year, now that I could have gotten excited about as a single mom all those years ago. It would have been real action that truly addressed what folks like my younger self were going through, and that sort of amount of money over the course of a year, over the course of a month would make a real, tangible difference. That amount of money could have paid for summer camp. It could have paid for a really extraordinary field trip for my kids. I would have thought that a government that's becoming ever more comfortable with setting up a Crown corporation and five new pillars would have been comfortable with perhaps considering for just a moment that public insurance might have been the way to go.

Now, certainly, I do have other concerns, but at the moment I don't want to take the time of other folks who I know are interested in contributing to debate, so I will end there.

The Speaker: I think we're going to hear from Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. That's right, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I'm happy to join debate in third reading on Bill 47, the Automobile Insurance Act. Certainly, I've appreciated listening to all of my colleagues who have already spoken on this issue. I'm just going to remind folks in the House a little bit about what it was like when the NDP was government. When we were government, we wanted to protect Albertans and make sure that they didn't pay, you know, super high premiums, so we did cap insurance rates in our government. In 2019 the insurance industry made \$5.4 billion in profits, and that was with the cap in place. Overall, maybe some insurance companies did better than others, but, I mean, that's still a pretty significant profit for that industry.

Of course, in 2019 the Kenney government was elected, the UCP, and they lifted the cap that we had put on because they thought that – I don't know – the insurance companies weren't making enough profit. Sure enough, in 2021 insurance companies made \$6.1 billion in profit. That was a significant increase. We have to decide who we're supporting. Are we supporting regular Albertans, or are we supporting large corporations to make billions of dollars in profit off the backs of regular Albertans? We know that insurance lobbyists, including Premier Kenney's former press secretary and now the CEO of the Insurance Bureau of Canada want to blame the cost of increasing fees on accident victims rather than look at insurance companies' significant profits. I'm just asking the House to actually consider that.

Now, things have changed again under the UCP. They wanted to put in the good-driver rate cap because things were out of control.

Let's face it. People were paying some of the highest premiums, sometimes the top in the country and sometimes maybe second to the top. In jurisdictions across Canada many pay significantly less, hundreds and hundreds of dollars on an annual basis less than we do here in Alberta. The UCP saw this and they thought: okay; well, maybe we'd better put a cap on again because it's kind of out of control. The insurance companies certainly are taking advantage and creating even more profits for themselves. They had a good-driver rate cap. That was in 2024. Rates could be increased for the good drivers by 3.7 per cent. Then in January 2025 up again, 7.5 per cent, and it's slated to go up again in January 2026 by another 7.5 per cent. Between 2019 and 2024 it's estimated that rates have gone up about 35 per cent for Albertans, so that's huge.

12:30

You know, the UCP government is doing this at a time when many Albertans are struggling to make ends meet. We know that the high cost of groceries, utilities, housing is burdening some families, and in some cases families are overwhelmed and they aren't able to provide for the necessities of life for their families.

There is a better way, Mr. Speaker, than what the UCP is choosing to do, but this is what we're debating now, Bill 47. Really, I mean, the minister himself, when he brought this forward, didn't even say that it would necessarily reduce the rates or it may in time, but, I mean, isn't that one of the fundamental things that's at play here, that it's really important that rates be curtailed because they're out of control in our province?

You know, people in other jurisdictions pay hundreds of dollars less. It's really a no-fault private system. Really, nowhere else in our country are we doing this. There are no-fault public systems, and those actually are operating quite well in the west, out here in the provinces of B.C., Saskatchewan. They have no-fault systems, and people pay hundreds of dollars less and get the coverage they need.

But this is kind of untested, this private system. The thing about the no-fault public system is it takes the profit motive out of it whereas a private system, guess what? We're in it for the profits. It does create sort of an unknown situation. We don't really know what's going to happen, and I certainly hope for the benefit of Albertans that it doesn't, you know, create a significant increase in their premiums.

I'm not assured by what this bill says that that will be considered or that Albertans will be supported to have reasonable fees for insurance rates. It's kind of a weak promise that the UCP is giving us that rates may go down in time, but, you know, we really don't know. It's a pretty untested system.

We know that the majority of the claims will be settled without going to court. Currently, of course, we do have a tort system, where claims for service injuries are litigated in court, but the only time with this bill that the injured may sue is when the at-fault driver is convicted of a serious driving offence. Offences that qualify will be in the regulations. Of course, we don't have the regulations before us. We don't know what's in the regulations, so that's hidden from us. We wonder what that will hold.

Really, the bill removes the fundamental right of Albertans to hold at-fault drivers and insurance companies accountable in court. Like the Member for Calgary-Varsity so clearly articulated, when she was working with a patient who had become a paraplegic because of an injury, a catastrophic injury, that that was the only way he was going to get the supports he needed because with that kind of injury you need support to do everything. She identified that very clearly. He's entitled to that in a just system. That's very important that people be given support when they are injured in an accident that, you know, is not their fault and they need to be supported to live with dignity.

