



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 28, 2025

Day 3

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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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)  
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
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Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)  
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),  
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## Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 2

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Rick Wilson	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
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Chelsae Petrovic	Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement
Jason Stephan	Parliamentary Secretary for Constitutional Affairs
Ron Wiebe	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (North)
Justin Wright	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (South)
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development

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Hunter  
Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton–City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce family members of Dr. Darren Markland. I apologize. I did not have my notes prepared in front of me yet. I am pleased to have here today his wife, Dr. Julia Ackland-Snow; his sister, Heather Hall; and his brother-in-law, David Hall. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you today leaders from Wounded Warriors Canada. Wounded Warriors Canada is a national mental health service provider dedicated to serving trauma-exposed organizations, professionals, and families. Mr. Scott Maxwell serves as CEO, and Mr. Richard Martin serves as board chairman. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce a number of constituents from my riding: Simone Chalifoux and Pierre Picard, who are public education advocates; my incredible constituency manager, Angela Saxby, and her two sons, Matyx and Leo Krausher; as well as Tejashui Armstrong, a grade 11 student from my riding who has shared her experiences during the strike with me. I ask them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the new president for AUPE. Sandra Azocar is here together with, I think, 10 members of AUPE. On behalf of Edmonton-Glenora I would like to have them all rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

**Ms Hayter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce my daughter Clara Hayter. You are compassionate, kind, and incredibly bright, and I look forward to you being an advocate and an activist.

Thank you for being here during this week watching democracy. Please rise.

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

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with immense pride to introduce the people who have been my unwavering foundation, my family. Joining us in the gallery are my husband, Matt, whose support has been my strength, and our children, Emmett, Cassidy, and Quin, who inspire me every day to pursue a better Alberta. Their love and encouragement have guided me for this moment, and I'm honoured to share this journey with them. I ask them to rise and accept the welcome from this Chamber.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. I rise to introduce Lylene Bell, a senior who is a constituent in the Riverdale community. I met her and her daughter Amy and many others as they were fighting for affordable housing to stay in Riverdale. She's also very concerned about the UCP's choice to reduce seniors' benefits. Please rise, Lylene, and receive the welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you Maliyah Chance. She is a Canadian-born multidisciplinary artist and youth empowerment advocate from Calgary of Laotian descent and currently holding the title of Miss Alberta 2025. She is dedicated to fostering resilience, confidence, and self-worth in youth. Maliyah is joined by long-time nonprofit leader Jim Campbell. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you Amy Bell. Amy is a Mill Woods constituent and also an amazing housing advocate who helped garner support for the preservation of her mother's affordable housing units in Riverdale. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-West Henday.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I am proud to rise today and honoured to introduce my wonderful family: my mama, Karen Arcand, my cousin Angie Walker, and my wonderful niece and nephew, Mila Walker and Cullen Arcand-Paul, who I do this work for. They help lift me up and make sure that I do this work. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you David Walsh and Reed Dixon. They have been working in my constituency office, and as we all know, it's those people that are working in our constituency offices that help us serve our constituents, as they do in the wonderful riding of Sherwood Park. Would you both please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you Katie, Keira, and Everett here in the gallery

as well as three wonderful Calgary-Glenmore constituents: Jennifer, Michael, and Adelyn. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise to introduce to you and through you Angela Johnson, who is my constituency assistant. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Indigenous Missing Persons

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Mr. Speaker, right now there are 32 Indigenous families in Alberta who are grieving their loved ones' disappearance. I send my deepest sympathies and the sympathies of every member of this Chamber, who recognize your losses.

This summer folks from across Turtle Island were aware of the heartbreaking disappearance of a youth from the Edmonton area, the late Samuel Bird. Sadly, two weeks ago the family of this Indigenous boy were given the worst closure in this story, that he would not be coming home. This was after almost five months of searching by the family and the community that rallied behind this young boy's family. I think as well of the family of the five-year-old Darius Macdougall, who disappeared near Long Island Lake on September 21 of this year, the family of this baby who may never see him again.

