



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, October 27, 2025

Day 2

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Deputy Government House Leader
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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
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Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
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Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
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(UC)
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Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)
Kasawski, Kyle, Sherwood Park (NDP)
Kayande, Samir, Calgary-Elbow (NDP)
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)
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Long, Hon. Martin M., ECA, West Yellowhead (UC)
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Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC)
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Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre
(UC)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
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Deputy Government House Leader
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Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 2

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Nate Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
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Gurinder Brar
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Cyr
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Eggen
Gray
Hunter
Metz
Petrovic
Sabir
Singh
Yao

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Gray
Sinclair
Stephan

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Schmidt

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Al-Guneid
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Boitchenko
Calahoo Stonehouse
Dyck
Eggen
Hunter
Yao

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, October 27, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 2 Back to School Act

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move second reading of Bill 2, the Back to School Act.

For nearly a month classrooms across our province have stood empty. For weeks students have gone without their teachers and the daily structure that gives them stability, security, and the quality education that every parent expects. Each passing day widens the learning gap, pushes kids further behind, and makes recovery harder. That's what irreparable harm looks like, and that's why this legislation is necessary.

This is not a step any government takes lightly, but it's one we must take to ensure that no further irreparable harm is done to Alberta's students as a result of the ongoing strike by the Alberta Teachers' Association. Bill 2 would bring this strike to an end.

If passed, Bill 2 would return Alberta's teachers and students to classrooms by Wednesday, October 29. The legislation implements the memorandum of agreement reached in late September, an agreement based on the ATA's own offer and accepted by the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association. It's fair, it is reasonable, and it reflects our respect for both teachers and the collective bargaining process.

Under this agreement teachers will receive a 12 per cent salary increase over four years plus a market adjustment that will raise compensation for 95 per cent of teachers even higher, by up to 17 per cent. This bill also secures the hiring of 3,000 additional teachers to reduce class sizes and strengthen supports for students still catching up from pandemic disruptions and now from this strike.

As requested by the ATA, the government is committed to providing COVID shots for teachers, and to further support our teachers we're also committing to the hiring of 1,500 new EAs. It is a balanced and responsible settlement, one that rewards the work of teachers while protecting the long-term sustainability of our education system.

Our government always preferred a negotiated settlement. We were prepared to accept the March 2025 mediator's recommendation endorsed by ATA leadership, but teachers rejected it. We were prepared to accept the September 2025 memorandum of agreement, again based on the ATA's own proposal, but this, too, was rejected. The ATA's latest offer went well beyond what is fair or manageable. It proposed an additional \$2 billion bill for Alberta's taxpayers. That is \$2 billion beyond the \$2.6 billion that was required to support the September 2025 memorandum of agreement. It would have imposed rigid classroom size and complexity rules that would have made it impossible for school boards to operate effectively and nearly double the cost of the agreement on the table.

Alberta's government has proven that we can bargain fairly with public sector unions. Nurses, government workers, education

support staff, and postsecondary faculty have all ratified agreements with similar terms for the same period. But after 18 months of negotiation and mediation, there is no reasonable path to settlement with teachers in sight.

This legislation is not about the ATA or the government; it's about Alberta's kids. Every day that classrooms remain closed, students lose ground they may never fully recover. Their right to learn, to grow, and to prepare for the future has been compromised. Our government cannot allow that to continue. Bill 2 restores balance. It respects teachers' access to fair wages and working conditions while affirming the fundamental right of students to an education. This legislation ensures that no further harm is done to Alberta's students by immediately ending the strike. It also invokes the notwithstanding clause to ensure that when classrooms reopen, they stay open. This is a decisive measure to protect what matters most, our children's future.

The bill also establishes clear accountability for compliance. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. members, everyone will get their turn to speak. Right now, hon. members, only one person has the floor. I think we all ought to hear him regardless of whether we like what we're hearing or not.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bill also establishes clear accountability for compliance. The Alberta Labour Relations Board will oversee enforcement, with penalties of up to \$500 per day for individuals and \$500,000 per day for organizations that refuse to comply. These are not harsh measures; they are safeguards to ensure Alberta families never again endure this level of disruption. Parents have missed work. Graduating students have lost crucial instructional time. Children with additional needs have been cut off from supports that help them succeed. This cannot go on one day longer.

Some have asked why government didn't take another route, such as a disputes inquiry board, a public emergency tribunal, or voluntary arbitration. Each was carefully reviewed. Every one of those paths would have meant more delay and more uncertainty. Delay means more lost learning and deeper harm to students. That is something this government simply cannot accept, so we chose the responsible course, one that ends the strike now, restores stability, and gives students a fair chance to make up the ground they've lost.

Bill 2 also addresses a structural weakness in the current system: the cycle of local bargaining that follows central disputes. Bargaining with teachers is done through a unique model that no other group of employees in Alberta follow. Each round of bargaining with teachers activates two separate sets of negotiations, one provincial bargaining table for central matters and then 61 local bargaining tables to consider local matters, each set of negotiations being conducted with strike or lockout as a means for resolving disputes. We cannot risk the frustrations and concerns over central negotiations to spill over into local bargaining with a high likelihood of triggering multiple local strikes over matters no longer open for negotiations.

For the duration of this agreement, from September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2028, there will be no formal local bargaining. This legislation prevents that. It guarantees labour stability until these contracts expire at the end of the four-year term so that students, teachers, and families can focus on learning, not labour action.

Our government knows that this is not the easiest path, but it is the right one. Our primary responsibility at this time is to Alberta students, to protect their learning, their well-being, and their future.

We respect our teachers and the important work they do. We are now at a point where Alberta's children must come first. Their classrooms must stay open. Their education cannot be collateral damage in a prolonged labour dispute. This bill ensures that schools reopen, learning resumes, and stability returns to our education system. It is fair, it is reasonable, and it is necessary.

With that, I move to adjourn the debate of Bill 2, the Back to School Act, legislation that ends the strike, restores certainty for families, and protects the future of every Alberta student.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:39 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Eremenko	Miyashiro
Arcand-Paul	Ganley	Nenshi
Batten	Goehring	Pancholi
Boparai	Gray	Renaud
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Schmidt
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Shepherd
Ceci	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.
Ellingson	Metz	

Totals: For – 44 Against – 35

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

Time Allocation on Bill 2

7. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 2, Back to School Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One hour. It's an absolute democratic betrayal in the making. Time allocation is a blunt instrument and not a shield for constitutional overreach. Time allocation is not a neutral procedural tool; it is a political weapon used to silence dissent. When paired with the notwithstanding clause, it becomes a double blow to our democracy: first by overriding fundamental rights, then by muzzling the debate around it. This is not legislative efficiency; it's legislative authoritarianism.

Let's not forget Ontario's 2022 debacle. Premier Doug Ford's government invoked the notwithstanding clause to force education workers back to work. Sound familiar? The public backlash was swift and fierce: mass protests, legal challenges, and humiliating reversals. The government of Saskatchewan has also used the notwithstanding clause as recently as 2023 to remove the rights of transgender youth. It is clear this is becoming a conservative tactic to slowly remove the rights of its citizens.

Now we see Alberta adopting the same tactic, but we see it worse. By using time allocation it would deny even the pretense of democratic deliberation. This action is so severe that even the Supreme Court of Canada is reviewing the use of this clause. To be used as carelessly and frequently as the Conservatives have done, to decide to use it across the country is starting to raise red flags.

The notwithstanding clause is a nuclear option. It suspends core charter rights: freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly. To invoke it under the cover of time allocation is to treat constitutional override like, hmm, I don't know, a housekeeping motion. That's not just undemocratic, it is absolutely reckless. Every MLA silenced by time allocation represents thousands of constituents. When the government cuts off debate, it's not just shutting down opposition voices, it's shutting down parents, teachers, students, and legal scholars who deserve to be heard.

In a province that prides itself on grassroots democracy, this is a betrayal. It's strong and free until the government disagrees. The government claims urgency, but this strike has been months in the making. If they truly cared about students, they would have acted sooner and pursued arbitration. Instead, they have chosen the most extreme legislative tools available, and now they want to ram them through without scrutiny, recovery, and the ability for any type of court challenge. No checks, no balances.

8:00

This is not leadership; it's a government in panic. Time allocation in this context is not about efficiency. It's about control. It's about streamlining opposition, dodging accountability, and rewriting the rules of democracy to suit political convenience. As the Alberta government proceeds down this path, be warned: this will damage your public trust, and it will stain the province's democratic legacy. And don't worry; Albertans will never forget.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 7 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:01 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Jones	Sawyer
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Schow
Boitchenko	Loewen	Schulz
Bouchard	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Lovely	Singh
de Jonge	Lunty	Stephan
Dreeshen	McDougall	Turton

Dyck	Nally	van Dijken
Ellis	Neudorf	Wiebe
Fir	Nicolaides	Williams
Getson	Nixon	Wilson
Horner	Petrovic	Wright, J.
Hunter	Pitt	Yao
Jean	Rowswell	Yaseen
Johnson	Sawhney	
Against the motion:		
Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Eremenko	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Goehring	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Gray	Renaud
Brar, Gurtej	Guthrie	Sabir
Calahoo Stonehouse	Haji	Schmidt
Ceci	Hayter	Shepherd
Chapman	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Dach	Irwin	Sweet
Eggen	Kasawski	Tejada
Ellingson	Kayande	Wright, P.
Totals:	For – 44	Against – 36

[Government Motion 7 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 2

Back to School Act

(continued)

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 7, agreed to earlier this evening, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further discussion, consideration of Bill 2, Back to School Act, in second reading.

The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance?

The hon. opposition leader.

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. What a first day of work this is. You know, I did not expect – this is not what I planned . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Only one person has the floor. That person will be heard.

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, these are not the remarks I had planned for my first remarks rising in the House – maybe you’ll hear those tomorrow – but this is remarkably important work.

8:20

I want to address Albertans, parents, teachers, students, but in particular I’d like to address the members opposite. As I today speak a little bit about education, a little bit about what got us here, a little bit about this government, and a little bit about the egregiously antidemocratic acts that we are about to see, I hope that all of us in this Legislature reflect on that. Every one of us – the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie and I and the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are the most recent ones – was elected by our neighbours, by our colleagues because they wanted us to do the right thing for them. Every one of us entered this House, as I did just last week, bright eyed and hopeful and optimistic. Last week I stood up in front of the Speaker for the first time. I had practised. I knew what was going to happen. I knew what I was supposed to

say. But I felt myself overwhelmed by the fact that fewer than 1,000 people in the history of this province have had this remarkable opportunity, the opportunity for their neighbours to say to them, even for a minute: “We’re entrusting you. We’re entrusting you with our hopes and our dreams. We’re entrusting you with our fears. We’re entrusting you with building a future for ourselves, for our children, and for our grandchildren.”

So as we go through today and as in the wee hours of the morning this legislation likely perhaps will finally be jammed through, I will ask through you, Mr. Speaker, to all my colleagues in the House to ask themselves: was it worth it? Is this what we wanted when we were first elected? And particularly for the members opposite: how do they feel about forever being tarnished in their own political legacies by being part of the first government in Alberta’s history to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in advance, to actually say: “We know that what we’re about to do is blatantly unconstitutional. We know this. We’re not going to wait for the courts to rule on it. We’re saying it in advance”? It’s the only reason one uses the notwithstanding clause pre-emptively. But I’ll come back to that. The members opposite know full well they’re about to pass an unconstitutional piece of legislation. That’s why the notwithstanding clause is in it.

We never had to be here. The Premier and her cabinet did not need to put the members opposite in this position. There are so many better ways to have achieved what we are achieving.

You know, the minister, in moving this motion, spoke beautifully. He really did. He spoke honey-coated words about respect for teachers and the need to get students back in school and the irreparable harm of learning loss. We on this side agree with all of that. But what this government has not done is show in their actions that respect.

I’ll be blunt. We are in the midst of the largest public-sector strike in Alberta’s history. It was completely avoidable. When a government screws up this badly, there are typically only two reasons, malice or incompetence. I encourage us to think about how in this case perhaps the government has done something rare and both of those things are true.

I’ll steal a little bit from my conversation that I’ll be having with you tomorrow for a moment here and tell you a little bit about my story. I grew up poor, sometimes very poor. I didn’t have any privilege. I grew up in a very working-class neighbourhood in northeast Calgary, but I also grew up in a community that believed in me. I grew up in a province that believed that this kid from northeast Calgary whose parents worked 16, 17, 20 hours a day, who made change in his family’s laundromat, who cleaned toilets in his family’s motel in Red Deer county was still worth investing in. Everything I am and everything I have is because of public education. Everything I have and everything I am is because Peter Lougheed made a brash promise the year I was born. That promise was that here in Alberta, barely 2 million people in the middle of the often frozen Canadian prairie, we would have the best public education system in the world. And we did.

I remember when I was a media commentator, I commented on the minister of primary care’s commentary when she pointed out that Albertan students in 2018 ranked in the top five in the world in science and math and in reading. How quickly things change. In a mere six years we have seen the quality of public education in this province decline substantially, considerably, and terrifyingly. And again I’ll come back to the previous question: malice or incompetence? In a mere six years we’ve gone to the lowest per capita funding of public education in the country. In a mere six years we’ve seen class sizes that we have never before seen. We have seen complexity beyond anything that we have ever seen before, and our kids suffer.

I'm not even comparing what students today are going through to what I went through a million years ago. The Premier and I graduated in the same year. That was a long time ago. I'm comparing the kids today to what their older siblings had three or four years ago.

You know, the minister has several times today blamed it on this completely unexpected influx of people, 91,000 new students. Let me tell you something, Mr. Speaker. It was this government that offered signing bonuses to come here. It was this Premier who said: I want Red Deer to be 1 million people. Now, I grew up in Red Deer, and I think the members for Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South might agree with me that that's probably a bit much. It was this Premier who said: we want Alberta to have 10 million people; we want to double in population. Did she think no one was listening? Did she think no one was paying attention? Yet again, malice or incompetence, this government completely failed to plan.

We've heard a lot about the New Democrats' record on public education, and I'll remind the House and remind the members opposite that in four years, when we were in government, that government built or modernized over 200 schools. Even the minister's pipe dream plan is fewer schools than that, and I'll come back to that. The UCP cancelled that program. In the six years that they've been in power, not even 70 schools have been built or modernized.

Much as we've heard over and over and over again about the \$8.6 billion and the 200,000 student spaces, I'll remind this House that the 2025 budget with its three-year forecast on construction funding allocated precisely zero dollars to construction of any of those schools. Zero dollars.

They created an entirely new system of preplanning. Forget planning; preplanning. Now, in my old job we worked very hard with joint-use lands in very technical ways with the school boards to ensure that we could build schools more quickly. In this government's estimation it will take up to eight years, even if the funding is found, for the very first one of the schools under the school acceleration program to be built. That's gaslighting in the extreme. For this government to be able to say, "We allocated \$8.6 billion, but we didn't budget a penny to actually do it" is beyond reasonableness, and Albertans deserve to know the truth.

How did we get here? Let's be clear. Teachers and parents have been talking about the issues of class size and complexity for a long time. This government in 2019 chose to stop reporting on class sizes because they didn't want us to know. They didn't want us to know how bad things were getting. The brave teachers and brave parents across the province told us the truth. They told us what was really happening.

8:30

In fact, I remember that when I was running for this job the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and I had quite a tiff at one of our debates on this very issue. She argued that class sizes should be in collective agreements. I said that they should be in legislation. She was right. I was wrong. I don't say that very often. But the point is that was two years ago. We knew that this was on the table, and yet this government chose to ignore that. The teachers were very clear, and although the government has spent millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on misinformation, telling people the teachers don't know what they want and the teachers haven't been clear in what they're talking about, the teachers were very clear. They've said from the beginning that issues of class size and complexity should be baked into the collective agreement. I knew that. I knew that when I was running for this job. Again, malice or incompetence: the government either didn't know that,

incompetence, or they deliberately chose to ignore it, malice. Those are the only options here.