This bill will take away that fundamental right and that certainly is a significant concern. Jackie Halpern, the spokesperson for the Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association says that Bill 47 will ultimately strip Albertans of their rights, reduce accountability for dangerous drivers, and leave injured Albertans with fewer protections and poorer outcomes. This is someone who works in the industry, who understands what's happening there. I mean, that should be a big concern.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 70 agreed to earlier this evening, one hour of debate has now been completed, and I am required to put to the Assembly all necessary questions to dispose of Bill 47, Automobile Insurance Act, at third reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:35 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

12:40

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Batten	Hoffman	Shepherd
Boparai	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Calahoo Stonehouse	Irwin	Sweet
Eremenko	Kayande	Wright, P.
Totals:	For – 42	Against – 15

[Motion carried; Bill 47 read a third time]

Bill 50 Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (continued)

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 75, agreed to earlier this evening, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, in third reading.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 50, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act. Now, the hon. interim Minister for Municipal

Affairs rose several moments ago and spoke a bit, moving third reading of Bill 50. He said Bill 50 is intended to make government work better for Albertans. He said it's about creating fair elections, increasing fairness and accountability. It's laughable. Everything we see this government doing in regard to elections in this session, whether it's Bill 50 or Bill 54, is quite the opposite. It's about tilting the scale in elections. It's about reducing transparency and accountability. It is about reducing fairness.

Take a look at Bill 50 here. One of the pieces that they are doing in terms of elections is in regard to election finance changes. Now, of course, last year with Bill 20 this government introduced a number of changes to how municipal elections will operate this fall. One of those was imposing political parties on our municipal elections, something which definitively the survey that was conducted by the former Minister of Municipal Affairs said Albertans decidedly did not want, but, of course, this government isn't one to actually listen to Albertans. This government is about doing what it wants for its political ends and its political advantage, so they forced municipal parties on.

In Bill 50 they are making an additional change now to allow parties in municipal elections to transfer funds and donations amongst their candidates. Now, what this effectively does, Mr. Speaker, is it means that if you run as a candidate with a municipal party, you get to double-dip. You can use twice as much money as your opponents. You can use the party to raise additional money and transfer that over to the candidates, that an independent candidate does not have the ability to do. So not only is this government imposing its opinion of how it thinks municipal elections should run by forcing them to have political parties, when the vast majority of Albertans said they do not support that; they are now tilting the scale to advantage candidates for those political parties.

Now, the government, of course, has got the lovely bit of subterfuge hand-waving to try to explain this away. They say, well, really, Mr. Speaker, that this is just about aligning municipal political party finance rules with the rules at the provincial level. Well, here's the thing: political parties at the provincial level are the norm, have been for a while, and the fact is there are limits involved in that. It does not advantage any individual candidate within the provincial elections race because, again, it is dominated by political parties, and that has been the way it is. It is independent candidates that are the exception to the rule.

At the municipal level we know this is precisely opposite. Now, this is something that this government has decided it doesn't like so it's forcibly changing, despite the fact that most Albertans said quite clearly they do not want that level of partisanship in their local municipal elections, but this government does because they're hoping to get people that are more favourable to their agenda. They're frustrated that despite their multiple attempts on the part of themselves as individuals and certainly their friends and their supporters to try to elect more conservative mayors in Calgary and Edmonton, they have repeatedly failed. So they're putting their thumb on the scale to try to change that. As part of Bill 50 now they are ensuring that these municipal parties that they are forcing into the race in order to pursue their political objectives are going to have a financial advantage over the individual independent candidates that Albertans have told this government they actually prefer.

Again, that's the arrogance of this government that thinks they know better than Albertans, that they should have the ability to dictate to Albertans how things should go rather than listening to Albertans as the service that they are supposed to be doing on behalf of Albertans. That is what is at the heart of Bill 50, Mr. Speaker.

That is certainly not increasing fairness and accountability. That is certainly not making government work better for Albertans. That certainly is not going to lead to fairer elections. It is going to do quite the opposite.

Now, another provision here within Bill 50 is in regard to municipal codes of conduct. Now, I spoke earlier on Bill 49, Mr. Speaker. I recognize we're speaking here to Bill 50, but just to give some context: when I spoke about Bill 49, I talked about an extensive analysis that was put out by Rural Municipalities of Alberta analyzing Bill 49. You know, there is a repeated phrase that kept coming up as part of that, and it's something that is echoed here in the RMA's discussion of this particular clause here in Bill 50: "RMA is currently seeking further clarification from government on the reasoning behind this decision." That was a repeated phrase in their analysis of Bill 49, too.

The reason for that is because this government doesn't actually consult with Albertans. It says they consult, by which they mean they ran a heavily loaded survey or they sat down at a table and told somebody what they intend to do, not that they actually sat down and listened. When you have an organization like Rural Municipalities of Alberta that represents all of rural municipal leadership in the province and they continually have to say, "We are still waiting to find out why the government is deciding to do this," then that suggests the government did not bother to explain, did not feel that they had to step down from their high horse to deign to give a reason to those lowly municipal leaders over there. They aren't deserving of their attention; they aren't deserving of their consideration despite the fact that they, too, are elected on behalf of Albertans to serve them.