Mr. Speaker, the death of any Albertan is sorrowful, especially so for the families who are at the mercy of a system that may be slow to respond to the crisis before them, who may feel as if the world has come to an end, and for whom moving mountains is not enough to bring their family home. Today I am wearing a pair of red pants on my lapel to bring awareness to the lives of those Indigenous peoples, which include women, girls, two-spirit, and men and boys, who many in our community refer to as missing and murdered Indigenous relatives.

Mr. Speaker, may we always remember those who have been murdered or who have gone missing. I'd like to thank the first responders such as volunteers, the police, and search and rescue crews, who do what they can with the resources they have for missing and murdered Indigenous relatives. May the Creator guide our lost loved ones home. Hay-hay.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Grande Prairie.

### 1:40 School Class Size and Complexity

**Mr. Dyck:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just yesterday our government reaffirmed its commitment to getting students back to school, but we know that simply returning children to the classroom is not enough. Educators are facing rising behavioural challenges, increasing diverse learning needs, and more frequent incidents of classroom aggression. They've asked for support to manage these demands, and this government is listening to teachers. That's why Alberta's government is taking immediate and decisive action to address the growing complexity in classrooms across Alberta.

In response to these concerns, Alberta's government is committing to replacing the outdated 2004 standards for special education and working with school boards to gather and publicly report data on class sizes and on composition, Mr. Speaker. Additionally, the Minister of Education and Childcare launched the Aggression and Complexity in Schools Action Team. This team brought together front-line educators, school leaders, and support staff to identify practical, classroom-focused solutions.

Mr. Speaker, the action team's final report is expected to be released in the next few weeks. Its recommendations will help guide a comprehensive road map for safer classrooms and stronger learning environments for students, which a working group will help to implement. Our government has spent the last six months working with teachers through the action team to ensure the success of not just our education system but of every single child within it. Let me say that again: every single child within it.

Over the next three years we are committed to funding to hire 3,000 teachers and 1,500 educational assistants. This funding can also be used to provide additional student supports, including assessments for complex needs, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology, and other in-class services. Mr. Speaker, no teacher should be harmed while doing their job. We will achieve this by giving teachers the tools and supports they need to make that possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** My apologies to the previous speaker, who knows as I do that Grande Prairie is indeed not in Edmonton.

Edmonton-City Centre indeed is in Edmonton.

### Dr. Darren Markland

**Mr. Shepherd:** Today I rise to pay tribute to someone who was a friend and inspiration to many, Dr. Darren Markland. Truly one of the best humans I've ever known. Husband, father, physician, cyclist, poet, philosopher, and public health advocate who lived and loved with abandon, with a ready laugh, infectious smile, and a heart as big as the outdoors he loved so much.

I met him through the cycling community. Darren was a fearless rider who rode year-round no matter the weather, both for love and for health. Well known on the streets and on the trails as a vibrant ambassador and passionate advocate for cyclists, he loved community, helped found Coffee Outside, where he'd bring his creation the barista bike to brew free coffee for everyone.

He was a fixture in the ICU at the Royal Alex, where he saved countless lives and provided solace and support at the end of many more. There he faced some of the darkest, most difficult things imaginable, but in staring into that abyss, he never failed to bring light to those he served, to truly see them, because no one was anonymous for Darren. Everyone was fully human, and he cared for them, every part of them: body, mind, and spirit. Even those who rejected his knowledge and resisted his help received his care. Darren cared a lot, which is why he chose to fight for public health and our public health care system.

He was the first doctor to stand with me in March 2020 to speak against policies targeting him and his colleagues, and he kept speaking throughout the pandemic with media, on social media, advocating for science and public health, and sharing the stories of the impact of COVID on the patients he served. Through that he gained a level of celebrity, but – you know what? – he was one of the humblest people I've ever known. Darren didn't seek the spotlight, but I'll say that his soul shone too bright to be hidden. His loss hurts because in the shadow of the challenges our world faces today, we need more people like Darren. Perhaps the best tribute we can pay to him is to strive to be more like Darren.

**The Speaker:** Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Yuill School of Agriculture

**Mr. Wright:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Agriculture is more than just an industry in Alberta. It's the heart and soul of our province. It's where our values, culture, and entrepreneurial spirit were born. It's

a force that has shaped the resilient and tight-knit communities we proudly call home.