But even giving them the benefit of the doubt, even assuming that their thumb-on-the-scale bargaining process, which was never bargaining in good faith, not from the beginning, even assuming that they just didn't know, there was a pretty big clue. The pretty big clue was when the teachers overwhelmingly rejected the offer in the spring. That meant that the government had bought itself some time. The teachers chose not to enact their strike mandate. The government had all summer to negotiate a better deal. They didn't. They didn't; they took the summer off. They took a summer vacation. There wasn't a single negotiating session held during the summer.

And then what happened? Well, perhaps the government felt they were playing chicken with the teachers and they would never actually strike. Perhaps they felt that once school was in session, things would calm down – that's incompetence – or, more likely, they wanted there to be a strike. They engineered a strike. They thought that this would ruin all public support for the teachers at the bargaining table, and they went back to the teachers with the same deal. They went back to the teachers with the same deal except with a free COVID shot thrown in, a COVID shot that should have been free for all Albertans anyway, by the way.

Did the minister seriously think that the teachers could be bought off with a \$110 COVID shot? Did he seriously believe that they would get any different results than the result they got in the spring? If he believed it, incompetence. If he knew what was going to happen as we all did, malice. Those are really the only options here, and both of those look bad.

Now we find ourselves in a situation where the government plays its last card, and it is so scared of that last card that it used a standing order under this Legislature that's been on the books since 1916 and has never before been used. Why? What are they scared of? What kind of debate do they not want? They know what's going to happen. Why the need to ram this through and silence the voices of dissent? Is it because they don't want to hear them? Is it because they're scared? Is it because they're worried that people will organize?

Well, I hate to tell you this, Mr. Speaker, but people are organized. People already know, and if any member opposite actually believes that this is going to end tonight, they are very, very wrong. In fact, I would argue that every member opposite will rue this day. They will rue this day because they will say to themselves: "That was the day we lost the faith of Albertans. That was the day we massively overplayed our hand. That was the day when we woke people up." The worst part of this, Mr. Speaker, is that they could have got what they wanted without any of this. In fact, I would say to the members opposite that you should rue the day that the Premier and her cabinet put you in this awful position. To be clear, the government had the power to force the teachers back to work without any legislation. They can do that under the labour code. The government had the power, as has been done in the past, to pass legislation without the notwithstanding clause, and quite frankly every single time the government passes a law they pass the law with the confidence that it is constitutional or I hope they would never present it in front of this House.

As the Premier herself said many, many times, the courts are the supreme arbiters of people's rights in what is constitutional. So we are to take that what we're at today is very simply an acknowledgement that the government knows this is unconstitutional, and they don't care. Albertans deserve so much better than that. This government had months to understand the overcrowding of classrooms, of growing class complexity, of unfit learning conditions for students, but

instead they engineered this strike, and they made the biggest mistake of their political careers.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to share with you just a few of the thousands and thousands and thousands of notes that we have received from parents and teachers across this province.

Gillian* from Edmonton: "I've been a teacher and principal for 32 years in public education and I am heartbroken with the current direction of this government. The intentional dismantling of our public systems is criminal."

Kristen* from Calgary:

I am extremely concerned about the government's push to send teachers back to work this week without any meaningful changes to teacher working conditions in classrooms. Eighty-five per cent of my students speak a language other than English at home. It's near impossible to plan for a room of 32 kids, many of whom do not have a full command of English, and yet I am somehow expected to teach the full curriculum every year.

This one's from Brian* in Calgary, directly contradicting something that the minister said earlier in question period when he suggested that class sizes don't matter above the age of grade 3.

Recent 21st century studies from 2011 to 2024 have found that students who have had multiple opportunities to learn in smaller class sizes have improved noncognitive skills in comparison to students who are consistently in larger class sizes. They have also found that adults who had smaller class sizes when they were younger were more likely to complete postsecondary schooling, have higher wages, have home ownership, and improved quality of life as adults. And to what effect were these benefits? There was an 18 to 20 per cent net benefit compared to the money invested in promoting smaller class sizes.

Yet we had a minister stand up earlier today and say: "Maybe it works for kindergarten kids if the classes are really small. Beyond that, it doesn't really matter." The evidence is not there. The evidence is very clear that we are hurting students.

Let's get to some more. Amy* from Calgary:

If you want what's best for students, properly fund public education. If you want what's best for parents, properly fund public education. If you want what's best for teachers, properly fund public education. Here's what causes real, irreparable harm to Alberta students, teachers, and families: one, refusing to even track class size, refusing to discuss ratios; two, threatening back-to-work legislation and use of the notwithstanding clause; three, underfunding the system to such a degree that there literally aren't even enough physical rooms for a limit of 30 students per room; four, cutting PUF and FSCD funding for kids with disabilities.

That's another thing that this government has become famous for.

Teachers aren't corrupt, and we're not greedy. We just want to talk about class size and proper funding for our students.

From a parent, this is from Chenko.*

I'm writing to you for your response to the teachers strike. How are you going to address your constituents about the issues that need to be resolved in Alberta education? Students navigating Alberta's education system have faced a year and a half of intermittent learning due to COVID. Teachers have spent the last four years rebuilding learning communities. Both groups are discovering and dealing with the new realities of education after the epidemic. This has created new mental health challenges that revolve around learning gaps, deficiency in social skills, and a volatile dependency to screens.

Some of us may have that.

These are new issues. Combine them with the old issues of Alberta falling behind all other provinces in funding while being one of the fastest growing provinces. Why do you think it's acceptable not to help with the burdens your Alberta students are dealing with daily?

8:40

With the changing dynamics in the job market between the corporate implementation of AI and the shifting fiscal reliability of working with fossil fuel companies, how do you condone adding extra barriers to learning by not addressing the complexities in learning and the overcrowding of learning? Why do you support being last in provincial funding for an essential service that feeds the Alberta economic engine? We elect you. You are our voice. If you are not supporting the needs in education being spelled out to you, then you are clearly only holding office to benefit yourself. You do not care about the educational needs of your constituents. You do not care for the success of your province. You do not care for the future of your country.

Let's pause on that one for a moment and talk about that provincial funding number. We have gone, from every credible source, to the last in the country in per-student funding. Once again, this was obvious, and it was predictable, and the government had so much time to act. Instead, the government under the previous minister chose to stop reporting on class sizes. This is the same government that at the very last minute cancelled the provincial achievement tests in grade 6 because they were scared of the results, because they knew their new curriculum would have led to massive failure among the grade 6 students.

Now, maybe I'm too new at this, Mr. Speaker, but most governments, I would hope, would want the information to be out there so that they could act on it, so that they could do something about it. This government, uniquely among governments I've seen – and listen, I've been a political watcher my whole life. I've been in political life, myself in elected office for 15 years, and I have never seen a government like this. I have never seen a government so unwilling to share data, so unwilling to accept responsibility, so unwilling to make change. I've never seen it. And I ask myself: how did Albertans end up with a government so unwilling to govern, a government so unwilling to roll up its sleeves and do the hard work, a government that lets problems fester for so long that they have to use rules that haven't been used since 1916, that they have to become the first government in the history of Alberta to attempt to use the notwithstanding clause pre-emptively, that they have to jam and ram that through in one night? How did we get here?

We got here because we've had a government for all this time – for six whole years. You know, they love to stand up over there and talk about the record of the New Democratic government from 2015 to 2019. They've been in power for six years. The Premier has been the Premier for three years, and I hope that the members opposite all ask themselves: is there a single Albertan who is better off today than they were in 2019? Is the education system better today than it was in 2019? Is the health care system better than it was in 2019? Is unemployment better than it was in 2019? Is job creation better than it was in 2019? Is inflation better than it was in 2019?

Under this government, unemployment has risen by three points in the absence of a global recession. Youth unemployment has never been higher. Young men face a 1 in 5 unemployment rate. They don't know how to manage the economy, they don't know how to manage their budget, and they sure as heck don't know how to manage public services.

Let's keep going. This is from a parent in Edmonton who sent a note to the MLA for Edmonton-McClung.

Dear MLA, I'm tired of seeing the UCP government fail to act to get a fair deal for kids and their teachers. Great teachers are leaving the profession because they are overwhelmed and under supported in the classroom. Instead of working with teachers on real solutions for our schools the UCP government keeps trying to distract from the issues.

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

Well, yes. Yes, they do, “attempting to pit parents and teachers against each other.”

Let’s talk about this one for a minute. Recent studies from the Alberta Teachers’ Association show that as many as 50 per cent of new teachers leave the profession in the first five years. We can hire 3,000 new teachers, sure. It’s not in the legislation, but we’ll trust the government that that’s really what they want to do. How do you fill the bucket when there’s a giant hole in the bucket?

I used to love talking to teachers. I really did. I loved hearing about what they did in public schools. I loved hearing about the students and the way that they managed those students. Nowadays, with apologies to anyone who might be hearing this, I hate talking to teachers, and the reason is because the situations are so dire. I still love the teachers. I still love everything they do, but the situations they face are so dire.

A year ago I spoke with a young woman in her third year of teaching, and she said to me: this is not at all what I thought it would be. She said to me that her principal had done a budget PowerPoint for her school for all the faculty, and the first line of the PowerPoint presentation on the top page was: no one is coming to help you. No one is coming to help you. She looked at me and she said:

I’ve got 35 students in my grade 3 class. More will come over the course of the year. We’re not funded for them. There are students in my class with special needs. There’s one student in my class who really cannot be more than an arm’s length away from a grown-up at any time, and I have no education assistant.

She looked at me and she said:

I’m still young. I don’t have kids of my own. Why am I doing this? I’d go back to school. I’d get trained in a different profession. Heck, with an education degree I can go work in corporate training. Maybe I can go work at a private school, and I won’t have to deal with all of this.

Fifty per cent of people leaving in the first five years in any other industry would be a crisis. If 50 per cent of welders left in the first five years, if 50 per cent of accountants left in the first five years, we would talk about nothing else in this Legislature, but somehow it’s okay if 50 per cent of teachers leave in the first five years. No matter how many teachers we say we’re going to hire, that bucket will empty faster than we could ever fill it.

Let’s go to another one, a letter from Robin in Lethbridge. She’s a parent.

Teachers are striking because they have been pushed to the brink by years of underfunding, overcrowded classrooms, and disregard for their professional expertise. Forcing them back to work is not a solution. It is an insult. It sends a clear message that this government values control over collaboration and power over people.

Mr. Speaker, I don’t want to believe that’s true. I really don’t. I know many of the members opposite, before politics and in politics, and I know that every one of them has entered politics because they wanted to do better by their neighbours, because they wanted to have craft to better Alberta. That’s not what we see. When we strip down this government, a government consistently unwilling to roll up its sleeves and do the hard work, a government consistently interested in scoring political points rather than getting work done, a government that consistently doesn’t think about the implications of its terrible decisions or what they mean to real people, I have to ask myself that same question that Robin from Lethbridge is asking. What does this government value? When we strip this government down to its essence, what is there beyond a need for power, power, and more power?

I can give you the answer on this side, Mr. Speaker. I know these people very well. In this group of people – economists, lawyers, public servants, teachers, social workers, small-business people, entrepreneurs, even a geologist – we come from very, very different

backgrounds. We have surprisingly different political inclinations once in a while, but when you strip us down to our essence, what you see is a real desire to make the province better. What you see is a group of people who believe in the dignity of every other person lucky enough to share this land, and what you have here is an unflinching and unwavering desire to improve this province. It’s not about power, and it never will be.

8:50

Dallas from Mayerthorpe:

As an adult I am now facing the devastating reality that my provincial government and my representatives have failed multiple generations of students. These appalling classroom conditions still exist and even have been normalized.

This government broke public education real fast. The good news is that we can fix it real fast. The bad news is that we have no choice but to fix it real fast. The minister was correct when he stood up earlier and said that that learning loss that students are facing can cause irreparable harm. We know this. We know that the learning loss that we’re seeing will take a long time to fix and could stay with people throughout their lives. But here’s the thing. Kids could have been back in school. Kids could have never left school. Kids never had to have this four weeks of learning loss had the government only done its job.

This next one is from Brian in Lethbridge, and I’m going to apologize in advance because this one is going to be hard for me to read.

Public education in Alberta is being held together by the unsustainable efforts of teachers, teachers who are overburdened and undersupported. The system is breaking down. Students with additional needs are not receiving the support and tools necessary to succeed. Meanwhile overcrowded classrooms are limiting teachers’ ability to create the effective learning environments that every student deserves.

As a personal example, my daughter has dyslexia and ADHD. She was unable to read by grade 3 not due to teacher incompetence but because her teachers, overwhelmed with large class sizes and minimal support, could not give her the attention she required.

I urge you to oppose the use of the notwithstanding clause in matters that affect the rights of teachers. Its use in this context undermines constitutionally protected rights and sets a dangerous precedent for all workers in Alberta. Stripping teachers of their rights jeopardizes not only their safety but also the well-being of the students they serve.

Now, I heard a member opposite get super excited when I said that I hate talking to teachers these days. I’m glad that the member was super excited, and I hope he heard the next sentence. The next sentence was: because they were forced to work in appalling conditions.

I disagree with Brian a little bit here because he says that the system is close to collapse. In too many communities, in too many schools across this province the system has collapsed. It has collapsed under this government, and only one thing has kept it going: the strong backs, the unwavering devotion, the sweat and the strength of the people who go to work in those schools every single day.

This winter I went up to Fort McMurray, and I spent an unseasonably warm winter’s day in Fort McMurray on the line with educational workers. Let’s talk about them for a minute. This government allowed the education assistants in Fort McMurray to stand in the cold of a Fort McMurray winter for four months. And let’s be clear. These women – 85 per cent of them are women. And let’s be further clear. If 85 per cent of them were men, we wouldn’t have been paying them poverty-level wages. These full-time

unionized public servants under this government were earning \$28,000 a year.

I want to share with you a story of one of them, and she's asked me to share this story. She walked up to me and she said:

You know, I didn't stumble into the job of being an EA. I went to school for this. This is my dream job, and 28 years ago when I was hired by the Fort McMurray school district, it was the best day of my life. I knew that I'd be able to do what my passion was, I knew I'd be able to make a huge difference for special-needs kids, and I knew I'd be able to do it working for a government that valued the work I was doing.

In 28 years, since she stood on those cold, cold Fort McMurray roads through that winter, her salary had been increased by \$7. Twenty-eight years. A single mom herself, and she said to me:

You know what? I work full-time, I'm a public servant, I belong to a union, and every single morning when my kids are packing their lunch, I have to say to them, "Honey, today you can have an apple or an orange. I'm sorry, but you can't have both."

This is the legacy of this government. It's not about making life better for people. It's about forcing single moms to ration the fruit they give their kids. Recent studies showed that 40 per cent of families in Calgary are facing food insecurity under this government. Forty per cent. More than half of Albertans are less than one paycheque away from not being able to feed their kids, and this government systematically wants more and more public servants to join that group.

Let's go to another one. This is Joyce. Joyce happens to be the parent of a grade 11 student at Sir Winston Churchill high school. I happen to have a niece who is a grade 11 student at Sir Winston Churchill high school, so I asked her to check this one. It is in fact true.

Recently, I learned that my daughter's chemistry class has 67 students being taught by one teacher.

Now, to be fair, there were supposed to be two teachers in that classroom, but they couldn't do it. Sixty-seven students being taught by one teacher. This is deeply troubling.

With such a large number of students in a single classroom, I worry about how students can effectively manage the class, provide individualized support, and maintain a high standard of education. Another class she attends has over 40 students, which is still far beyond what I would consider conducive to quality learning.

I happen to know this school pretty well. I've had two nieces graduate from there. They're brilliant, they've done incredibly well, and they've benefited from an outstanding education and outstanding teachers. They never had a cafeteria because the cafeteria is used for instructional space. My younger niece times her trips to her locker so that she doesn't get crushed by the students in that school because it's so overcrowded. This is not a school that's in a brand new suburb or a place of high growth. This school was there when the Premier and I went to high school. Yet this government has allowed this to happen: 67 students in a chemistry class in high school at one of the very best high schools in the province. When you say "one of the very best high schools in the province" for so many years, you could also say that automatically means one of the best schools in the world. You just can't say it anymore under this government.