Yet on things like this, which significantly impact their ability to do their work, the fact that we had multiple municipal councils who were in the process of creating codes of conduct because they were required to do so by this government when this government brought in Bill 50, telling them they immediately had to stop, down tools, and they would not be allowed now to have codes of conduct – they were shocked. They were caught off guard because, again, this government didn't actually talk to them before bringing this legislation. That is the definition, Mr. Speaker, of arrogance on behalf of this government. That is the definition of entitlement, the idea that you don't have to bother to talk to the people that you are changing things that it's going to impact what they do. That is a repeated pattern we see from this government over and over and over again.

Now, they may feel, as they are riding high on a few political polls, Mr. Speaker, that that entitles them to be that arrogant, that that entitles them to disregard the opinions of Albertans because, hey, no one notices. The fact is that we are hearing clearly from Albertans, from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta that they are deeply concerned about many a number of things, including this section of Bill 50. So they are in the process of seeking further clarification from the government, clarification which I'm guessing is not going to be forthcoming.

For example, as I said on Bill 49, they've been seeking further clarification from the minister for over a year. Since he introduced Bill 11 last year, they got none. Instead, they got the next piece of legislation, which they now have to seek further clarification about. They are looking for that clarification on the reasoning behind this decision, again, this government acting arbitrarily, reversing its decision from just a year ago, without providing any reason or justification, no consultation, and they're trying to figure out how now are they actually going to handle these situations where they have these issues, these conflicts on municipal councils where they have conduct issues.

12:50

We know there have been real and genuine issues. We look at the example of Councillor Sean Chu in Calgary, who I think many in Calgary are grateful will be exiting the municipal scene in the next election, having expressed a number of concerns about his behaviour that didn't come out until after the advance vote had actually occurred. Should there be another situation like that with another councillor like Mr. Chu, currently this government is leaving councils in limbo with no tools to address. Now, there may be a provincial-level code of conduct coming, but we don't know because, again, this government doesn't provide details.

It's only a couple of pieces, but those are enough for me, Mr. Speaker, to be able to say I cannot vote in support of Bill 50. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 50 in third reading, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. This is another omnibus bill. Of course, an omnibus bill is a bill that amends more than one act of legislation, and there are four that are going to be amended by this bill when it passes: the Local Authorities Election Act, the Municipal Government Act, New Home Buyer Protection Act, and the Safety Codes Act. Those are the four things. Of course, it's a pretty common practice of the UCP to present omnibus bills in legislation. I know that certainly when we were government, when the NDP was government, if we had presented as many omnibus bills as the UCP has, there would have been a lot of complaints. I know that we did split some bills because there was concern about that, but it's just practice now. It's just how things are done when the UCP are government. So here we are.

This bill, of course, because it is an omnibus bill, does several things, but perhaps the most egregious aspect of it is the elimination of municipal codes of conduct, and it prevents councils from passing bylaws that relate to councillor behaviour. It terminates all current code of conduct complaints and sections against councillors as these codes won't be recognized anymore. Of course, this is troubling. I think that it's very important, you know, in any kind of work that you do, you are accountable. There sometimes can be bad actors and they're doing things that are not in the best interests of certainly their constituents, for Albertans in general, so it is important that we have transparent codes of conduct that we follow, and I think that this is deeply concerning. I would say that I have my doubts also, that the UCP perhaps will understand, when they are creating – like, now it's the provincial government, I understand, that will be sort of doing some kind of global code of conduct that they create.

You know, there are a lot of acts of unethical behaviour by this current government, so if they're the writers of these new codes of conduct, I have some significant concerns. We certainly know that there are many examples of a lack of understanding of ethical behaviour by the UCP government, conflicts of interests, and certainly the Ethics Commissioner already has found the Premier in breach of the code, conflicts of interest, when she asked the Minister of Justice to intervene in the case of Artur Pawlowski regarding the Coutts border blockade. So if the UCP is going to be writing these codes of conduct, I really am deeply concerned about that. I feel like there's some lack of clarity, lack of awareness about what is ethical conduct and what isn't.

Another example of that is when the UCP, shortly after they became government in 2019, appointed Janice Harrington as the Health Advocate of Alberta. She was the CEO of the party, of the

partisan political party. She has no experience, no understanding of health or seniors' issues. I mean, they fired the Seniors Advocate, eliminated that whole office despite the promises of the minister at that time, Josephine Pon, that of course it would all be taken care of. Nothing was done, and seniors' concerns were disregarded significantly in our province. To appoint someone partisan like that in that position, like, that's unethical, in my view. If a government is going to be writing these codes of conduct, then I would hope that they would have a better understanding of ethics to know that that's inappropriate, to appoint someone like that.

Of course, you know, I have many examples because we seem to have so many opportunities to see the UCP doing unethical things. Another thing was that the UCP fired the Election Commissioner, Lorne Gibson, while he was investigating illegal donations in the 2017 UCP leadership contest. I don't know. That seems kind of wrong, and that's another unethical thing.

More recently, if we do it now under our current Premier's watch, the CEO of AHS and the entire board were fired when they were investigating bloated private surgical contracts. We call it now the corrupt care scandal. Instead of actually dealing with the issue, you know, people are just fired.