With the creation of the Yuill school of agriculture we're investing in future generations who will carry forward Alberta's proud legacy of agriculture. Also known as the south Alberta school of agriculture, this new collegiate school marks a significant milestone for public education and opportunity in southeastern Alberta. Developed by Prairie Rose school division, it will provide students with the knowledge, skills, and hands-on training they need to thrive in one of Alberta's most essential and cherished industries. With programming in agriculture, horticulture, greenhouse management, heavy equipment operation, and skilled trades it will prepare students for meaningful careers rooted in our province's soil.

Under the leadership of superintendent Dr. Weeks Prairie Rose school division continues to lead in innovative and career-focused education. With 18 public schools, 18 Hutterite colonies, and a growing network of collegiate programs Prairie Rose is playing a vital role in education and empowering the next generation of Albertans, with Budget 2025 including \$22 million in start-up funding over three years and \$43 million in capital supports for new collegiate schools just like this one. With the projected enrolment of 120 students over three years the Yuill school of agriculture will offer young Albertans a direct path into agricultural industries while strengthening the roots in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, this is more than just a school. It's a promise to our youth, our province, and our future. It's been a great honour to advocate and secure funding for this essential program in my community. To all those who helped to bring this vision to life: thank you for helping shape a stronger Alberta.

#### Support for Teachers

**Member Batten:** Mr. Speaker, the world is watching. They are watching as Albertans cast a vote not with a ballot but with their presence, their voices, and their dedication to a future worth fighting for.

Alberta's teachers have shown extraordinary restraint and integrity through this government's insulting negotiations. While teachers are standing up for their students, the government is cherry-picking concerns from the Dumpster fire they created. Teachers never stop caring about their students. They stood up because they care so deeply, because teaching has never been about power, because it's actually about shaping a better future for every child. While the government changed the rules in the middle of the game, teachers kept their focus where it has always been, on their students. They deserve respect, not retaliation, and Albertans know it.

Parents, too, understand this. Parents know that education is the greatest investment a province can make. They want their children back in the classroom, one that invites curiosity and supports growth. They do not want their children to return to the same overcrowded spaces and underfunded programs that make it so much harder to teach and so much harder to learn.

Mr. Speaker, young Albertans, too, are watching all this. They're learning more than any textbook could ever have taught them, and they're demanding better from this government. It's not about winning. It's not about politics. It's about being on the correct side of history. It's about protecting democracy and people's rights. It's about respecting hard-working Albertans, and it's about time this government heard them.

#### Support for Education

**Member Gurinder Brar:** Growing communities, lack of schools, crumbling public education system. Is it acceptable that children

must travel an hour each way just to reach their overcrowded classrooms? The answer is no. Is it acceptable to send teachers back to work without respecting their collective voice? The answer is no. Is it acceptable that the futures of our next generation are being pushed into darkness, with their hope for a brighter tomorrow fading away? The answer is no.

Teachers are not asking for something unreasonable. They are asking for their rights, respect, and resources. Parents are not just frustrated about finding child care spaces; they are frustrated with this government's morally corrupt attitude towards public education. Kids don't just deserve to go back to school; they deserve smaller class sizes closer to their homes with every support that they need.

Education is the ladder that lifts the kids' future to the heights of prosperity. This UCP government has weakened that ladder, taken the nails out of the steps, and lifted it above, making it difficult for kids to even put on their first step. With the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona as our Premier we will put back the nails, strengthen this ladder, lower it down so that every child can step on it. With a world-class education system we will have world-class minds that will build a world of endless possibilities. There are three things, Mr. Speaker, that drive a nation: education, education, and education.

1:50

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The first question goes to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Collective Bargaining with Teachers

**Mr. Nenshi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night we observed one of the most cowardly acts ever committed by a government. Ironic given that this is a government and a Premier who sell themselves as being the tough ones, the ones who stand up for Alberta when nobody else can, but they cannot stand up for Albertans. What this government did yesterday was show that they're scared. They're scared of dissent. They're scared of even hearing opposing arguments. They're scared to stand up for themselves. This was all avoidable. Why didn't the Premier start reporting on class sizes . . .