Another parent from Calgary writes – and I really want to dwell on this one for a moment as well –

Public education is not a luxury. It is the foundation of a strong and equitable society. It ensures that the children of immigrants, of working families, of every background can succeed, contribute, and support Alberta's future. If we fail to fund it properly, we're not just hurting schools. We're hurting Alberta's economy, its communities, and its next generation of leaders.

That's Lisa.

I've talked already about the importance of public education in building a better society. I want to be extraordinarily clear. Our children's education should never depend on the price of oil.

9:00

This government has gone from a \$9 billion surplus to a \$10 billion and counting deficit. This government for the first time in generations crafted a budget that relies more on oil and gas royalties than less. They made us more dependent on oil and gas. This government wrote a budget that requires \$75 oil to even have a \$7 billion deficit.

These are choices, folks. Mr. Speaker, these are choices this government has made. It's not accidental, and when the Premier pleads poverty, when the Premier says to teachers that there's not enough money to give you a raise or hire new teachers, that's not an accident, that's not something that just happened. Those are results of deliberate choices by this government.

We know how wasteful this government is. We know how this government refuses to actually spend money on the priorities of actual Albertans. We know from Justice Wyant's recent report that hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars have been wasted on private health care contracts that didn't go through proper authorizations, that didn't go through proper procedures, that allegedly had money flowing in directions that they ought not to have been flowing in, and we know that all happens while public operating rooms remain empty.

We know that this government has for the first time in Canadian history chosen to fund the construction of private schools with public money. We know that this government has a record of waste and mismanagement and fraud that we have never seen before in Alberta. These are choices this government has made. They made choices to spend money on great deals for their friends and take money away from students that need it.

I want to go to the next letter. This is from Joe in Airdrie: "Teachers don't want to strike. They would rather spend their time in the classroom teaching their students. They see education as a public service. They take pride in seeing kids light up when they learn something new. They care deeply about their school communities, and their greatest wish is to be remembered as a great teacher."

I'm also an educator. I spent many years standing in front of classrooms at the university level. That was my job before I got into politics, and I can tell you that what Joe says to us is entirely true. You don't do this job because you get the summers off, even though members opposite intimate that. You don't do this job because it's cushy. This job is so far from cushy. You do this job because every now and then a student makes you so proud. You do this job because every now and then a student who's been struggling will just get it.

You know, my world is different than the Member for Edmonton-North West's world as a teacher. Mine were a bit older, probably not as smart as his. I used to teach finance. It's a notoriously difficult class. The Member for Edmonton-North West and I went through it together. It is a hard class, and for most students at some point the light comes on. For the lucky few it comes on before the first midterm. The Member for Calgary-North West, the Minister of Indigenous Relations, is one of those smart students. She figured it out.

For most students it comes on sometime between the first midterm and the final exam and for the unlucky few students it comes on the second time you take the course, but it comes on. But it comes on. When we see that light come on, when we see the student go, "I get it. Wow. That's how a mortgage works. That's

how corporations issue debt and equity. That's what that really means. That's how the system works. That's how capitalism works," that is a great moment, and I know that my colleagues on this side who are teachers and all the other teachers in the province have that story every single day, the story of how things could be better.

I have lots more parent and teacher letters, but I want to flip to another topic here. I want to talk about the notwithstanding clause. Today the UCP is using the notwithstanding clause pre-emptively for the first time in the history of Alberta. This is deeply shameful and we should be ashamed of it. We have a Premier who says she loves freedom. She says it all the time. In the throne speech, we called Alberta the freest jurisdiction in Canada.

The Premier has a tattoo. I think it reads – I don't actually speak ancient Babylonian, but theoretically, it's liberty. It's actually the symbol of a right-wing agitator organization in the United States. Yet this government has systematically stripped away freedoms and stripped away liberty from Albertans. They stripped away the right of property owners to put what they like on their property. They stripped away the right of medical professionals to prescribe and give what they believe to be the best treatment for their patients. They stripped away the right for parents to agree to what they believe to be the right medical treatment for their students. They tried to strip away the right to read. The minister of education walked that one back pretty quick, in fact, in the same afternoon. One morning, he said that books about menstruation and puberty would not be allowed. In that afternoon, he said: oh, sorry, they are allowed. Are you there, God? It's the minister.

Now they want to strip away more rights for more people. Earlier this summer, the Minister of Justice stood up and defended the use of Bill 21 in Quebec. I'll remind all of you that Quebec is the only jurisdiction in the world that says people of certain faiths cannot have certain jobs, that devout Muslims, Sikhs, and Jewish people cannot be teachers in public schools. It's the only jurisdiction in the world, and this government, instead of standing up and saying, "We would never do that. We don't believe in that," stood up and defended Quebec's use of the notwithstanding clause for that. That's the government the members opposite chose to belong to. They did that. They did that, and I wonder how they then speak to their Muslim, to their Sikh, to their Jewish people, to their constituents about the fact that they defended that.

This summer, I said, "Well, that is a strange thing to do. That is a strange thing to do politically. It's certainly going to cost them a number of seats," and I can tell you which ones, and I'm looking over at some of them now. It is a very strange thing to do.

"But why are they doing it?" I asked myself. That's when I realized the horrible truth, that they're starting, for the first time in history, against workers and against their unions. They have signalled that their next use of the notwithstanding clause will be against vulnerable children, and the one after that will be against health care workers. That's the government the members opposite have chosen to join: a government that systematically takes away people's freedoms. The first government in Alberta – the first government in Alberta – to say, "We don't believe in the Charter of Rights. We don't believe that human rights are for every human." That's this government.

A former Premier in this Chamber, a fellow I got to know pretty well over the years, sometimes on the opposite side of picket lines, in 2003 faced enormous pressure to use the notwithstanding clause to overturn the Supreme Court's decision in *Vriend versus Alberta*, the decision that enshrines same-sex rights into the constitution. He was tempted. He was sorely tempted. His party was pressuring him. He was getting all kinds of letters from citizens saying, "You must do this," and Ralph Klein said: no. Ralph Klein said: Some things

are more important. Ralph Klein watched a protest on the steps of this Legislature, and he found it to be so hateful that he had to say: No. No Premier of Alberta has used the notwithstanding clause pre-emptively until today – until today – and not just doing it today, but denying debate on it today.

9:10

I want to share with you another quote here. This is not from a parent or a teacher. This is from a legislator. In fact, it's from the person who was the architect of the notwithstanding clause. It's from the person who at the table in 1982 said that this is what it would take to pass the constitution. He never used it. In fact, 10 years after he said:

I believe in the notwithstanding clause; I still do. There are three areas in which you should be able to use it. First, the Legislature needs to spell out the exact purpose of its use. It can't just use it pre-emptively. It has to say why, and it has to talk about how it's time limited. Second, a simple majority should not be enough. It should require at least 60 per cent of the members of a Legislature to use the notwithstanding clause. Third, pre-emptive judicial review should be disallowed. The notwithstanding clause should only be used after the courts have had the opportunity to declare whether a law is constitutional or not.

Perhaps I'll table this report when tablings are once again allowed since we couldn't do it today. That was a lecture from the hon. Peter Lougheed. Peter Lougheed himself, the architect of the notwithstanding clause, would have strongly opposed the way that it is being used today. The throne speech called us the freest jurisdiction in Canada, and literally in the next day of the Legislature sitting the government has signalled that they don't care about people's fundamental human rights and freedoms.

This is probably the hardest letter that I've gotten. I don't have a name, but I know this is someone who teaches at Rocky View county schools.

To those with positions of power. I'm sad that this is my chosen profession. I wanted to teach since I was in grade 6, but this is not what I've been looking forward to all these years. I'm exhausted. I'm irritable. I'm depressed. I'm anxious. I don't deserve to feel this way. I'm trying to fill my students' buckets with my very own, very limited, very empty bucket. My family doesn't deserve this. I am the shell of a human at home. I cannot give them the love, attention, and patience they deserve because I spent it all day putting out fires. I don't have support for my two high-needs kids, and it's not fair to my other 25 kids to not have my attention and for them to always be on guard.

We are all done. We are all not okay.

Folks, this doesn't just happen. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't just happen. It's not something that we have to live with because it just happened. It's not something that we can blame on the federal government or 91,000 new people coming or inexplicably on temporary foreign workers and international students who generally don't have small children that they bring with them. This is the result of bad government policy, which takes us back to where we started: malice or incompetence. Malice or incompetence. At the end of the day, the situation that that teacher in Rocky View county is feeling is something caused by government policy.

Mr. Speaker, what should we have done rather than being here this evening having this debate? We should have seen this coming. We shouldn't have stopped the construction of new schools in 2019, as the UCP did. We should have focused quickly on complexity and on class size. We should have been able to make a better deal with teachers. We should have been able to avoid work action. We shouldn't have locked the teachers out, as this government has done. More importantly, we should have made a promise to the students and the parents and the teachers in this community, a simple promise that we believe in Peter Lougheed's dream, that we

believe in having the best public education system in the world, that that is something we will strive for, that is something we will work for, that is something that we will do.

The minister, in his introduction and his moving of this motion, talked about how he respects teachers, he respects students, and he respects parents. If he really does, I'm happy he's come to that revelation. In reality, real respect for these folks would have happened six years ago, when this government took power. Real respect would have happened when we said: we're going to build more classrooms, we're going to have more teachers, and we're going to make sure that every single student can succeed.

I think back to that kid cleaning the toilets at the motels in Red Deer county and going to River Glen school, the county school, a school that had its own rodeo. I couldn't participate in that rodeo for I had no skills, no horse. The greased pig race was open to me, but I found it undignified, mostly for the pig. I saw a picture recently somebody sent me of me back then, dressed up in what an immigrant family thought a cowboy might dress like.

And I remember, when we left Red Deer and moved back to Calgary, going to Marlborough school. I remember being so happy and so lucky that I was accepted into the gifted program and going off there and meeting a bunch of freaks like me that allowed me to blossom. Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Marlborough, northeast Calgary. Not a lot of people have a lot of hope for kids who grow up in Marlborough. I had two friends growing up. All three of us did our graduate school at the same institution. Every kid I went to school with has gone on to contribute to the community in extraordinary ways. That's all we're asking today.

So as government members ask themselves, "Was this worth it? Was it worth tarnishing my political legacy to make this happen?" I hope they remember one thing. Regardless of what happens today, it's not going to get better. We're returning teachers and students to the same broken system, and every single kid growing up in every single neighbourhood in every single town of this beautiful province deserves exactly what I got. Today's motion does not give them that, and if this motion passes in the wee hours of the day after being rammed through through these terrible, terrible legislations because the government is scared of dissent and scared to debate, I hope every member remembers that they will rue this day, because this is the day this government finally, once and for all, broke faith with Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. members, we have now reached the time when all questions to dispose of the second reading of Bill 2 must be put to the Legislative Assembly.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:20 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Jones	Sawyer
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Schow
Boitchenko	Loewen	Schulz
Bouchard	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Lovely	Singh

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Eremenko	Miyashiro
Arcand-Paul	Ganley	Nenshi
Batten	Goehring	Pancholi
Boparai	Gray	Renaud
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Schmidt
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Shepherd
Ceci	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Chapman	Irwin	Sinclair
Dach	Kasawski	Sweet
Eggen	Kayande	Tejada
Ellingson	Metz	Wright, P.
Elmeligi		

Totals: For – 44 Against – 37

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a second time]

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 2 Back to School Act

The Chair: I see the hon. Minister of Finance rising to speak.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and offer brief remarks on Bill 2, the Back to School Act. Bill 2 ensures every Alberta student can return to the classroom and learn without further disruption. This legislation puts Alberta families first. It delivers a fair and responsible deal for teachers. It offers 12 per cent salary increases for all and further salary adjustments up to 17 per cent for more than 95 per cent of Alberta teachers. It secures 3,000 new teachers and 1,500 new educational assistants to support students' needs. This government is protecting both stability in education and fiscal responsibility, ending the strike, keeping schools open, and ensuring agreements remain reasonable and accountable.

With that, Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 2, the Back to School Act. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion that the committee rise and report progress carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:39 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Shepherd
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Ceci	Ip	Sinclair
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.

Totals: For – 43 Against – 33

[Motion that the committee rise and report progress carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. van Dijken: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2.

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 Motions

(continued)

Time Allocation on Bill 2

8. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 2, Back to School 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 in the chair]

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Government Motion 8, which time allocates our ability to debate in this House,

is shameful. This government's disregard for democracy, the idea that this Legislature is a barrier to what the government wants to do, is completely counter to how our system of democracy works, and it continues a pattern that we've seen from this government. Fifty per cent of the time allocation motions that have ever been used in this Legislature since 1937 have been used by this government in six years. Half. More than half now because I didn't add tonight's.

They are shutting down debate in a way that is historically undemocratic, and tonight they are doing it by ramming through all stages of a bill at once, which has not been done before. It is a historic change, giving people no time to review Bill 2, the Back to School Act, and they continue to use these tools in a complete abrogation of their duties. It is absolutely disgusting, and it is, unfortunately, behaviour from this government that we've seen before and we will likely see again.

I imagine a bunch of the members across the other way think that the divisions that have happened tonight are just annoying and the government should be able to do what they want to do, but we are using the only tools that we have to try and slow this down so that the public, so that the media, so teachers, parents, students can see what is in this bill. Earlier today the government used a standing order called 27 to intercept and to change how things normally work here so that the program would run on their schedule.

To be very clear with you, Mr. Speaker, Albertans want the government to fund bigger class sizes. Albertans want complexity to be addressed. Albertans want teachers to be supported. The fact that we are in a strike right now is a direct result of the recipe that this government cooked up starting six years ago, when they changed the funding formula for classes and they made sure that growing schools got less while protecting rural schools and smaller schools with smaller growth. During a time with population boom they knowingly put in a formula that would give urban schools less and they created the crisis that we find ourselves in.

10:00

Two years ago, when people were talking about the impact of this funding formula, the government chose not to change it, to ignore what they were hearing. As teachers came to the bargaining table, they chose not to bargain in good faith. They chose not to talk about class sizes and complexity. They told teachers those were not on the table, and then they claimed that they bargained 3,000 new teachers. News flash, Mr. Speaker: that was in Budget 2025. That is not an item that was bargained; that was a commitment the government had already made. So they gave teachers virtually nothing and yet wouldn't talk about the things that parents, students, teachers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, Albertans across the way want to talk about, which is that our class sizes are too big.

Now, people know class sizes are too big because of their experience, Mr. Speaker, not because the government measures it, because the UCP government stopped measuring that right around the time that they changed the funding formula. This is a crisis of their making, and now they are abusing the powers they have as a majority government to ram through legislation that Albertans are not supportive of and that contains a historic use of the notwithstanding clause. How many new things that are all terrible can we layer on all at once?

In the meantime Albertans are doing rallies of 38,000 people outside, on these steps, begging for the government to listen that kids in their classroom learning conditions need more. Alberta should not be the lowest funding in the country because of their funding formulas. Alberta students deserve better than what this government has done.

Mr. Speaker, having labour peace is a sign of good government. It is the government's responsibility to respect labour and workers

and their unions. It is the government's responsibility to respect the historic bargain that has been negotiated to keep labour peace. With Bill 2, they are tearing it up, and they have no idea what will happen next because, again, this is historic on historic on historic, and they are not going to like it.

[The voice vote indicated that the Government Motion 8 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:04 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

10:20

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Shepherd
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Ceci	Ip	Sinclair
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.
Totals:	For – 44	Against – 33

[Government Motion 8 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 2 Back to School Act

The Chair: I'm looking for members who wish to join the debate. The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in opposition to Bill 2, a bill that will force teachers and students back

into classroom environments that do not support the learning needs of our kids or the ability for educators to be effective teachers. The degradation of our once world-class public education system has been years in the making, and the culprit for this can be easily found in this Premier's direction to her Finance minister. The mantra of the UCP has long been to keep government spending below population growth and inflation. This phrase has been thrown around casually in every mandate letter this Premier has issued to her Finance minister, yet I have never heard this government speak openly to Albertans about what this means. I have not heard them tell Albertans directly that this means that the services they receive will worsen, that they will wait longer to receive life-saving health care, or that the path towards the lowest education funding per student in the country was no accident but instead a deliberate path this government has driven us down regardless of the wishes of Albertans.