You know, another aspect of the corrupt care scandal is that the Minister of Justice's relative has benefited from government contracts and the minister has not recused himself from discussion or decision-making in those matters, which is another unethical thing.

If the UCP is planning to actually do codes of conduct for municipalities across Alberta, I certainly want them to do it in an ethical matter. Their own behaviour for the several years that they've been government has indicated time and time again they don't seem to understand that. They don't see what a conflict of interest is. Like, the Premier – I don't know. Is it naïveté or cavalier disregard and thinking that they're entitled and that they don't need to follow the rules that the rest of us do?

I mean, you know, the Premier actually interfering with a court case, asking the Minister of Justice to intervene – please – that is flagrantly being unethical. Then just today in question period we learned that the Premier invited her husband to a confidential internal government discussion about a rail link, a multibillion-dollar project proposal. Super unethical. Like, it just screams it. Yet this government is saying: "No, no. Municipalities don't know what they're doing. We need to, you know, have the big arm of provincial government come in and tell them how to run things."

Even our current Speaker when he was minister said: well, some people might see this as paternalistic. Yeah. Imagine that. It is paternalistic. You know, sure. Sometimes governments can get into trouble and they need support and things like that, but it doesn't mean you just throw the baby out with the bathwater. That makes very little sense to me. [interjection] Yes. Of course. This is just an expression.

I just feel, you know, I don't have a lot of confidence, I guess is how I'd like to say it, in the current government and their ability to understand what ethics are and to be able to write these codes of conduct for the municipalities.

1:00

Certainly, I know that the Rural Municipalities association, too, has these same concerns that I do. They feel that it undercuts their autonomy, the autonomy of municipal governments to manage internal challenges, with damaging behaviour by elected officials. This bill does that. Alberta Municipalities are concerned about the transition period after the repeal of the codes of conduct bylaws, where municipalities will have no mechanism to encourage

accountability of council members in their behaviour towards other members of council, municipal staff, or the public, particularly outside of council meetings. It's going to be the no-man's-land. Our leader said it pretty well here. I think I'll just quote. This bill is an affront to local voters. It basically says to local voters: we don't trust you. It's the wild west out here. Municipal officials will be able to do anything they want, with no disclosure and no repercussions. I think most municipal officials will say that it is an extraordinary infringement on the rights of councils to be able to discipline their own members. End of quote.

Yeah, I concur. Absolutely. What are these municipalities going to do in the interim?

Do you want me to stop? Yes? Okay.

These are some things I'd like the UCP to consider. You know, I think they could all benefit from professional development training and ethics.

Thank you.

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

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to rise and speak a wee bit about my opposition to Bill 50, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. One of the things that I've believed for a while is sort of a fundamental cornerstone of democratic life in Alberta, the strength of local accountability. Of course, we have that through each of our municipalities. We've heard before about a flurry of things included in this and other bills, where things like legal housekeeping: "That's all this is. We don't have to worry; it's just housekeeping. That's why it's an omnibus bill. It's just housekeeping. We're just making things work; we're just making sure that one act works with another act."

But the fact of the matter is that this isn't just about legal housekeeping. This actually fundamentally changes some of the ways in which municipalities are going to be able to operate going forth. It fundamentally changes, alters the checks and balances that speak to how democracy is written in our province, how it works on that local level. It talks to its processes. Of course, every four years or so it's also about the front-facing work that all voters see. It strikes at the very systems that allow municipalities to govern themselves with integrity. It eliminates tools that communities depend upon to maintain trust in their local councils.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, and I know that we've heard this from many of my colleagues, Albertans did not ask for this bill, just like they didn't ask for the previous Bill 20. They didn't ask that electoral safeguards be dismantled. They didn't ask for additional political interference from on high. While one could, I suppose, see Bill 50 as a bit of a reaction to the chaos that was maybe created by Bill 20, there could have been more of an opportunity to correct and smooth out some of that chaos, those edges. Instead, this government has decided another way to proceed. As I know we, people tonight already have heard many times, this is indeed a pattern of this UCP government.

There does seem to be this running pattern through all of the bills that have been introduced during this session, a refusal to listen when local representatives, in particular, voice their concern or continue to ask for discussion, continue to ask for clarity, continue to ask for a depth of conversation about issues that they've highlighted. That has to do as much with Bill 20 as it does, Mr. Speaker, with Bill 50.

This is a government that, sadly, appears to simply want to wrest control from all the municipalities even though this is also a government that over and over and over has said expressly that it views municipalities as partners. But this is not how you act when

you actually consider someone or something a partner. This appears to be rather, Mr. Speaker, a government that demands rather than discusses, a government that controls rather than collaborates, a government that dictates rather than listens.

In response, Mr. Speaker, what that means is that in very real, tangible ways Bill 50 will affect the way city councils manage disputes, how municipal campaigns, including the one that we'll be having across the province in October are financed, how votes are cast and counted, but, more than that, how power is distributed between the province and its communities. These are some of the most fundamental mechanisms of a healthy democracy, and Bill 50 rewires them in a way that is, to be charitable, unhelpful.