Madam Chair, Bill 2's actions fail to recognize the reality of what is happening in our classrooms. I have hundreds of stories from teachers desperately pleading with this government to recognize the reality of what is happening in our schools, but we are tight for time because this government doesn't believe in fulsome debate on this issue, so I will give just a few examples.

Lynn,* who has been teaching for eight years, wrote to tell me about declining conditions at her school. Eight years ago as a full-time music teacher Lynn was able to teach each class of students two to three times a week, giving them continuous enrichment in music while also providing classroom teachers with prep time along with other specialists in the school. Over the years as per-student funding has decreased, Lynn's role has shifted, and the school she works at has lost specialists one by one: first French, then English language, then gifted. Each cut reduced the programming and supports for the kids at that school. Lynn is now only able to teach music half time, with the other half of her time spent on standard classroom teaching, but of course still being expected to maintain the entire K to 6 music program and its ancillary activities such as school concerts. Students only have music once a week now instead of two or three times.

Madam Chair, if there are members of this House who fail to understand the value of music education, those members also fail to understand the value of math and the work that music does to reinforce critical learning on things like patterns, ratios, sequences, in addition to all the benefits that music brings to develop verbal memory, reading ability, and executive brain function.

Bill 2 fails to address the teaching conditions that are our kids' learning conditions. Jessica* is a teacher who struggles to provide meaningful instruction, individual support, and safe, engaging learning environments to her class of thirty 11-year-olds. In that class 11 students have an individual learning plan, many who have multiple learning disabilities. Nine of her students require assistive technology to write, which the school lacks in sufficient quantity to support those students. Seven students are reading below grade level, and 10 struggle significantly in math. Jessica teaches without the support of an education assistant despite these complex needs in her classroom. It is clear that Jessica is not able to meet the needs of the kids in her class.

Lisa* wants this government to know that as a 10-year teacher last year was the worst year she has ever seen when it comes to class size and composition. In addition to teaching two curriculums for grades 5 and 6, she has nine students in her class with individual learning plans, five severe undiagnosed behaviour students, one conduct disorder, one oppositional defiance disorder, and two children who require significant language supports.

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

Bill 2 will send these teachers and their students back into exactly the same classroom environment they left three weeks ago. There will be no additional mental health supports for these students. There will be no additional education support workers. There will be no changes whatsoever to the class size and complexity in any of these classrooms. Of the hundreds of letters, e-mails, and calls I have received from teachers during this strike, every single one spoke to the condition of their classroom, to the unmet needs of the children they are responsible for.

Yet, if you follow the narrative of this government, you would think that tens of thousands of teachers have walked out in protest over salary. This government has tried so desperately to spin this strike as teachers' greed, and I want to be clear here that teachers, and all workers, deserve wage increases that keep up with the cost of living, that has done nothing but rise under this government's tenure.

The fact of the matter is that over the last decade teachers' salaries have risen only 5 per cent while cost of living has climbed 30 per cent. It is not asking for the moon to be fairly compensated for a complex and demanding job, however hard this government may try to spin it otherwise, but this strike is not primarily about salary; it is about the conditions in our classroom.

Now, I know this government has had a hard time understanding what teachers want. For weeks they publicly lamented how very difficult it was to figure out something I have had 10-year-old children sum up in a single sentence. "My class is so full, it's hard to move around in. Not all the kids get the help they need. My teacher is stressed and needs more help." When even a child is better able to grasp what is going on in a classroom than the adults in this room, it is fair to ask: is this ignorance incompetence, or is this by design?

Bill 2 makes it crystal clear that it is by design. The offer that is being forced on teachers with Bill 2 is the exact same offer that was rejected just a few weeks ago by 90 per cent of teachers. Bill 2 makes it crystal clear that this government was never bargaining in good faith with teachers, because bargaining is a negotiation that requires both parties to come to the table with an ability to compromise.

10:30

Bill 2 makes it crystal clear that it wasn't that this government didn't know what teachers wanted; it is that they didn't care what teachers wanted. Bill 2 is this government's response to a problem of their own making. The choice this government has made to fund education at the lowest level per student in the country: that choice comes with consequences. That choice has led to the growing class sizes that add to a teacher's workload. That choice has led to a lack of resources to support complex learners. That choice has resulted in a desperate lack of learning spaces, meaning that even if we had a government who was willing to properly fund education, we literally don't have enough classrooms to accommodate all Alberta students.

Now, look. The UCP has promised \$8.6 billion in funding to correct their own failure to plan for the needs of Alberta students. Let's put to the side for a moment that this is merely a promise, that this government has not communicated how they plan to build so many schools in such a short time frame. We won't forget about this, but let's just put it to the side for the moment.

Bill 2 forces teachers back into classroom conditions that have worsened over years. I'm going to use just a single school board as an example, though there are many others that I could have given you if we had been allowed an appropriate amount of time to debate this bill. The CBE is Alberta's largest school board, serving over 140,000 Alberta students. Although this government likes to

pretend that population growth just snuck up on us, in fact, you can watch the CBE system utilization rise steadily over five years from 83 per cent in 2021 to 87 per cent in 2022, 92 per cent in 2023 to 95 per cent in 2024. If they don't hit 100 per cent this year, it will be next year.

I will remind you, Madam Chair, that once a school hits 85 per cent, they are actually full. Beyond 85 per cent a school starts to lose spaces; libraries, gym stages, boot rooms, hallways: these must all become classrooms. In that time, when Alberta's largest school board was growing at this steady, constant pace over the last six years, how many new schools were approved by this government for construction funding for the school board? Four. Well, okay, technically five, but one of the construction projects that was approved in 2023 still hasn't started construction. It is literally an empty field.

Now, interestingly, in 2023 the CBE opened the single high school that was provided construction funding over the last six years. North Trail high school was full the day it opened, and students who could literally walk to school are instead being overflowed to a school that requires a daily 90-minute transit commute. Today CBE high schools operate at 108 per cent capacity and the earliest a new high school will open for this board is 2030. It is a shocking failure to plan for the needs of Calgary students.

Look. This government, they love to crow about that \$8.6 billion promise, a promise that they may or may not keep, when it's really just a clear sign of this government's abject failure to plan for Alberta's future. I'll remind you, Madam Chair, that the Alberta NDP built or modernized 244 schools over our four-year term in government, and this government hasn't managed close to even half of that in their six years in office.

Above all things, Madam Chair, I am a mother, and for many years my kids have attended our local public elementary school. Like many schools in my riding, the building is 50 years old. It was designed for a different type of education, a different type of student, sitting quietly in rows, if you can imagine that. The only classroom in the building that has a door is the kindergarten classroom. All the other kids learn in open-concept wings where the sound moves freely between the four classes housed in each wing.

When I started on parent council I asked what could be done about noise dampening and the principal was blunt with me. They'd had a study done and the cost was \$1 million, but it didn't even crack the top 10 list of improvements the school board was able to fund. It probably didn't even crack the top 50 because all the funding available for operations and maintenance at existing schools has to be spent on roofs, HVAC systems, and fire suppression updates, all the bits and pieces that age out and need to be replaced in an older building. There is no money available to create a suitable learning environment for the kids of this school.

Over nearly a decade I watched conditions in this school slide. Class sizes crept up, which meant so did the noise. Parents were increasingly asked to fundraise for what I thought were foundational items for a classroom. Without parent fundraising, this school would not have Smart boards in every classroom. We would not have had more than one classroom set of laptops. We would have half the books that currently live in the library. No field trips, no little rubber balls on the chair legs to bring down the volume of kids scraping their chairs back and forth. No trees in the school yard, no nets in the soccer goals, no adaptive technology for kids who need support with writing, and no robotics program because parents had to pay for all of that technology. These little things add up.

Then in the last two years the big stuff hit. Two years ago three nonverbal autism spectrum disorder students walked through the door of their local public school, who did what public schools do

best: opened their arms and welcomed them in. Those students needed support, so a teacher was let go to free up the budget to bring two EAs into the school. Just two EAs, mind you, not three, even though clearly three were needed, but they couldn't afford three. So they had to make do with two.

Now, this year the kindergarten class, well, they got the boot from their special room. The only room with a door, the only room in the school that provides the kind of space kids need to help process the transition of starting school. But the school needs the space for the complex students, and as I mentioned, it's the only room with a door, so into a split kindergarten-grade 1 class those kids go. No one is being served in this scenario. Not the teachers, not the support workers, and certainly not the students.

Madam Chair, Bill 2 forces teachers back to work when it is this government who has been failing to work in the interests of Albertans for years. How do we know what Albertans want? Well, they have made it pretty clear. My office has received thousands of calls, e-mails, letters, pop-ins – a fraction of what the minister and Premier have received, I'm sure – and overwhelmingly Albertans, whether they be parents, grandparents, educators, or students, have gone to every length to tell this government that they want a negotiated solution to this strike that will address class size and complexity. Three thousand Albertans protested this government at the McDougall Centre three weeks ago, 8,000 Albertans protested this Premier during a Chamber speech two weeks ago, and 30,000 Albertans stood outside the Legislature just last week to send a message that they want to see real action from this government to prioritize public education.

What Albertans have received in response is a government who put in their earplugs and bullied us all down their predetermined path that will not substantively address learning conditions in our classroom. Bill 2 prevents us from talking about the most important thing, the thing that is on the mind of all Albertans: that our public education system is crumbling under the gross mismanagement of this government, that the thing that draws parents toward private education options – namely, small class sizes – is not something that this government is willing to prioritize for the 95 per cent of Alberta students who attend a public school.

10:40

This government stopped collecting data on school sizes. For Pete's sake, why? Is it possible that this government feels ashamed of their actions, like a toddler who knows he's done a terrible thing and runs to hide under his blankie to avoid the consequences of his decision? Of course, the worst the toddler likely did was break a vase, not a public education system that serves over 700,000 students.

Bill 2 is a gross violation of workers' rights to collective bargaining. It forces teachers and students back into overcrowded classrooms, and it does absolutely nothing to address the classroom conditions that our kids learn in. I encourage all members of this House to vote against this bill.

I would like to introduce an amendment, Madam Chair.

The Chair: It's very close to the wire.

Ms Chapman: Well, we're lucky . . .

The Chair: You have 25 seconds to move it, once I tell you you can move it.

Ms Chapman: It's past my bedtime. I'm sorry. I'm really, really doing the best I can.

The Chair: Oh, nice and short. Okay. Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

Ms Chapman: Thank you. I move that Bill 2, Back to School Act, be amended "by striking out section 3." The use of the notwithstanding clause to force teachers back to work is one of the greatest abuses of democratic rights in Alberta's history. Instead of listening to the teachers, parents, and students, who have been sounding the alarm about the crisis in public education, this government is forcing teachers back to work with an offer that was overwhelmingly rejected.

The Chair: Well done, hon. member.

I see the hon. minister of education rising to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you so much, Madam Chair. I'm happy to rise to speak on the amendment today and to respond to some of the comments that I've heard from members opposite over the course of debate this evening. I think it's critically important that the bill move forward, which is why I'm speaking in opposition to this amendment and supporting the bill. It's essential for our kids to get back in the classroom. That is at the heart of this bill, and that is at the heart of government actions here today.

In thinking about today, I took some time to do a little bit more homework and research and analysis into the impacts of prolonged closures and strike actions on students and on student learning. [interjections] Madam Chair, you can just hear all the heckling. You know, they can't give anybody any opportunity to say anything, but that's totally fine. I'll just continue on with my comments.

My main concern, though, of course, as I mentioned, is making sure that we get students back into the classroom as quickly as possible. Now, of course, the decisions that are being made tonight are decisions that are not taken lightly, Madam Chair. I firmly believe that the decision that we are making this evening is deeply rooted in the undeniable moral imperative to prioritize the well-being and future of every student in this province. This strike, without question, has moved from beyond the state of inconvenience for teachers, excuse me, and students, but is now actively causing measurable long-term harm to our students, and it must stop. We must get our kids back into the classroom, and we must do it now.

Now, as I mentioned, I had an opportunity to look at some of the latest research in this area. Many of our students risk losing the ability to graduate, they risk losing postsecondary opportunities, and they risk losing future earning potential. Now, again, I want to go walk through some of the evidence that I was able to uncover and explore. The experience of major educational disruptions, Madam Chair, whether in the form of a pandemic or labour action, is crystal clear and undeniable. A study tracking the effects of a 20-day teachers' strike in Ontario showed clear learning loss in math test scores equivalent to half of a standard deviation. For our grade 9 students preparing for high school or our grade 12 students finalizing university applications, this is without question a measurable and tangible setback.

Now, test scores are one thing, of course, but beyond test scores other studies tracking long-term outcomes have shown that high school students who experience prolonged closures are 6 to 10 per cent less likely to graduate high school and 3 to 5 per cent less likely to attend college. This isn't just a classroom setback; it is an economic issue as well that will follow them into adulthood. Experts have estimated that the average affected student could see a 3 per cent lower lifetime income if these learning losses are not

immediately reversed. At a national level prolonged failure to remediate learning loss can translate to lower GDP for the remainder for decades to come.

This strike presents significant concerns for our students and an economic liability to the future of our province, but most concerning of all, Madam Chair, is that the impacts are not distributed equally. Global research from the World Bank and other institutions confirms that learning losses are disproportionately larger, up to 60 per cent greater, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, for those in vulnerable families, and for those who were already struggling academically. For every day the strike continues, we are not just failing to teach; we are actively widening the gap between those students who have access to resources at home and those who can rely entirely on the structured, equalizing environment of our amazing public school system. We cannot allow that to happen.

Our public school system is meant to be the engine of opportunity, not a source of inequality. The longer we delay, the harder it becomes to bridge those divides. Just like the Leader of the Opposition, I too am an incredibly proud product of Alberta's public education system. My parents when they immigrated to this country, very similarly to the Leader of the Opposition, came with very little. It was our public education that allowed me to succeed and allowed me to reach the position that I am today, and I, just like the Leader of the Opposition, want to ensure that every student has those same opportunities.

Now, education, as we all know, is so much more than just test scores, Madam Chair, and curriculum. The school classroom is the primary laboratory for social and emotional learning. It's where children learn to co-operate, manage conflict, share ideas, develop critical noncognitive skills like problem-solving and self-regulation. We all know that those soft skills help to determine success in life, and they are learned through daily real-time interaction with peers and trusted adult role models, their teachers, of course. For three weeks the critical socialization has been absent.

When schools close, Madam Chair, the data shows that children's social development suffers significantly. Surveys have shown that 4 out of every 10 parents report a major or moderate negative impact on their child's social development following prolonged school disruption. Moreover, these developmental disruptions have immediate consequences. Research shows a clear link between loss of routine and increased behavioural challenges, with some studies documenting up to a 15 per cent increase in disciplinary incidents when students return to school after prolonged closures. The lack of structure is creating emotional dysregulation that they bring back to the classroom, further disrupting the learning environment.

10:50

This is not in our students' best interests, and it's not in our teachers' best interests. For our youngest learners the three weeks missed represent a crucial window for developmental milestones. For our older students it means missing the practice required to navigate the complex social landscape of adolescence. If these social-emotional challenges go unaddressed, research indicates a significant increased likelihood of long-term academic failure and high school dropout. The school is not just a building, Madam Chair. It is a community. It is a source of routine, predictability, and essential human connection. Every day – every single day – every minute away from that community chips away at that innocent child's sense of normalcy and social confidence.

Finally, Madam Chair, we have to talk about mental health. For many children in Alberta, their school is their safe haven, their source of stability, and their first line of defence against mental health struggles. School closures strip away this essential safety net,

hitting our most vulnerable children the hardest. Students with IPPs who rely on consistent one-on-one support are being left completely adrift. This strike means they are not just missing classes; they are missing essential scheduled services, like speech and occupational therapy. Progress that families have fought for years to achieve is now being lost.

I have heard reports of children with complex needs who are now backtracking on their social and developmental skills because the consistent structured environment that they rely on and need is vanishing. For children already struggling, the sudden loss of routine and prolonged isolation are breeding grounds for anxiety and emotional distress. Anxiety disorders are already the most significant mental health condition amongst adolescents. When the predictable structure of the school day vanishes, the sense of security goes with it, making these young people feel even more vulnerable.

I have received some heart-wrenching reports from parents describing symptoms of their children, including increased anxiety, severe meltdowns, violence at home, and deep-seated fears about falling behind. School offers more than just classes. It offers early identification as well. Our amazing teachers are often the first to notice signs of distress: the withdrawal, the sudden aggression, change in eating habits. With the schools closed, these red flags are going unseen. Our system for protecting vulnerable children is now blind and unresponsive.

Furthermore, we know the long-term productive power of education itself. Studies have linked sustained education to a lower likelihood of reporting symptoms related to depression and anxiety later in adult life. By keeping these doors closed, Madam Chair, we are not only compromising their present well-being but potentially increasing their vulnerability in the future. It is not fair to our students. We cannot continue to expose our children to this level of instability. We cannot continue to ignore the evidence that this work stoppage is directly harming their psychological well-being. That is why the Back to School Act is essential and must be passed as quickly as possible. Students must return to the classroom immediately to mitigate the negative effects that I've just outlined.

This does not mean, though, Madam Chair, that we do not address the growing problems that we have in our education system. Absolutely, we need to take more steps to address complexity in our classrooms. There is no question that we need to do more to address aggression in our classrooms as well. And there is no question that we need to do more to accommodate the incredible number of new Canadians and individuals from other provinces who have flooded our province in recent years, looking for the same thing that the Leader of the Opposition's family and my parents were looking for when they first came to Canada and to Alberta, a better life for their family and a better life for their future.

In order to help ensure that we move our education system forward, we will be hiring 3,000 additional teachers and 1,500 educational assistants. Now, I've heard some comments that that doesn't even add up to one teacher or one EA per classroom, but of course, Madam Chair, no final decisions have been made when it comes to the allocation of those teachers and those EAs. Our intent is to look very closely at the level of complexity in every single one of our classrooms and work with our school divisions to determine where these 3,000 teachers and 1,500 educational assistants are best served. Some communities undoubtedly will require this additional staff complement more than others. We will be working with our school divisions to extrapolate the necessary data that we need to get the best possible assessment of the needs of our education system and deploy an evidence-based approach. That is the right thing to do. [interjections]

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Nicolaides: Furthermore, Madam Chair, the cost of this strike, as I mentioned, is being paid by our students. The long-term academic damage, the missed social milestones, and the compounding mental health toll are consequences we can no longer justify. Again, as I mentioned, we will continue to take steps to improve classroom complexity conditions. We will continue to take steps to reduce class sizes and ensure that every student is able to receive a world-class education.

Now, Madam Chair, we've been working towards this goal for the past couple of years. We've talked about choices a little bit already, so I want to talk a little bit more about choices in the few minutes that I have left. In Budget 2024 the government made a clear choice to increase funding to our education system by 4.4 per cent, representing approximately a \$400 million increase that year alone. In Budget 2024 we made a direct choice to provide \$209 million to the PUF program to allow for a second intake to the program, to ensure that students who are identified as needing intervention are able to receive it as early as possible.

In Budget 2025, Madam Chair, we made a deliberate and clear choice to move from a three-year funding model to a two-year funding model at the behest and request of our school boards to ensure that fast-growing school divisions had the resources that they needed in a timely manner. In Budget '25 we made a clear and deliberate choice to commit \$8.6 billion to build and renovate 130 new schools. In Budget '25 we made a clear and deliberate choice to increase spending to education by 4.5 per cent, a \$426 million increase. In Budget 2025 we made a clear and deliberate choice to increase funding for the classroom complexity grant by 20 per cent, topping \$55 million this year alone. In Budget 2025 we made a clear and deliberate choice to increase funding to rates for PUF, to rates for refugee students, to rates for students with English as an additional language, and more.

In addition, in Budget 2025 we made a clear and deliberate choice to allocate \$40 million to support literacy and numeracy intervention, to ensure that students that are identified as requiring additional assistance are able to receive that, because we know full well that those formative years are critical and essential to a student's academic development. Furthermore, Madam Chair, looking at the cumulative effect since 2022, we've made a clear and deliberate choice to increase funding to our education system by \$1.5 billion.

Now, as I mentioned, that doesn't mean all of our problems are solved. Absolutely not. As I've said a moment ago, we understand and recognize that more work needs to be done. We hear loud and clear from our teachers that our classrooms are more complex, that our classrooms are larger than ever before, and we absolutely commit today to take the necessary steps over the course of the next few months and years to ensure that we're able to provide students with the support that they need, to ensure that we have hired the adequate number of teachers, adequate number of EAs so that all students can receive the world-class education that the Leader of the Opposition received and that I received when our families came to this country. That is our commitment, Madam Chair. As a father myself I want to see the absolute very best for my children and for all children in the province.

11:00

All of that being said, again, within the context of Bill 2, we cannot wait any further, Madam Chair. This amendment cannot proceed. We must move immediately with the bill because leaving

our students out of the classroom will hurt their academic success, their psychological well-being, and their future.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to begin by thanking the Albertans who are watching this debate right now. I want to thank those in the gallery who have been here all day and are here all evening because they're bearing witness to what's happening in this Legislature right now. I want to thank the thousands of Albertans who have been watching online and have been commenting. They know that what's happening in this Legislature right now is incredibly undemocratic, and it is an assault on public education, and it is an assault on the freedoms and rights of Albertans. They are rightly outraged, and they are going to make their voices heard. I'm very, very proud to have them here listening and watching what we're doing in this Legislature today.

I want to begin by saying that I am glad to hear that the minister is suddenly so deeply concerned about the learning conditions and the learning loss experienced by Alberta students over the past three weeks of the lockout and strike that they created. If only that minister of education had had the same interest in the learning conditions of those students for the past six years.

The minister stated repeatedly – and I'm so glad that he acknowledged – that the state of public education in Alberta is a result of the words that the minister said: the clear and deliberate choice of this government. It has been the clear and deliberate choice of this government, of the UCP, for six years to fund Alberta students at the lowest rate in the country. It has been the clear and deliberate choice of this government to not build the schools when they invited people to this province. Even outside of that growth that came from immigration, Alberta's schools have been bursting at the seams for years. They made a clear and deliberate choice, in the words of the minister, not to do that. They made a clear and deliberate choice, Madam Chair, to disrespect, devalue Alberta teachers and to defund our public education system. That was a clear and deliberate choice, and the minister just acknowledged that.

Now, the amendment that is before this House right now, which the minister did not speak to, was an amendment to remove the egregious notwithstanding clause that this government has included in this legislation. What the minister failed to address, what this government has failed to address, is why they included this provision in this bill. The government has the tools they need already at their disposal to issue an order under section 112 of the Labour Relations Code to issue back-to-work legislation that would have ended the strike and lockout that they created, that would have gotten Alberta students back to school. They could have done all of that without the notwithstanding clause.

What they have done by including the notwithstanding clause in this legislation is – this is not anything about directing local bargaining or to say: oh, they can't have job action at the local level. That's what the Labour Relations Code is for. That's what the Education Act is for. That's what the Public Education Collective Bargaining Act is for. We already have all that legislation. No; the use of the notwithstanding clause has one purpose and one purpose only. It is to protect the UCP. It is to protect themselves from knowingly, intentionally, and deliberately breaching the fundamental rights and freedoms of Albertans. That's what they want to do. That's what they intend to do.

We've listened to the Minister of Finance get up and say: this is the right thing to do, and we feel that we've been very reasonable in our bargaining. We had the minister of education stand up and say that it was a moral imperative to do this. If it is moral, if it is right, if it is reasonable, they would not need the notwithstanding clause in this legislation. They know. By including it in there, they are saying that they do not have the ability to justify this, to say that it is reasonable in front of a court. That is what they are saying. They're saying that they know they're being unreasonable. They know that their actions are unjustifiable, and they're saying that they alone have the right to make a determination that Albertans' rights and freedoms are meaningless. They are making that determination, and that's what this amendment is intended to address: to remove that absolutely egregious piece from this piece of legislation because this is just the first step, and we all know that.

Just as we got used to in this House the fact that this government repeatedly limits debate – it used to be something that was outrageous for a Legislature to do, to limit debate, to limit the rights and privileges of each member of this House to represent their constituents. But guess what? Over the last two years of this government it's now become just normal. I will be shocked if this is the only time we see it this session. I'm sure we're going to see it over and over and over again. We've gotten used to it, and that's what they're trying to do with the notwithstanding clause. They want to get Albertans used to the fact that their rights and freedoms are meaningless to this government, that they will override them over and over and over again. They're starting today, but we know there's more coming, Madam Chair, and that's what this amendment is intended to address.

Listen, we heard the minister talk about how they need to do more to address complexity. I will say that what we do not need, Madam Chair, is another task force. If this government was serious about addressing class complexity, they would have listened to the teachers that have been saying for almost two years that we need to address class complexity. They would have been listening to the Alberta students, to the Alberta parents who are saying that we need to address class complexity. So forgive Albertans if they're not suddenly going to be believing that this government is going to take this seriously when they have not for six years.

I love this sense of wonder that comes from this government about: "How did this happen? How did we get here? How did we get to this point where teachers are not in school and students aren't in school? We have no idea." They set the path for this, Madam Chair, for the last two years.

As the spouse of a teacher I'm outraged that my husband has not been doing what he wants to do, which is teaching students. That is his profession. He's been out of work. This government is trying to starve teachers into compliance. That's what their intention was. They never entered this three-week strike period with any intention of actually coming forward to address the very issue that they knew teachers wanted them to address: class sizes and class complexity. So they decided they're going to starve out 51,000 teachers. That was the decision they made. They came forward with nothing.

As a parent my children were not in school for three weeks. All of our kids who are school age were not in school for three weeks. For what? For them to be returned by this government to the exact same conditions that they were in before, with no commitment other than: oh, maybe there'll be another task force. You know what? Albertans spoke up, they used their voice, and they said: enough.

Now, I'm not surprised, Madam Chair, that the members on the other side had no problem voting in favour of motions to limit debate in this House. We see the e-mails they get, the e-mails they get from teachers, from parents, from students, from grandparents and people who don't even have kids who are saying that they are

outraged. These are people from across the province, from every constituency in this province. They've been speaking to their MLAs and saying: this is outrageous; we support Alberta teachers, we support public education, we want our kids to have the best learning conditions possible.

So I'm not surprised that these members would vote in favour of limiting debate because they probably don't want to have to get up and face their constituents. They don't want to get up and have to say why they're voting in favour of a piece of legislation that their constituents do not support. They don't want to say why they're forcing their kids back to the same conditions that they left. They don't want to say that, and I'm not surprised.

Madam Chair, we could all stand here and read numerous, numerous e-mails from Alberta teachers and parents and students who have written to us with their concerns. I think we have the right to do that. I believe that on this side of the House we represent I want to say over 2 million Albertans, right here in this space, yet their voices are being cut down to a mere three hours of debate, and that is shameful.

Now, listen, I want to address the repeated talking points from this government about the \$8.6 billion that has been so-called going to accelerate school construction. As my colleague the fabulous Member for Calgary-Bedlington mentioned, this \$8.6 billion right now is a fiction. There's actually no allocation in the budget of \$8.6 billion to construct schools. It's just simply not there. They can say it all they want, and we know how good their promises are. I'm sure they'll have a task force to evaluate what happened to the \$8.6 billion that they promised to school construction. What's actually in the budget for 2025 is around \$750 million, and that's including construction for charter schools. But that's for the existing schools. The schools that they promised years ago, the ones that aren't even completed yet: none of the schools that they've announced under their school acceleration program actually have construction dollars in this year's budget or next year's budget or the budget after that.

11:10

So \$8.6 billion: that's just going to design a whole bunch of schools that I'm certain at some point the UCP is going to say: "Oops. So sorry. We don't have the money to do that." This is the same government that just four months ago had an \$8.6 billion surplus, but now all of a sudden they've got a massive deficit. So I'm not going to be surprised, Madam Chair, if none of these schools materialize. In fact, the Minister of Finance in estimates also cast his doubt on the ability of his government to be able to build all these schools. We certainly know that they're not going to be able to commit the funding. They haven't committed it yet. Why do we believe that they will commit it in the future?

Listen, I represent a constituency in Alberta with three of the most overcapacity schools in the Edmonton public school division in my riding. Three of the community schools in my riding have gone to a lottery. That means kids who live across the street may or may not get into their community school. That's in elementary, it's at a junior high level, and it's at a high school level. Now, if you listen to the UCP, they'd have you believe that this just suddenly happened, but I was raising issues about this in this House, as have many of the members of my caucus, since 2019, since we were elected and we got to say: "Excuse me. The schools in my riding are full. The constituency that I represent is full. We need schools." This is not a surprise. This is nothing new. Edmonton public has been growing. It's one of the fastest growing school divisions in the country. So to say that this is suddenly a new issue is simply false, Madam Chair. This has been going on for years.

Now, if you look at that list of construction projects that have been approved for Edmonton public, you will see that the first

school that is intended to be built, that will actually open, will not open until 2028. That is despite the fact that just three years ago – three years ago – members that represented Edmonton constituencies, including the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, attended a school tour with the Edmonton public school division where we drove around the city and we looked at how overcapacity schools are. We looked at the demand. This was more than three years ago, Madam Chair. The school division said to us: “Guess what? We’re going to be out of high school spaces by 2027.”

Again, this is not a new issue. These schools have been busting at the seams for a very long time. But let’s go back and look at the announced school construction projects for Edmonton public: in 2020, zero; 2021, zero; 2022, zero. Three years in a row this UCP cabinet did not approve the construction of one single school for Edmonton public, and they wonder how we got to where we are now, Madam Chair.

I just want to mention as well – I thank the Member for Calgary-Beddington for talking about the high schools in her area that opened and were already overcapacity. My husband had the privilege of being an assistant principal at a high school that the Alberta NDP built and opened shortly in 2020, a fantastic school, a beautiful school. That school, Madam Chair, the day it opened was at 110 per cent capacity, already well over the 85 per cent that means a school is full. None of this is new.

I want to highlight that the issues that we’re facing right now, the lack of trust, the reason that this bargaining has failed and the government has had to impose with the most heavy-handed measures they possibly could a collective agreement that 90 per cent of Alberta teachers rejected – the reason they’re doing this is that it did not happen overnight either, Madam Chair. This is a result of six years of this UCP government undermining teachers and undermining public education.

Let’s go back, because I remember. Many of us were in this House. Many of these ministers were in the House when this happened. Back in 2019 they began with Bill 8, where they undermined the trust between teachers and parents and between students and teachers and parents. They brought that in. It was the first attack on public education, to insinuate that somehow schools were not safe spaces for students.

I know that this government only talks about one aspect of COVID, which is that, yes, there were mandatory immunizations and people had to wear masks, forgetting, of course, about the over 5,000 Albertans who died during the COVID pandemic. But also during COVID one of the biggest issues was about safety of kids going back to schools. Teachers were asked to do way more than they ever should, and all they asked in return from this government was: “Can you please take some measures to make schools safer? Can you make sure that there are smaller class sizes or fewer kids in one space? Can we open up other spaces? Can we put in measures to protect kids?” This government told them that they should just clean up a little bit more. They rejected all calls from teachers to actually make their students and themselves safer, and guess what happened? If the minister of education is so concerned about learning loss, we all remember how many times schools had to close over and over and over again because the UCP government did nothing to make schools safe for students or for teachers.

Then let’s talk about the Alberta curriculum, Madam Chair, a curriculum which was ridiculous when this government brought it in and completely disregarded all of the thoughtful input, development, work, research, evidence-based input that came from teachers on developing an actually developmentally appropriate curriculum. This government told Albertans that you can’t trust curriculum developed by teachers. No, no, no.

Then let’s talk about the reason why we are where we are right now to have the lowest per-student education funding in this country because this government, in the words of the minister, made a clear and deliberate choice to bring in the weighted moving average formula, a formula which ensured that the largest school divisions in the province, the four in Edmonton and Calgary, would never, ever, ever be able to fund every student that came through the door. In fact, they would always be behind in funding. Sometimes 5,000 students per year would be not funded because of the clear and deliberate choice this government made to use a model that did not fund every single student that walked through the door of a school.