As many of my colleagues have already noted, certainly one of the most egregious parts of this legislation is the wholesale repeal of municipal codes of conduct, and I say egregious because it really is. There are codes of conduct that are in force right now, and one of the things that I truly don't understand is to simply say: "Yeah. We're not going to have them anymore, but guess what? There's nothing else that we've created to replace them right now, which means there will be nothing for a period of months until, of course, we can get the new codes of conduct up and running, and we'll let you know when that would be." Like, that is not the way to run an organization, much less a municipality and much less a province, Mr. Speaker.

Under Bill 50 every single municipal code of conduct in Alberta will be voided. Every ongoing complaint against a councillor will be terminated. A system and a process that communities have relied upon to hold their own elected officials accountable will simply, Mr. Speaker, be dismantled. It doesn't suggest a reform, a fix, or, as I say, propose a new model. It just wipes the slate clean and says: "Okay. Done now." It's a reset without a plan and, certainly for at least the next number of months, no safeguards at all and no transitional support being offered.

This is, in my view, authoritarian because it strips those locally elected councils of the ability to govern their own affairs and disputes that they may have, which, of course, are some of the responsibilities that they were elected by their own constituents to carry out. It removes tools that prevent abuse and protect public servants, elected officials, and citizens, too.

What we've also heard over the course of debate, Mr. Speaker, is that for the most part the codes of conduct did the job that they were meant to do. We know that in Calgary the Integrity Commissioner reviewed serious complaints and then published findings. In Edmonton there was an independent office that was tasked with maintaining high standards of accountability. In Strathcona county and Lethbridge municipal staff relied on these codes to protect them from intimidation and harassment. These varied codes of conduct throughout municipalities in Alberta helped to address real incidents and real behaviours that needed an answer and a remedy. They did the job. In many instances they created a fair way forward.

Again, Mr. Speaker, municipalities did not advocate for the elimination of code of conduct bylaws. While of course there have been issues with a few of them, that's issues with a few. It's like if I was a teacher. For the most part, you know, teachers don't take the whole class of 20 – okay, well, for a few moments you might ask everyone to put their heads down. But then we're going to deal with the two or three that actually caused whatever the problem was. We are not, in effect, going to punish the entire class for something that one or two kids did. And that's what's going on here. It's whole-scale punishment. All the municipalities within Alberta are being punished because perhaps one or two had some issues or difficulty over the last couple of years.

Alberta Municipalities as well is concerned about the transition period after the repeal of code of conduct bylaws. They understand

the danger that lies when they have no mechanism to encourage accountability of council members in their behaviour, whether it be toward their colleagues, their fellow councillors, municipal staff, or the public, particularly outside of council meetings.

Alberta Munis themselves have asked a couple of questions. They ask: how does the province plan to support municipalities during this transition if there is indeed serious misconduct by a councillor or an unelected member of a council committee? They also note that despite the proposed addition of section 145(9) that prevents the council from making a bylaw or resolution that addresses the behaviour of councillors: is there an opportunity to remove council from the decision process and allow the municipality to hire an independent investigator?

1:10

Alberta Munis members are telling their organization that there could be a wide range of unintended consequences, and unintended consequences, Mr. Speaker, as we know, happen most often when there are gaps, when there isn't clarity in a situation. This shouldn't be. There should, at the very least, have been a standard code of conduct that simply could have been used in the interim, and I would hope that whatever that code of conduct ends up being, much like we've heard in other bills – I'm thinking of Bill 40 in my head right now, where there was indeed a promise within that bill, that when the codes of conduct with the different regulatory organizations were being developed, those organizations were, despite the fact there would be a standard template, actually going to be consulted. But this is not what's happened to the municipalities. One does have to wonder: why isn't it happening with municipalities if this government is allowing a very similar situation to happen and to collaborate with our postsecondary institutions?

I also did want to just get in a few words, Mr. Speaker, this evening about the fact that one of the remedies this bill does seek to fix is that issue of Bill 20 and the decision to ban voting tabulators, realizing, of course, that it was going to put some disabled Albertans at a disadvantage, so good on the government for doing that. However, I do think that there's a case to be made for voting tabulators generally.

Clearly, I'm not going to have time to make that case, so I'm going to wrap it up right now and will let one of my colleagues continue on.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Member Batten: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to join debate on Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. I want to commend my colleagues for some really great points already made this evening, and I want to share how I approached debate tonight, because, of course, with every bill there are a number of questions that we really need to ask ourselves. Why do we need this bill? Why now? Who's going to benefit, and who might it harm?

I took a look at prior debates that we've had in this House on Bill 50, and just from the very first reading: "committed to ensuring that Alberta's local governments are strong and collaborative and that their investments in new homes are protected." This was from our newly elected Speaker, the MLA for Calgary-Hays.

Now, that sounds great except for a few things. One, if we're taking a look at local governments, this bill removes the code of conduct. Now, it's very strange, because I think we could all agree that codes of conduct are very important as they guide kind of how the collective has agreed to move forward. This bill not only

removes the code of conduct for municipal councils, but it also permits the UCP government to step into the lane of local governments, which is, you know, kind of rich given that they accuse the federal government of doing the same.

Now, if we just think about the purpose of the code of conduct, you know, it provides those expectations for what a respectful, lawful workplace would look like. It provides guide rails to guide everyone so that you have a shared goal and you have different ways of getting there. So why would you not want to keep codes of conduct? You know, that's actually a really great question. I mean, "How better to get more power than to take it away from someone else?" is one idea, or, better yet, "Just trust us," says this UCP government. "We'll totes come up with something that sounds better later." Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough.

I realize the lateness of the hour, but Albertans didn't elect this UCP government to interfere with municipal affairs. That's not why they elected this government. That's not why they elect any government. Again, going back to why it matters if we remove a code of conduct, if you don't know the expectations, it's kind of hard to follow the rules. It's hard to maintain an environment where everyone is safe and everyone can participate.

Now, I've worked in a variety of workplaces over the years, all of which had very strong codes of conduct that would, you know, help guide me in understanding what that particular workplace demanded and expected of me. Now, can you imagine if this government decided to take away the code of conduct from registered nurses? Now, that's just simply ludicrous, and I think it would become maybe a little more obvious, hopefully, to this government how inappropriate this is. Yes, we could argue that the role of a registered nurse is a little bit different than the role of a local councilman or council person. However, they have direct impact on people's lives, so by pulling the code of conduct, by removing those guardrails, you're allowing for bad actors to enter into those spaces, bad actors like my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre had shared.

An Hon. Member: He's not a bad actor.

Member Batten: To be clear, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is not the bad actor.

An Hon. Member: Thanks for clarifying.

Member Batten: Yes, thanks. It's late – or early, however you want to see that.

Just to again double down on that it's not the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, in fact, one of the city councillors we have right now in Calgary was previously found guilty of sexual misconduct with a minor, a 16-year-old, while this person was a police officer. Codes of conduct exist so that when we have actors such as this, we can protect Albertans from them; we can create a respectful, safe environment. You remove them, Mr. Speaker, and what are you left with? By removing from local municipalities the ability to create bylaws, which, again, is part of this bill, it goes further. It doesn't just take away their code of conduct. No, no, no; it goes further than that. It says: "You know what? You're not able to sanction your people. No, no; the provincial government is going to take that over for you. There, there. You just sit in your corner." Super inappropriate and not what Albertans elected this government for.

You know, if we think about if there is poor behaviour, then what are the consequences? What happens? What are people supposed to do? Well, this bill shifts the ability, that power to the government, which is kind of an ongoing theme we've had this session – well, the entire session, actually – where we continuously see this

government undermine other levels of government. Now, this one is just way more blatant. By stepping out of their lane and into municipalities' – I'm sorry – the hypocrisy is just outstanding. Anyone who has spent time inside this House has heard this UCP government rally against the federal government, blaming them for everything that's gone wrong in this province in the last six years that they've been government because they're always looking for a scapegoat, Mr. Speaker.

Now, a very concerning part of this bill is that it terminates the complaints that are already on the book. Let's just walk through that for a minute. We have someone who feels that they have been poorly treated or has been in an environment with someone who is a bad actor. They bravely come forward to share their concern, to issue a complaint just to have it steamrolled by this UCP government whose job is to protect these very same Albertans. Mr. Speaker, this is ridiculous.

1:20

Further, it's like giving a get-out-jail-free card, Mr. Speaker, to bad actors. Recognizing that it's early morning and, you know, maybe we're all a little tired – I can say we're all a little tired – I'm struggling to move past this ridiculous bill. It's incredibly disrespectful to anyone who has ever had the guts to step up for what's right, and they're leaving it at the table. They're taking away the ability for municipalities to sanction bad actors, to create bylaws, to protect. It's just incredibly shameful.

Now, I will give some credit here for bringing back the voting tabulators. I will forever recognize when someone corrects an error, and in this case this was an error that was corrected. However, it shouldn't have needed to be corrected because this was a very clear, foreseeable consequence of their previous bill. This government asks Albertans to trust them; however, at every opportunity they do the wrong thing.

Now, in my last few seconds here I just want to remind everyone about Popsiclegate. Remember that, when the Ministry of Health put out some kind of communication to the health care workers? The health care workers followed that instruction, and it wasn't until Albertan parents stood up, loudly asking for this government to stop punishing their children – this government needs to think past step one. They need to be able to chew gum and walk and maybe talk all at the same time. It's not rocket science, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I will sit and let one of my colleagues continue. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Al-Guneid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to join the debate Bill 50, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. I really try to keep an open mind when we have bills that want to modernize or update governance laws. I really do. I think our modern way of living means that we need to modernize our laws. That is true. I do appreciate the spirit of modernizing laws and governance, and I really tried with Bill 50, but this is a tough one because of some troubling parts in it.