They cut PUF. They cut regional collaborative service delivery, and then, of course, the culture wars that they have put on Alberta schools, where they have tried to undermine Albertans’ trust in what’s happening in schools with their so-called parental rights arguments that somehow schools and teachers are doing something insidious to try to turn kids, you know, into ways and undermine parents. That was all a culture war against teachers to pit parents and teachers against each other. Book bans and now forcing schools and teachers to require proof that girls who want to play on the junior volleyball team are actually girls. This has all been a deliberate attempt to undermine public education, to undermine teachers. We did not get here overnight, Madam Chair. We got here because of six years of a UCP government.

Madam Chair, I wanted to do so much more. I’ve only got three and a half more minutes, and I wanted to talk about the NDP record on this, which I’m very proud of because yes, it is true. Teachers did not get an increase in the time that the NDP were in government. It was a very difficult time. It was a time of economic recession when oil prices dropped in 2014 in a record way. Like all public-sector workers, they agreed at the bargaining table to take zeros. That was something we would never have asked public teachers to do if it wasn’t for the economic conditions we were in.

However, what we did not do as the NDP was underfund public education at a time of economic recession. We maintained per-student funding that was above the national average, that was above student enrolment growth and cost of inflation. We built and modernized 244 school projects in four years when this government can’t even do 70 in six years. We were committed to making sure that public education was still strong until we got through a rough time. I am sorry to the teachers who did make a commitment and hoped that things would get better, and then we got a UCP government and things got so, so bad.

I apologize to teachers that they didn’t get what they deserved when we could back then because we know you deserved it. But now you can afford it, this government can afford it, and what they’ve done is undermined your working conditions. They’ve made it so the classrooms that you work in are untenable. That is what this government has done.

So, Madam Chair, I have so many more comments that I would like to read, but I want to take my last moments to say thank you to all the Albertans who showed up on the steps of the Legislature, who showed up outside Rogers Place, who showed up at their MLAs’ offices, who showed up in the small towns, who wrote their e-mails, who phoned their MLAs, who phoned the Premier, who phoned their opposition members, who did all of that. And I really, really want to take a moment to thank Alberta students because it is the voices of the students. You know, this government talks about students, but they won’t talk to students. In fact, when they do talk to students, it’s to threaten them, it’s to tell them that they know better.

I have gotten some of the most thoughtful – thoughtful – comments in my inbox from Alberta students. Students like

Catherine in grade 7, who says: "I'm a grade 7 student in Edmonton. My home room has 33 students and is tied for the smallest home room in the school. Last year, there was a grade 7 class of 43. My class this year was told we should feel lucky that we have such a small class. I don't feel lucky. My younger siblings, when they were in grade 1, had a class of 32. My current class is at such a size that the teacher is unable to monitor if kids are even doing work or just playing video games."

I think about Clara in grade 4, who says: "I'm a student in grade 4. First of all, I think that kids deserve education so they can get smart, get a diploma. What if they wanted to work for the government but now they're starting to have second thoughts? So if you want to help kids work for you and you want them to be smart, I suggest you fund their education. So that is why I think you should fund public education." I could not agree more.

11:20

I want to give a shout-out to the high school students that met with me in my riding who talked to me about their worries about the strike and how it was going to affect their applications to university, but they still stood behind their teachers. They stood behind them because they knew that their teachers' working conditions are their learning conditions.

I want to give a special shout-out to a student who has captured the emotions and feelings of a lot of Alberta students, and that's Evan Li. Thank you to Evan for using your voice. Thank you to every single one of the teachers, the parents, the grandparents, the foster parents, the Albertans who don't have kids, parents from small ridings, from big ridings, cities everywhere across this province. Thank you. [some applause]

The Chair: Order.

Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 8 agreed to earlier this evening which states that after one hour of debate all questions must be decided to conclude debate on Bill 2, the Back to School Act, I must now put the following questions to conclude the debate.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:22 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Shepherd
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Ceci	Ip	Sinclair
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.

Against the motion:

Amery	Jones	Sawyer
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Schow
Boitchenko	Loewen	Schulz
Bouchard	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.

Cyr	Lovely	Singh
de Jonge	Lunty	Stephan
Dreeshen	McDougall	Turton
Dyck	Nally	van Dijken
Ellis	Neudorf	Wiebe
Fir	Nicolaides	Williams
Getson	Nixon	Wilson
Horner	Petrovic	Wright, J.
Hunter	Rowswell	Yao
Jean	Sawhney	Yaseen
Johnson		

Totals: For – 33 Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: Now, on the clauses of the bill. Are you agreed?

[The voice vote indicated that the clauses of Bill 2 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:40 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Shepherd
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Ceci	Ip	Sinclair
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.

Totals: For – 43 Against – 33

[The clauses of Bill 2 agreed to]

[The voice vote indicated that title and preamble carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:45 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Shepherd
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Ceci	Ip	Sinclair
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.
Totals:	For – 43	Against – 33

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 2 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:50 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Metz
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Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Shepherd
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Ceci	Ip	Sinclair
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.
Totals:	For – 43	Against – 33

[Request to report Bill 2 carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. van Dijken: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

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

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 2 Back to School Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to move third reading of Bill 2, the Back to School Act.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Alberta's teachers have been on strike since October 6. On October 17 the Alberta Teachers' Association rejected government's offer to enter into enhanced mediation. Enhanced mediation would have allowed teachers to return to their classrooms, given students back their learning routine, and allowed bargaining to continue in good faith. The ATA denied that opportunity to Alberta students and to parents, who have watched their children fall further behind with each passing day. This legislation prevents further harm from being done to Alberta students. It restores stability, gets kids back to learning, and gives families the certainty they deserve.

This legislation also invokes the notwithstanding clause to ensure that the stability built today with Bill 2 can last for the remainder of the agreement's term. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. This government would have preferred a negotiated settlement. For more than 18 months we negotiated in good faith with the ATA. We accepted the mediator's recommendation in March of 2025, a deal the ATA leadership endorsed but teachers rejected. We accepted the September memorandum of agreement based on an ATA proposal, but again teachers rejected that settlement. The ATA's latest offer included rigid classroom size and complexity clauses that would have stripped school boards of flexibility to manage

their schools effectively, and it would have nearly doubled the cost of the September memorandum, imposing a further \$2 billion obligation on Alberta taxpayers.

As President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance I have a duty to safeguard Alberta's fiscal well-being. We all know the province's bottom line is tied closely to the price of oil, and it was referenced by the members opposite that it was a leading factor in their decisions when zeros were given to the public service in their time. If oil prices continue to slide, our deficit could rise by billions. That's not political rhetoric; that's fiscal reality. In that context, it would be irresponsible to accept an agreement that dramatically increases costs without considering the impact it would have on other essential services.

Mr. Speaker, we all know our kids have been out of school for far too long. Parents want certainty, and students want to get back to learning. All other paths for resolution have been explored and exhausted. This legislation is the only path forward that delivers immediate certainty, not weeks or months from now but today. Invoking the notwithstanding clause is not a decision taken lightly, but it is the most effective and responsible way to restore learning, stability, and fairness to Alberta's education system.

This government has consistently shown respect for collective bargaining. We have successfully reached reasonable agreements with over 87 public-sector unions, including nurses, government workers, education support staff, and postsecondary faculty, all with comparable provisions. In this case, however, the ATA was unwilling to reach a fair and reasonable agreement, leaving Alberta students to pay the price. That is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. Our government will not allow Alberta students to lose another day of learning. This legislation is the solution. It restores balance, it delivers a fair agreement and functional outcomes, and, most importantly, it restores hope for parents and students, who have waited long enough.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all members to put Alberta students first and support Bill 2, the Back to School Act. Together we can ensure teachers and students are back in classrooms this week under a fair contract that respects both Alberta's educators and Alberta's taxpayers.

With that, 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 12 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Shepherd
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Ceci	Ip	Sinclair
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.
Totals:	For – 44	Against – 33

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

(continued)

Time Allocation on Bill 2

9. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 2, Back to School 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.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there's a well-known quote from Maya Angelou: when someone tells you who they are, believe them. Over the last three years time and time again this Premier, this government have repeatedly told us exactly who they are, and they doubled down hard on it today. They've made it abundantly clear that they are a government drunk on power, that has no respect for anyone who doesn't agree with it, not Albertans, not their elected representatives in opposition, and, quite clearly, not the Albertans, like some who join us in the gallery today, who have chosen to take on the honourable vocation of teaching.

Mr. Speaker, we stand here today after years of this government pushing our education system to the brink, and after having done so, this government has refused to bargain with teachers in good faith. They've refused to listen to their concerns or take any real, substantive action to address the key issues affecting them and their students. Instead, what we see this government doing today is taking unprecedented action to stifle their voices and trample on their rights. But, you know, it's even worse than that. This government isn't just shutting down the voices and the rights of teachers; they're shutting down the voices and the rights of students.

12:20

There was an excellent op-ed that was published this past weekend by former minister of education Mr. David King. In it he said, you know, teachers have a couple of advantages that students don't when they are working under bad conditions. Teachers are the more mature, so they're better able to deal with the stress, and teachers have the option to leave. However, he notes:

students can't leave... students don't have any advocate for improved working conditions, except [their] teachers. Bad working conditions for teachers are bad learning conditions for students and, at the end of the day, the bad impact on students comes back to haunt us all.

He says that if any voter or, hey, government MLA doesn't care about classroom conditions, perhaps they should ask a student.

Now, Mr. King also says that in this strike teachers are exercising their democratic right. Yes, their democratic voice. Yes, on behalf of themselves but also on behalf of their students, who don't have the same choice or voice to protest the intentional failures of this government. But this government has no interest in hearing from students any more than they've had any interest in hearing from teachers. I mean, hey, we saw that pretty clearly at the Premier's recent Alberta Next town hall, where she sat in silence while her executive director from her own office cut off a high school student's mic and suggested he should be beaten for daring to question this government's actions. Yet this government, the minister today has the gall to stand here and say that he's in this for the students.

Let's be absolutely clear, Mr. Speaker. This government is not acting for students. They are acting to protect themselves. This bill, their actions today, their use of the notwithstanding clause: they are all rooted in their choice to put their political interests, their desperation to hold on to power ahead of the interests of anyone else. It's a level of arrogance, entitlement, abuse of power unlike any we've seen from any Alberta government before.

To be absolutely clear, with the motions that they've passed this afternoon, with what they have put into Bill 2, they are choosing to do an end run around the normal practices of democracy in this House to allow them to take the unprecedented step of forcing through in a single day legislation that will not only strip teachers of their constitutional right to strike but make use of the notwithstanding clause to cut off any opportunity for teachers to be able to challenge the loss of that right in court. In doing so, they are not only showing contempt for Alberta teachers; they're showing contempt for democracy itself.

To return again to Mr. David King, in his op-ed he admits public education is not, in fact, perfect. But he notes that it's absolutely central to our functioning as a democracy, and given that we can't abandon it, we have to be willing to do the work to make it better. And then he makes a key point. He says:

Any government that undermines or abandons the project of improving public-school education in the face of difficulty is undermining and abandoning democracy.

And, in my estimation, the current government is abandoning democracy.

He says he sees a lot of ways in which they're looking "to fragment the public," pit people against each other, "marginalize local decision-making," but they are not doing anything to protect the public. That is why we're here.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 9 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:24 a.m.]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Horner	Petrovic	Wright, J.
Hunter	Pitt	Yao
Jean	Rowswell	Yaseen
Johnson	Sawhney	

12:40

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Shepherd
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Ceci	Ip	Sinclair
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.

Totals: For – 44 Against – 33

[Government Motion 9 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 2 Back to School Act (continued)

Ms Wright: Mr. Speaker, when I taught grade 6 social studies, I always looked forward to the beginning of the school year because that's when we would start our discussions about democracy, the constitution, freedoms, and rights. I loved watching the kids who were in my classroom as they gradually realized how important all these things were, as we explored where these rights and freedoms came from, what they meant, what they are, how they're protected, and who is in charge of protecting them.

Walking side by side with those rights are the freedoms we all enjoy and are entitled to. These freedoms include freedom of assembly and freedom of association. My grade 6ers were thrilled to find out that kids have rights and freedoms, too. We'd explore other countries' charters, bills of rights, and the UN convention on the rights of the child. We'd look at the Supreme Court of Canada and its role in making determinations, decisions, and interpretations. We'd talk about fairness, privilege, and how rights are for everyone. We'd do a deep dive into what responsibility meant and how responsibility is an action.

My grade 6 students understood that the constitution and the charter needed to be protected, and they knew that the success or failure of our democracy here in Canada is linked to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that to threaten one is to weaken another. Mr. Speaker, if a room filled with 11- and 12-year-olds knows this, why doesn't the UCP?

Merely hinting at the use of the notwithstanding clause sets the foundation reeling, but this UCP government has decided to go further and actually invoke the notwithstanding clause to deny teachers their charter rights. This government is trampling on the fundamental democratic rights of people who live here in Alberta. Just think about this for a moment. These are our brothers, our sisters, our mothers, our grandparents, our children's teachers. If this UCP government is willing to trample on their rights, Mr. Speaker, whose rights will they be trampling on next?

Invoking this section of the notwithstanding clause, just so this UCP government doesn't have to deal with the pesky difficulty of

getting back to the bargaining table with teachers, is both egregious and dangerous and profoundly undemocratic. The use of the clause not only violates teachers' charter rights, its use in the context of an ongoing labour action is unprecedented in this country, and it risks leading us down the road to a further erosion of labour rights in Canada. I mean, even Doug Ford figured out when he had gotten it wrong and it was time to back off.

This bill could easily turn the clock back on workers' rights. There are implications for fair pay, pay equity, worker safety, pensions, and protecting a job when a person is on leave. We cannot and should not and must not forget the struggles working people faced in the earlier part of the 20th century to ensure their work was seen to be of value and worth things like fair pay.

In those earlier days my grandfather inhaled coal dust every single day, my mother was fired when her employer learned she was pregnant, and employers knew that it didn't matter if someone became injured or died on the job because that was simply the price of doing business. The struggle those workers faced on the road to the establishment of unions meant violence, unrest, and unsafe working conditions for years, but they did all of that work, Mr. Speaker, in aid not just of their own members but all workers. We know that Canada's labour movement has a long history of improving workers' everyday lives. They fought for and won minimum wages, overtime pay, workplace safety standards, maternity and parental leave, vacation pay, protection from discrimination and harassment. Unions lift all of us up.

That right to strike is constitutionally protected. The Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties tells us that the Charter recognizes the right to strike under section 2(d), the right to freedom of association, and that the purpose of the protection of freedom of association is to protect collective action. Freedom of association has been interpreted by the courts to mean that employees have the ability to pursue workplace goals and activities in substantive ways; for example, through the practice of collective bargaining. That means that this covers the ability to engage in discussions with or amongst themselves, present demands, and negotiate with employers. But in order for collective bargaining to be meaningful, a party has to be able to withdraw their labour, and within legal limits here in Canada collective bargaining cannot be considered meaningful without strike negotiations.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, employers have responsibilities, too. The Supreme Court found that a meaningful process of bargaining necessarily requires or implies some sort of duty on the employer to negotiate or consult in good faith over working conditions. This is what teachers have been talking about. Right now, in fact, there's some thought out there on the part of legal scholars that for any definition of freedom of association accepted by Canadian courts to date, direct state interference with or prohibition of strike action constitutes a violation of section 2(d) and requires justification. That is exactly the reason why this UCP government is invoking the notwithstanding clause. They know that they have written and presented and want us to vote tonight on a piece of legislation that is unconstitutional, so they've decided to use that nuclear option instead of doing the right thing. This would not pass muster with the Supreme Court of Canada.

In a recent CBC Radio news article it was noted that on her weekend radio show the Premier said, quote: "We have to make sure that we're balancing the rights of taxpayers [balancing the rights of parents] and balancing the rights of students. I hope it doesn't end up going to a broader labour action." End quote. But I will point out, Mr. Speaker, that 51,000 teachers were left out of that statement, because balancing the rights of workers has to be top of mind, too. Teachers are workers, and their working conditions are students' learning conditions. They are the ones sitting across

that table from TEBA, the government, and they are represented by people they have elected to do that job. They are the ones the government should be negotiating with right now. But this legislation marks a clear choice not to continue with bargaining and, instead, to simply circumvent it.

The article goes on to relate that the Premier also said: "We are very pleased that we've been able to get more than half of our [collective] agreements signed. That's what I think we should do. Let's focus on the issues for each of the bargaining units and . . . solve them." Absolutely. I couldn't agree more, Premier. However, that would mean getting back to the table not just with the ATA but with the AUPE, HSAA, NASA and more and perhaps repealing this legislation. Just so we're clear, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this government should do. They should repeal this bill. Take it off the Order Paper. That would be the right and responsible thing to do. That would mean not using this, as one commentator said, as your get-out-of-jail-free card and, instead, listening to what these folks are telling you about wages, about working conditions, and about the very unique parts of their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, there were many, many alternatives, and you've heard some of them tonight, that this UCP government could have chosen to pursue. The first, of course, getting back to the bargaining table and taking a serious look at what teachers have proposed. That would've meant allowing TEBA to fully consider the latest proposal.

12:50

I can tell you from experience that teachers honestly and really do know what they're talking about when it comes to classroom complexity, tools for measurement and assessment, and the need for that school-to-school, classroom-to-classroom, student-to-student flexibility that we've heard of. As many of my colleagues have said today, another task force isn't required. All the government has to do is ask the 51,000 teachers who have already presented a plan to them. The ATA has research reports from 2025, 2024, 2023, that deal with all of these issues. All you have to do is open up the ATA website and you can find them. It's super easy, I promise.

Bargaining can be difficult and it can be met with what seems like insurmountable challenges. We only have to look to our neighbour to the west, B.C., for their recent experience. It can take a long time, but that doesn't mean you don't try and that you don't exhaust every single other option that's available to you. This legislation demonstrates an unwillingness to do just that, and we've known about this, as many of my colleagues have said, not just for weeks but for months and years. It makes it clear that the UCP government was simply not interested in considering the issues that led to strike action: committing to addressing classroom conditions within a new collective agreement. Again, Mr. Speaker, other provinces have somehow managed to figure this out. Why not ours?

Before I move on, I just want to make it absolutely crystal clear, no matter what the folks across the aisle say, that in addition to everything else, this legislation won't change the working conditions of teachers, and that means it will not change the learning conditions of all of Alberta's kids. The harm, as we heard lots of times this evening from the minister, won't end because of this legislation. It will continue, and that is on this UCP government, Mr. Speaker.

I talked a little bit earlier about all the tools that the government had at its disposal, and again, as many of my colleagues have already mentioned, many of these tools live within the current labour code. They didn't even have to look very far.

They could have used division 18, which talks about emergencies and unreasonable hardship. This section also allows for the minister

to call all the parties together, get them into a room, sit them down in the hopes of resolving remaining issues. That didn't happen. There's division 17, that's the one about the disputes inquiry boards, and I can imagine that they didn't want to go there because it didn't work out so well with the educational assistants. Also, again, the option to call a public emergency tribunal. In that case, that means they can declare that an emergency exists arising from a labour dispute in circumstances where damage to health and property, undue hardship for persons not involved in the dispute, harm to livestock – although children, of course, are not livestock – or irreversible damage to crops is or is likely to be a result. They could have looked at the labour code and done one of these, but they didn't.

That being said, if they were so fixed on legislation, as they seem to be, they could have chosen other options. They could have just ordered the strike and lockout to end and said: hey, we're going to send you off to interest arbitration and here's the process we're going to use. Or they could have done one that kind of combines a couple of things, where they send folks off to arbitration, but they said: you're only going to discuss a couple of things. They didn't do those either. None of those options were chosen, and that's because this government probably didn't want to run the risk of going to arbitration for fear that maybe the teachers would get what they were seeking in the first place.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, this legislation also appears to take the discretion away from the Alberta Labour Relations Board on the matter of levying fines for both individuals and organizations in the event of a contravention of the act. So the legislation doesn't just take rights away from teachers; it also means that the Alberta Labour Relations Board apparently isn't trusted to be the one in charge of doing its own job.

This UCP government should think extraordinarily carefully about using the notwithstanding clause. The current labour relations framework we have has very significant limits on the right to strike. Strikes can only come at the end of a contract and after a series of steps that take months. This is why the process takes a long time: it's supposed to. The regulation of strikes is the product of a careful historic compromise between labour, employers, and government, and the notwithstanding clause breaks this historic compromise. And when one side breaks it, it is absolutely naive to expect that the other will continue to uphold their side of the bargain. That simply isn't how humans work.

The right to strike was formally recognized as a constitutional right by the Supreme Court in a Saskatchewan Federation of Labour case in 2015. However, the history of the right to strike actually started right here in Alberta. In 1987 the Supreme Court heard a challenge to Alberta legislation that prohibited many public-sector workers from striking. Some of us will remember those days. While unions lost at that time, Chief Justice Dickson wrote a dissent that argued that the Constitution protects the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike. His dissent became law in 2015.

Now this UCP government wants Alberta to be the place where workers lose the right to strike and, with it, the right to bargain collectively. This is not just about teachers, Mr. Speaker. Workers know that if the UCP is prepared to take away teachers' constitutional rights, they are prepared to take away the constitutional rights of any group of workers. And I'm here to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that every single union member in this province, for that matter in this country, whether a member of a private- or a public-sector union, holds a greater understanding and respect for democracy and Charter rights in their pinky than this government has demonstrated here today. They know what Bill 2 means.

A government that uses the notwithstanding clause to put off difficult things, like constitutionality of legislation, for five years is

a government that isn't serious about governing. A government that's willing to sacrifice the rights of its citizens for political expedience is a government that is about authoritarian control and power, which is the furthest thing, Mr. Speaker, from good governance. During question period today the minister of education declared that you don't want labour issues. Well, Minister, you've got them now.

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to oppose this UCP government's decision to legislate Alberta teachers back to work, a decision that abandons fairness, erodes trust, and deepens the issues in our education system. Teachers didn't choose this fight. They were pushed into it by overcrowded classrooms, unsupported students, and by a government that treats education as a political arena instead of a trusted institution. This isn't a contract dispute; it's a leadership failure. From the start the UCP approached these negotiations like a campaign, not a conversation. They broke the basic rule of bargaining, maintaining confidentiality. They ran taxpayer-funded attack ads, leaked selective details to the press, and tried to manipulate Albertans into believing teachers are greedy and unreasonable.

But the plan backfired because parents aren't fooled. They have kids in these classrooms. They see the overcrowding, the shortages, the lack of support. They know that teachers are not in this to exploit the system; they're fighting for the resources that their students deserve. Parents: they see teachers bringing in their own supplies, paying out of pocket, staying late, and they're not buying the government's narrative.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's classrooms are stretched. That's a fact. Students with unique needs are being left behind because there simply aren't enough aides. Specialized services like speech pathologists have been removed, and counsellors are tough to find. It's gotten so bad that even janitorial services have been cut. Halls might be cleaned daily but classrooms once, maybe twice a week. Reports of teachers having to complete their own classroom maintenance are not uncommon. They become educators, counsellors, caretakers, and custodians. That's not what a healthy education system looks like.

Mr. Speaker, teachers have made it clear. They no longer see this government as a partner. In the last ratification vote 89.5 per cent of teachers rejected the proposed deal, an overwhelming message of no confidence. I'll tell you this. That number would not be nearly as high if teachers felt that they had a government that respected them, backed them, and honoured its word. When teachers look at this government, they don't see partnership; they see politics of division. They don't see collaboration; they see control.

1:00

While this government lectures teachers about fiscal restraint, the hypocrisy couldn't be more clear. Last April government bureaucrats received a 3 per cent wage increase. All right. In addition, effective September 1 this year senior department officials were handed raises ranging from 10 to 14 per cent. And over the summer the UCP created yet another layer of bureaucracy, the chief operating officer sitting between the deputy minister and the ADM, just so certain officials could enjoy a \$30,000 pay bump. All this was done to satisfy the Premier's new deputy minister, Dale McFee. Mr. Speaker, your government certainly has been busy saving money.

This is insulting to every teacher who's been told that there's nothing left in the budget. Apparently, there's plenty left, just not for them. While the UCP say that we can't afford it, they somehow find endless funds for the things that they prioritize. The UCP has increased overall government spending by 23 per cent in just three years. The size of government itself is up 14 per cent, with new

Crown corporations being created at an almost exponential rate, and each one comes with new executives, new boards, new communications staff, and additional costs.

The UCP loves to talk about discipline, but its own decisions have been anything but disciplined. The province of Alberta now requires \$75 oil to balance the budget, a number that should make every Albertan nervous, yet at the same time the UCP continues to hand out tens of millions in sole-source contracts to political allies. They talk about restraint, just not self-restraint. And now they have set their sights on spending even more on planes, trains, and automobiles. It's a real comedy of priorities, Mr. Speaker. Poor spending decisions by this government are not the fault of educators. Unlike the UCP, teachers didn't get red carpets or new china or the growing list of politically driven vanity projects.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who believes in responsible, conservative governance, I understand the need for restraint and balance. Stewardship is about priorities, and when those priorities reward insiders and neglect classrooms, that's not conservatism; it's carelessness at best. True conservatives believe in value for money, accountability, and integrity in how public dollars are spent. Those principles should start at the top, not be a rule for others and an exception for themselves. And now instead of fixing the mess that they created, this government wants to legislate its mistakes.

What the UCP are preparing around the notwithstanding clause represents something remarkable. Rather than preserve democratic balance, they are creating space for the UCP government to override inherent Charter rights whenever they are seen as obstacles to their political objectives. This is not a principled stand on provincial jurisdiction; it's a calculated use of state power to impose control where the courts would otherwise intervene. This Premier brands herself as a libertarian yet consistently centralizes power in her office while stripping away the independence of institutions and individuals.

It's extraordinary to witness what is happening inside of that party. The UCP's actions show a government more interested in dominance than liberty, and this is where the use of the notwithstanding clause becomes especially dangerous. Its use today means it will be wielded as a weapon tomorrow, and when governments lose control of their own priorities, they will start writing laws to cover for their failures. That is exactly what we're seeing here. Legislating teachers back doesn't reduce class sizes. It doesn't hire a single new EA. What it does is impose compliance and call it a solution.

Now, you can get teachers back into the classrooms, and maybe – maybe – that makes those recall campaigns a little harder to organize, but governing should be about accountability, not self-preservation. When a government imposes control instead of earning co-operation, it doesn't solve the problem; it buries it. When it resurfaces – and it will – the result will be 47 government MLAs looking for a job.

Mr. Speaker, this Wildrose government thrives on conflict because it can't survive on results. When faced with controversy, crisis, or criticism, its first instinct isn't reflection; it's deflection. Teachers, nurses, doctors, municipalities, regulators, Ottawa, although I'll probably give you that Ottawa deserves it: anyone can become the next scapegoat. That's not governing. That's rhetoric in place of results. It's politics by outrage, leadership by talk radio, designed to distract versus resolve.

The truth is simple. Teachers didn't abandon students; the UCP abandoned teachers and Albertans. Strong leadership means listening before legislating. It means respecting the professionals

who hold the system together. Instead of spending millions on PR campaigns, instead of smearing teachers, sit down with them. Instead of forcing them back by law, help fix the system that brought us to this point. When you legislate people back to work without addressing the root cause, you're not ending the dispute. You're simply guaranteeing another one.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are seeing through this government's tactics. They're tired of the finger pointing and seeing public servants turned into political targets. You can't deny what a parent has seen in their child's classroom. You can't legislate your way out of neglect. You can't call it leadership when your answer to every crisis is control.

Now, look, collective bargaining is never easy. It's demanding, complex, and often tense regardless of the government in power, but this UCP government has taken an already difficult situation and made it worse. Conservatives believe in a strong education system, so bargain in good faith with those who make education their priority, our teachers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, my chapan Michel Calahoo was a signatory to Treaty 6, a treaty we recognize here in this very House every week for the responsibilities that we have under this relationship. Our grandfathers and grandmothers had the foresight to know how important it was to include the medicine chest clause, which ensures health care, and the treaty right to education. Elders have told us how important it is to walk in two worlds. I imagine that this is the moment of my ancestors' wildest dreams, to see their grandchild here in this place to remind the UCP government of just how precious our children are and their well-being through education. It is quintessential to the meaning of life.

Furthermore, protecting our Constitution is paramount, which could have easily been done if this government would have accepted our amendment brought forth earlier and simply deleted the notwithstanding clause. However, this government refused to do so and consequently has now destabilized the protections of workers' rights in our province.

Mr. Speaker, all children in Alberta who are learning in our public education system deserve a properly funded classroom with more than adequate supports for kids with complex needs. It has been very clear what the teachers are asking for. In fact, they made a simple infographic about it. What we see in this legislation is a direct affront to our kids' well-being, and it only punishes our teachers. This is detrimental to the entire future of our province. Even my ancestors knew how important education is to future generations.

1:10

What we have seen with Bill 2 is nothing short of an assault on democracy, with our children's well-being and educational needs held hostage. What we witnessed here in the House today was not democracy. It is the erasure of Charter rights, and every Albertan should be concerned about the dangerous precedence that this sets. A government that fears debate does not serve the people; it simply serves itself.

By cutting down debate and ramming this bill through, this government has chosen convenience over accountability and silence over the voices of Albertans. Every member in this House was elected to speak for the people we represent, from cities to the

smallest of hamlets, from the reserves to the ranchlands. Limiting our debate to an hour is an insult to every Albertan who expects their voice to be heard in this Chamber. It tells Albertans that their stories, their struggles, their hopes, and their fears simply just don't matter enough to be discussed.

For years and years teachers have told the truth about the overwhelming size of their classrooms, the complexity of the children, and this government blames rather than believes. Teachers have been using duct tape and paper clips and thank you to hold it together to provide care to shameful chronic underfunding. I have heard from teachers in my constituency of irreparable harm, yet this UCP government continues to perpetuate this harm: cutting per-student funding by thousands, slashing PUF, laying off EAs, and now refusing to track class sizes. Who does that? Teachers' asks have been clear: smaller classes, wages that keep up with the pace of inflation, real supports for complexity.

Mr. Speaker, democracy depends on disagreement. It depends on dialogue. It depends on our willingness to listen even when it's inconvenient, even when it's uncomfortable. When a government shuts it down, it reveals exactly who it is: a government afraid of scrutiny, a government afraid of accountability and driven by self-interest, not public interest and most certainly not the interest of our teachers, parents, and families. This most certainly is not strength. It is cowardice, the cowardice of a government that cannot defend its very own actions before the people it claims to serve.

Let me be clear. When debate dies, democracy dies with it, and today this government has struck another low blow against the democratic foundations our forefathers built. Their legacy of an Alberta for everyone is diminishing right before our eyes. The difficult part: there's absolutely no way to make up for the damage that has been caused by Bill 2. Albertans deserve better. Teachers deserve better than Bill 2. Students deserve better than Bill 2. Parents and caregivers deserve so much more.

Alberta deserves a government that shows up, that listens, not one that silences. They deserve a leader who shows up and sits through uncomfortable times. Albertans deserve representation, not repression.

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, is that a point of order that I hear?

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of a Member

Mr. Schow: I do have a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I'll actually begin my point of order by giving credit to the Leader of the Opposition. This has been certainly a long debate, and this is the first point of order, so it sounds like there's a change of tone on the opposition side, which is certainly welcome news.

The member clearly pointed out the absence of the Premier in the Chamber, which is unparliamentary. That is something that is a long-held convention in this Chamber. We don't recognize the presence or absence of a member. Doing so slaps in the face of tradition in this House, and I would ask the member to refrain from doing that going forward.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise because I disagree with the Government House Leader. I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but I heard the member say that we deserve a leader who sits through uncomfortable conversations. That statement on its own doesn't imply anything; it doesn't say anything. Now, I think the Government House Leader took that in a very sensitive way given the . . .