A constituent of mine in Calgary-Glenmore actually wrote us an e-mail, and I think he provides a great summary of this bill. His name is Mark, and Mark wrote to my office and describes himself as a taxpaying, blue-collar, working resident of Calgary-Glenmore. He specifically says, and I quote here:

This bill, while presented as a modernization of municipal governance, introduces changes that undermine local autonomy. Amendments to the Local Authorities Election Act and the Municipal Government Act can be seen as a move to centralize power. The changes to the New Home Buyer Protection Act, while seemingly minor, create a system where some homebuyers

will have less protections than others, creating an uneven playing field. The creation of an advisory board and the changes to owner-builder rules all provide the provincial government with greater control over municipal affairs, potentially diminishing the ability of local communities to self-govern.

End quote.

Mark also brings up the troubling cumulative effect of many of the bills that the UCP government brought this session. I've been talking, at every opportunity actually, about the power centralization and the insane amount of unchecked discretion that UCP ministers gain with these bills. Mark actually outlines this in his e-mail, and I thank him for paying attention. He describes the combined effect of bills 50, 51, 54. He says, quote:

Taken together, these bills represent a troubling trend. They shift power away from local communities and citizens and towards the provincial government and potentially wealthy interests. This centralization of power undermines the fundamental principles of democracy, which are based on citizen participation, local autonomy, and fair and transparent elections.

End quote. Thank you, Mark. This is exactly it, a troubling path towards power centralization and a power grab.

For me another troubling part in Bill 50 is in section 145(10) that eliminates the code of conduct bylaws and resolutions related to behaviours or conduct of municipal councillors or members. The Member for Calgary-Acadia has spent a lot of time there. I want to reinforce, really, that the question is: why? Why would the government eliminate the code of conduct? Any workplace should have at minimum a code of conduct. A code of conduct outlines what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. It gives elected officials a clear understanding of how they're expected to act toward fellow elected officials, the administration, and the public. This is not something new.

Last month, literally last month, we had this conversation on the codes of conduct in this House. Alberta's Special Standing Committee on Members' Services agreed to create a new subcommittee – and many of these members will know this – to examine potentially creating a code of conduct for this Assembly, something the former Speaker of the House has said is something many parliaments across Canada have and Alberta does not. I would like to quote the previous Speaker where he says, "I am of the opinion that our Assembly would be well served by discussing the possibility of a member-to-member workplace interaction policy."

In the standing committee members agreed that the new workplace policy review subcommittee would also be chaired by the Speaker and would include two members nominated by each of the government and opposition. I'd like to underscore here, Mr. Speaker, that this plan has drawn support from all members and from the Official Opposition specifically. We agree with the Speaker and with government members that we need a respectful and safe environment through establishing a code of conduct and rules on how to interact in this Assembly.

Why is it different for municipal leaders? Why is that any different? Municipal governments need to define standards for professionalism, ethics, and interpersonal behaviour to create a workplace that is respectful, inclusive, and safe for everyone. The code of conduct is important because it reduces conflicts and misconduct, harassment, discrimination, and unethical behaviour. It provides some sort of a base, a common agreement for addressing these issues if they arise.

We need these written rules, Mr. Speaker, to ensure everyone is treated equally and the decisions, especially disciplinary actions, are based on consistent standards, not personal biases or favouritism.

1:30

In short, a code of conduct is a foundational set of rules that help organizations like ours function with integrity and professionalism. As you know, we've all witnessed how the level of debate can decline really quickly in this House. I do believe that removing the codes of conduct in municipalities is problematic, especially when we know we need it in public institutions.

Now, I don't understand why the UCP doesn't do proper consultations, because if they did, they would have heard from both the Alberta Municipalities and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, RMA, who have expressed concerns on repealing the council codes of conduct and the lack of consultations on some of the provisions of this bill.

As the Premier likes to say, a quick Google search can help find the information you need, so guess what? I googled for her, and I found the information and feedback from RMA and the Alberta Municipalities, just for her. This is what they say, and I quote here. [interjection] If the member wants to continue heckling, he could listen maybe.

[Alberta Municipalities] did not advocate for the elimination of code of conduct bylaws.

On Google. You can google it right now.

We recognize there have been challenges with the implementation of codes, but in most cases, municipalities have used them appropriately. Both [Alberta Municipalities] and RMA had advocated for enhancements to the codes and that municipalities be supported by an independent integrity commissioner to investigate code of conduct complaints, which would prevent weaponization and support procedural fairness.

The removal of codes of conduct for councils undercuts the autonomy of municipal governments to manage internal challenges with damaging behaviour by elected officials. [Alberta Munis] is concerned about the transition period after the repeal of codes of conduct bylaws where municipalities will have no mechanism to encourage accountability of council members in their behaviour towards other members of council, municipal staff, or the public, particularly outside of council meetings.

This was a massive quote, but it was an important one.

RMA reminds the minister that they understand that the province is committed to replacing the code of conduct bylaws with a provincial standard for council meeting procedures and the possible creation of a municipal ethics commissioner.

Without a code of conduct they name a few challenges they would be facing. Like, when a councillor is unruly towards staff or other council members, it often takes place outside of council meetings, which we understand will not be captured by a new provincial standard for council meeting procedures. So that's another challenge right there for municipalities. Also, the timeline for creating a municipal ethics commissioner could be several years from now, and in the meantime councils will have no way to hold their own councillors or unelected committee members accountable for damaging behaviour or unruly behaviours in the council.