An Hon. Member: The state of affairs.

Ms Gray: . . . the state of affairs.

Thank you very much, Deputy Whip.

What my member said was that we deserve a leader who sits through uncomfortable conversations, and I think that is a clear statement, not referring to the presence or absence of anyone. I don't believe it's a point of order.

The Speaker: Are there any other submissions?

I heard what the hon. member said, and she said that the people deserve a leader that would be in the House through difficult conversations or . . . [interjections] Easy. I actually have the floor now. It's my turn. It was pretty clear to me that the hon. member wasn't making reference to any particular person or any particular person's absence or presence. Still, a fair caution from the Government House Leader, but it's not a point of order.

Carry on.

Debate Continued

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve representation, not repression, and on this side of the House we promise teachers and students and families that we will not stop speaking truth to power, even when there are attempts to be silenced. We believe in fairness, we believe in respect, and we most certainly believe that better is possible.

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

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise to strongly oppose Bill 2. What this government has introduced is not only deeply undemocratic and unprecedented in Alberta's history; it would force teachers back into the very same conditions that drove this crisis without any new supports to make classrooms safer, smaller, or more effective for kids, and it does so by pre-emptively suspending Charter-protected freedoms using the notwithstanding clause, cutting off the courts in collective bargaining for years. This is nothing short of making a mockery of Albertans' rights and the sacred democratic traditions of this Chamber.

This government claims that they're doing it for kids, but let's level with Albertans. If that were true, we wouldn't be here. Everything that this government has done since they came into power has been to undermine, underfund, and dismantle public education. This crisis didn't arrive like a storm, out of nowhere; it was engineered by this government. For months teachers set out plainly what was needed: smaller class sizes, more supports in the classroom, real support for diverse and complex needs, a bargaining table where those issues are allowed to be addressed.

Instead, this government chose another path. They spent \$6 million to paint teachers as greedy, it bargained with one hand while drafting back-to-work legislation with the other, and now it reaches for the notwithstanding clause in a blatant attempt to silence the people closest to the classroom and shield the government from challenge and scrutiny. Back-to-work legislation and the notwithstanding clause are completely unnecessary and heavy handed. There are already levers in existing legislation to compel teachers back to work.

There is something very telling about the path that this government chose. What does it tell us? Well, it tells us that this government doesn't respect teachers. It tells us that despite their sugary words, this government does not respect parents. I'm sure that on both sides of the House we have heard from thousands of Alberta parents asking for more supports for their children, and it's fallen on deaf ears. It tells us that this government doesn't trust the education professionals because at every turn it undermines the work of educators.

They dismantled RCSD, a consortium of supports for students across school divisions in a region. They made deep cuts to the program unit funding, in some divisions up to 60 per cent, an early intervention program that was once the envy of the country. These are choices, and Bill 2 tells us that this government fundamentally doesn't understand what's happening in the classroom. Teachers, school leaders, and staff don't need some provincial complexity committee. Local school division leaders already know what needs to be done, and what they need is respect and adequate, predictable funding. They have been asking for it for years.

This government talks about the concerns of learning loss as a reason for this bill. But during the COVID-19 pandemic guess how much extra money the government invested in public education. Not a dollar.

1:20

Mr. Speaker, records matter. This government has been in office for six years. While the UCP likes to blame population growth as an excuse for the challenges the education system is facing, school division leaders, including myself, have sounded the alarm for years about the need for more infrastructure investment, but this government chose to turn a blind eye to the challenges in the system until it could not be ignored. Instead, what this government likes to do is to reduce resources through the guise of funding formula changes, reallocate existing dollars and call it new money, pit rural and urban school divisions against each other while they compete for the same dollars, and keep the education system starved and underfunded. Whatever the government's spin and talking points might be, the facts are clear: lowest funded education system in the country.

Fundamentally, what this legislation tells us is that this government doesn't care about Alberta's kids. I want to share with members of this House why this is personal for me. I'm the son of immigrants. Chinese was the first language I spoke at home and the first language I learned. In fact, I only learned how to speak English when I started school. I remember the language supports I received in grade 1, a pullout resource room. I was always excited to see Mrs. Stoyko,* the resource room teacher who would take time to read with me and help me sound out the words. I loved seeing Mrs. Berzansky,* who was the school's full-time librarian, who would put a favourite book in my hands and say: this is the latest book in the Goosebumps series. But today you would be hard pressed to find a full-time teacher, librarian, or an extra educator that can do reading recovery with kids. These are not nice-to-haves; they were lifelines for kids like me. This is how a shy kid like me found my voice. That is what public education did for me.

On this side of the House we want every child in this province to have the same opportunity and supports to succeed. For the kid who arrived last month, for the kids struggling with reading, for the kid who needs a steady adult today: this is what this strike is about. It's about the kids who don't have the needed supports to succeed, kids that this government has wilfully chosen to ignore.

I know it's unlikely that we will win this vote tonight, but to the teachers and Albertans who have written to me and who are watching tonight, the fight is far from over. Albertans always have a choice. We have the choice of electing a government that cares about kids, and in the not-so-distant future Albertans will have the choice and opportunity to elect an Alberta New Democrat government.

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

Ms Al-Guneid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with discontent that I rise and speak on Bill 2 and the government's outrageous use of the notwithstanding clause. I want to start by saying that as a parent of two kids, yes, of course, I want to see students back in school

where they belong. Schools are not just a place for education. In the wise words of a grade 7 student from Calgary-Glenmore: school isn't just about learning facts; it's about friendship, laughter, movement, belonging, and memories. This is what she told me: I hope you understand how important it is for us as students to be back where we can grow not just in knowledge but in heart. This is a grade 7 student who e-mailed my Calgary-Glenmore office.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, no parent wants to see their kids in overcrowded classrooms. No parent wants to see strained teachers with three, five, and even seven IPPs in one classroom. No parent wants to see more temporary classrooms in trailers that have become permanent. No parent wants to see classrooms in the gym space or in the library or in the music room. No parent wants to see a child with complexity struggling in the classroom. An aide shared with me that a teacher had to change diapers for a grade 1 student because of their physical and mental needs.

A parent from Calgary-Glenmore e-mailed me on the impact of classroom complexity and underfunded classrooms on her family, and I quote here, Mr. Speaker.

I have six-year-old twins, and they both started grade 1 this September. My daughter Clara was diagnosed with autism at the Child Development Centre at the Alberta Children's hospital when she was two years old. Her most recent assessment with her developmental pediatrician placed her severity level at 3, which means: requires very substantial support. Clara attended an early intervention program at the Society for Autism Support and Services from 3.5 to 6.5 years old. In this program, funded by FSCD and Alberta education, Clara had a team that consisted of a behavioural consultant, a speech-language pathologist, an occupational therapist, a social worker, a certified teacher, two educational intervention therapists, and a program director: a full team that made a significant impact on her development at a crucial time in her growth.

My husband and I enrolled Clara with the Calgary board of education for grade 1 as we hoped she would be placed in a supported classroom near her home, making it easier for us to manage getting both children to and from school. Calgary board of education placed Clara in a difficult classroom, where she would have one certified teacher and share one educational assistant with another autistic child. To go from a support team of eight to a team of two is unreasonable, to say the very least. Clara would clearly not get the support she requires, and she would very much disrupt the learning of every other child in that classroom. CBE clearly does not have the resources to provide for my daughter and other children who require significant support and who deserve an appropriately supported education.

This level of class complexity is completely unreasonable.

Mr. Speaker, this parent from Calgary-Glenmore has sent the Premier and the education minister 23 e-mails and copied my office to highlight her struggle as a parent in our public education system. No parent – no parent – accepts to see their kids struggling in the classroom in an unfunded public education system.

I really also want to emphasize that funding public education is an economic imperative, Mr. Speaker. I finally heard the education minister today talking about economics, but he missed the part that the future workforce actually requires a well-funded public education system. Public education makes economic sense because it helps us establish the future workforce who will be able to compete in new technologies, in new industries, in the future economy, and in all the emerging energy races that will keep our province competitive. And if Alberta needs to bring more specialized talent from outside the province, public education is imperative for the families of the skilled workforce who will make Alberta their home. If we want skilled workers to live and stay in Alberta, then big talent expects strong public services, strong education, and strong health care systems for their children,

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

grandchildren, and their families. Our province requires skilled workers, and skilled workers want to stay for the long term, but they will not make this province home with subpar education outcomes for their children.

Mr. Speaker, all students should be able to access quality education. It should not be a privilege to access quality education. We heard from the Leader of the Opposition his moving story on how public education was actually an equalizer in his childhood. Ensuring a strong public education levels the playing field so that a student in rural Alberta has the potential to reach her potential, just as a student in my riding in urban Alberta, or that a student with disabilities from Hinton doesn't fall through the cracks. Public education provides access and equity, and it must remain for the public good and for the economic good of our province. The hard and difficult truth is that dismantling public education would hurt students in rural Alberta more than urban Alberta, who rely mainly on their neighbourhood schools and don't have as many options. This is a message for all UCP members with rural ridings.

1:30

All students in Alberta deserve an education that prepares them to reach their potential, and imagine the lost potential for Alberta if we take that away. Mr. Speaker, as a parent I want the best education outcomes for my children, and all parents expect no less for their children. Children deserve to be back to schools where they belong and not under the subpar working conditions that this government is forcing teachers to go back to.

I visited every CBE, Catholic, and francophone school in my riding in Calgary-Glenmore. I met with teachers and educators and principals in 15 public schools. I can tell you with confidence that these dedicated educators love their students. They care about their students. Teachers want their students to succeed, just as the parents want to see their children succeed.

This bill changes nothing. It doesn't set up the students or the teachers or the parents for success. I cannot support this bill in good conscience, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member Tejada: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against Bill 2, the back to work legislation.

Well, if you talk to teachers, they'll tell you. That's a quote from our Premier. But has she actually talked to any teachers, because I think if she had we wouldn't be where we are now with the public education system in crisis and the biggest public service strike in Alberta's history.

Before I go further, I want to thank teachers for everything they do in difficult circumstances, as a parent and as a fellow public school grad. This government has pre-emptively used the notwithstanding clause to undermine our teachers' bargaining rights, not just now but for years to come. This move is undemocratic, unconstitutional, and a betrayal of our educators, students, and our province as a whole, and it's a pattern.

The ministers opposite have justified Bill 2 as a way to prevent learning loss, irreparable harm, and labour unrest, but that harm has already happened and they've done it through wilful neglect. The anxiety, the compromised potential of our students, the lack of supports, the loss of hope, most importantly, for students and teachers lays squarely at the feet of this government. What we see now is the result of choices this government has made. They've stopped reporting on classroom sizes; they did that in 2020. They voted down a motion from the Member for Calgary-Beddington to report on classroom size and complexity. That was a choice. They ignored teachers, students, and parents who have been talking about

ballooning classroom sizes for years. That's a choice. And keeping our per-student funding at the lowest in the country: also a choice.

For years we've had to listen to this government's justifications and deflections for their failures to plan for growth – blame inclusion, blame immigration, blame teachers for advocating – and somehow they expect us to all still believe that they care about student mental health and our students' future prospects; not if you're willing to other them and certainly not if you're willing to trample on their human rights or silence them.

We're hearing from students, some as young as nine, some teens like Evan Li and my constituent Layla,* who will be sending a letter to the minister soon. They are part of a youth movement that holds more care and compassion for their teachers than this government is capable of, and they will not forget. This government may be able to turn off a mic but this crop of students is like fierce older siblings speaking up for everyone coming up behind them. They're a force to be reckoned with, and this government would do better to show them some respect as well.

Conditions in the classroom are a major pain point, and through the conversations I've had, I've heard about broken bookshelves, black mould on ceilings, and mouse droppings where kids sit to read. I've heard about that desperate need for EAs in complex classrooms. I've heard about the impacts on mental health and people wanting to leave the profession. In many ways this bill is the government's let them eat cake moment. They've likely not spent any time in these classrooms, and I don't think that they would. After all, the carpets for storytime in these classrooms aren't quite like the new ones gracing the floors of the Premier's office, but the UCP has plenty of money to spare on that and ad campaigns attacking teachers.

They're forcing teachers and students back into untenable situations. They won't negotiate in good faith. They cut off mics, plug their ears, and refuse to invest in public education. The treatment of our public education has all the hallmarks of an abusive relationship. They will continue their pattern of control and abuse of power, and they will likely pass this bill, but that's the thing about abusive relationships: you can't force respect, and you cannot force trust. With Bill 2, this government has lost both. Well, Premier, if you talk to Albertans, they'll tell you that they deserve better.

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

Member Kayande: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education made me what I am, the public education system, similar to the story that my leader told but not exactly in the same way. You see, I too grew up in Alberta. I too got educated in the world's best public education system. But that's not the whole story, because in 2020, you remember, we were shut down. There was a pandemic in August, and that was the time that the Jason Kenney government decided that they would change the school curriculum, take out everything that was good and replace it with everything that is garbage from the U.S. south. If it were not for that curriculum change under the Jason Kenney government, I would not be standing here right now. Jason Kenney made me; he put me here. Jason Kenney was the good old days.

I have a child in university right now. I have a child in university right now, I have a child in grade 10, and I can tell the difference between the quality of education that they got. It's not okay for me, and it's not okay for the people of Alberta. That difference is caused by this UCP government. It is caused by the wilful blindness of everyone who follows – across the aisle. It is caused by the malice of the ministers who have made this happen.

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

To the people of Alberta: they're hoping you're going to forget. To the thousands of people who, even now at this hour, are watching the live stream: they don't respect you. They think they can do this and they can get away with it, and then they'll do member statements on how Justin Trudeau is bad for the country, and they'll think everything will be fine.

Just heard the other side say: yeah, it's true. They don't respect you. My call to you, the people of Alberta: do not forget; keep this in your heart; remember. How we win is removing their mandate to govern. That is your job. Thank you.

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

Member Gurinder Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are asking: who is forcing the kids to go back to overcrowded classrooms? It's this Premier and this UCP government. Who is forcing teachers to attend and stand and protest on the steps of the Legislature instead of teaching? It's this Premier and this UCP government. And who is forcing the futures of our future generations into darkness? It's this Premier and this UCP government. It's shameful, it's hurtful and it's unforgivable.

Before I go any further, Mr. Speaker, our schools welcomed 91,000 new students, and I want to thank all the teachers for doing the very best that they could to give the best education to all those kids. Instead of offering any help, this government stopped reporting class sizes. Not only that, they voted against Bill 202, the Education (Class Size and Composition) Amendment Act, 2023 introduced by the Member for Calgary-Beddington. The UCP cut the past student funding to the lowest in the country, 16 per cent below the national average. This government fired thousands of EAs during COVID-19 when students needed them the most.

I have met many parents, Mr. Speaker. None of them asked to put a citizenship mark on the licence. None of them asked to put new licence plates behind their cars. None of them asked to support the separatist agenda. They stand in solidarity with the teachers, and they asked me to do the same, and I am proud to stand in solidarity with all the teachers of Alberta.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, I want this UCP government to tell what's wrong in asking for a fair wage for shaping the minds of the next generation of Albertans. Tell me what's wrong in asking for more resources to address classroom complexity. Tell me what's wrong in asking for more staff to address more enrolment in our schools. This government has failed Albertans, and we will not let this government continue with this agenda.

Mr. Speaker, this government is killing our tree of public education branch by branch, leaf by leaf. This government stopped watering this tree long ago. Today it poured the poison of the notwithstanding clause in the roots of this tree. We can and must cure this tree. We can do this in three simple ways. We can respect the people who are oxygen of this tree, which are our teachers sitting right there in the gallery. We can water this tree with the water of integrity, and come 2027, let's work together so this UCP government doesn't get anywhere close to this tree.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 9, 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 2, the Back to School Act at third reading. Bill 2, the Back to School Act was moved by the hon. Finance minister.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:42 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Guthrie	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Shepherd
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Sigurdson, L.
Ceci	Ip	Sinclair
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Dach	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.
Totals:	For – 44	Against – 33

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

Some Hon. Members: Shame.

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. today, October 28, 2025.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 2 a.m. on Tuesday]

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