It's important, Mr. Speaker, to remind the members opposite that the former Minister of Municipal Affairs stated at his own town hall on April 16, 2025, that the government wants to repeal codes of conduct now because all court cases related to codes are now resolved, and if a new case were to come before the courts, it would prevent the province from proceeding to make changes or engaging on potential changes. The minister stated that he is committed to creating the municipal ethics commissioner as soon as possible. We now have an interim Minister of Municipal Affairs. This ethics commissioner might not come any time soon.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the members in the House that in Calgary, where I live, a local city councillor was sanctioned because

the city of Calgary actually has a code of conduct. This councillor was golfing during a council meeting and was also mocking an Indigenous person on audio recording. Are these behaviours acceptable by any member in this House? Does the Premier condone this behaviour? This is not acceptable. Municipal governments need a way to deal with these behaviours. It was effective that the city of Calgary has a code of conduct.

To conclude, I want to say that I spoke with a councillor today, and literally they told me that this government, and I quote here, always stands up for the fringe minority instead of the reasonable majority. Well said.

None of this makes, Mr. Speaker—this bill creates new work and new issues to be handled by the municipalities. It's a new download of problems to the municipalities. It is unclear to me what the UCP is trying to solve here. There are many unintended consequences, or maybe intended at this point. I do not know anymore, because truly, why is the UCP eliminating codes of conduct? What is broken here to eliminate, frankly?

I'll leave the Assembly with important questions from RMA and Alberta Municipalities. How does the government plan to support municipalities during this transition? If there is a serious misconduct by a councillor or an unelected member of council committee, what is the mechanism here? They're asking the government: what is your plan?

Enough with the chaos. I'm asking the government to have a plan before throwing irresponsible bills at stakeholders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Dr. Metz: Thank you very much. I'd also like to speak to Bill 50, and I also want to talk about gifts. In this bill one of the things that we'll remove is municipal codes of conduct, and one of those is the problem of members not identifying the gifts that they receive. The \$400 million luxury airplane from Qatar that Trump will get may indeed be a new standard for gifts to elected officials, but small and often repeated gifts also can sway behaviour, and they're also very important.

Small gifts are often influential. There is plenty of research showing in the physician literature that even getting a notepad with the name of a specific drug on it can influence prescribing. It's subconscious but simply easier to write the name of the drug that's on that pen that's sitting there in front of you. Some of them are hard to spell, so the correct spelling right in front of you also helps. Some drugs are infrequent, and you don't write them often, so just a little way of getting that in front of you. Pharma spends 80 per cent of their marketing budget on marketing to physicians. It's not an accident. This is because it works.

But it's also important in politics. Removing a code of conduct really will make it more likely that we're going to have gifts to politicians that are unrecognized by the public and even for the politicians to not quite recognize that what they're doing is not necessarily a good thing.

If you live in Calgary-Varsity, I would like to offer you a nice orange pen with my name on it. It'll be a good-quality pen, so you will keep using it, and you will remember my name. But what if I'm a contractor, or I'm a restaurant?

What could happen if local politicians all started accepting gifts from Friends of Medicare? Let's say that Friends of Medicare gives us all pens. They would be nice, we would use them, we would keep them, and we would not forget their name. Friends of Medicare would be in our brains.

Now, suppose that we're living in another universe, and Friends of Medicare actually has money and has season's tickets to the

Edmonton Oilers. So you're offered to be a guest of the Friends of Medicare at an important game.

1:40

Now, if you're like me, you think, "how many minutes of my life am I never going to get back if I go to that hockey game?" and you'll decline. But if like many others, I admit, who like going to hockey games, you may be tempted, and you'll sit there with a representative from Friends of Medicare, probably the one representative, and you'll have a good time and you'll bond and the next week when they ask you for a meeting—that would be the representative from Friends of Medicare—you would be inclined to meet them. Over time you would perhaps attend more events, and someone...

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 75 agreed to earlier this evening, one hour of debate has now been completed and I am required to put to the Assembly all necessary questions to dispose of Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, at third reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:41 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Hayter	Metz
Batten	Hoffman	Shepherd
Boparai	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Calahoo	Stonehouse	Irwin
Eremenko	Kayande	Wright, P.

Totals: For – 42 Against – 14

[Motion carried; Bill 50 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to revert to notices of motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Notices of Motions

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 79, sponsored by myself, which reads as follows: be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's

committees be replaced as follows: (a) on the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services that Hon. Mr. McIver replace Mr. Cooper as chair and that Hon. Mr. McIver replace Mr. Cooper.

Government Motions

(continued)

Adjournment of Spring Sitting

74. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2025 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

[Government Motion 74 carried]

Committee Referral for Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act

73. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that

- (a) the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and the committee shall be deemed to be the special committee of the Assembly

for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review pursuant to section 37 of that act;

- (b) the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued; and
- (c) in accordance with section 37 of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, the committee must submit its report to the Assembly within one year after beginning its review and that report is to include any amendments recommended by the committee.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion. Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Government Motion 73 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On that, the final motion of the evening is that I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 14, 2025.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 1:50 a.m. on Wednesday]

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