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

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure how personal insults and name-calling help the situation. That's a strategy that the NDP would like to pursue, and that's fine by them. On this side of the House, however, we are laser focused on improving conditions for our students. I've recently sent a directive to our school boards to collect information regarding student-teacher ratios, number of students with complex needs, number of teachers, number of educational assistants so that we can get a clear and definitive understanding of the conditions in every single one of our classrooms to help us make informed decisions.

**Mr. Nenshi:** I suppose there is a first time for everything, given that it is this government that stopped collecting those very data six years ago. This government just admitted that it doesn't know anything about the class size problem despite everyone telling them about it. When it became clear this spring that teachers would not accept a deal that didn't deal with class size and complexity, the government didn't use the tools at its disposal at the time. The government could have called a dispute inquiry board and stopped this entire thing before it started. Why didn't the government call that dispute inquiry board and avoid the job action?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, we have been negotiating with TEBA and the ATA for 18 months. You know, this hasn't been easy on anybody; parents, children, teachers. We always want to bargain in good faith. We've shown that we were able to reach negotiated deals with UNA, with the public service, and we're talking about the biggest salary increases people have seen in probably two decades. We know it's time, we know that needs to happen, and we're focused on getting kids back in classrooms.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Eighteen months minus a six-month summer break.

Even after this strike started, the government could have ended it on day one or day two. The government had the right and has the right under the labour code to force binding arbitration instead of dragging themselves and all of us through all of this. Instead, they locked out teachers. Instead, they had an arbitration proposal that explicitly excluded complexity and class size. I've asked this before; I'm going to ask it again. Why did the government engineer this strike and keep it going so long?

**Mr. Horner:** We certainly didn't engineer the strike. Like I said, we were at the table for 18 months. I have heard from many Albertans; teachers, parents. We acknowledge that there are challenges in the classroom, with 4.4 per cent population growth, a more complex classroom than we've ever seen. Not all of that will be settled in collective bargaining, but we've made the commitment around the hiring of teachers, around the educational assistants that we're going to hire, and the Premier and the education minister have made it clear that the work continues and really starts today.

**The Speaker:** For the second set of questions, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Nenshi:** The work starts today, he says. The work should have started six years ago, when this government took power.

## Bill 2

**Mr. Nenshi:** This government could have, even having failed all of the other things at this minister's disposal, introduced legislation without the notwithstanding clause. They've done it before. All that means is the courts, months or years from now, will give an opinion on whether it was the right thing to do. In the meantime students would have been back, and we could have had time to negotiate a better settlement. But, instead, the government chose to use this unprecedented tool. Why didn't they pass this legislation without the clause and let the courts decide?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, we respect teachers' rights to strike. You just witnessed the longest education strike in Canadian history, over three weeks. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I didn't have any trouble hearing the question. We'll all hear the answer, whether we like the answer or whether we don't. [interjection]

Whoa. When I stop talking, hon. member, that's not a cue for you to chirp. Are we understood?

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Horner:** At some point teachers' rights to strike bleed in and prevent kids' right to an education, and it's up to the government to balance those rights. The reason the notwithstanding clause was used is because we need certainty. With the two-tiered system we couldn't see local strikes.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier and her chief of staff, Mr. Rob Anderson, when questioned about this, have continually said

that they respect the Supreme Court's decision-making authority. Last year in this House the Premier said, "We have rights that are independent of particular laws. They exist regardless of what the laws are." She called them inalienable and granted by virtue of being human. Why the sudden change of heart? Does this government believe that the law they passed yesterday is unconstitutional? And if so, why did they propose it?

**Mr. Horner:** Section 33 is part of the Constitution. This is a tool that is not used often, and it's a decision that our government did not take lightly. But, like I said, we just witnessed the longest education strike in Canadian history, and because of the unique situation of the two-tiered bargaining in Alberta for teachers, with a central table that then bleeds into local bargaining, we had very little tolerance to see further strikes. It's a very high bar, irreparable harm. We believe we've passed it. We need certainty.

**Mr. Nenshi:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to take the minister at his word here. He's just told us that this was a very unique set of circumstances. It was, of course, a very unique set of circumstances created by this government and a very unique set of circumstances that led this government caucus to swing in the wind when this government refused to take on any of its other expectations. So setting aside all of that, if this is a unique situation, this should be an easy one for the government. Will the government commit today to never again pre-emptively use the notwithstanding clause?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, I find in this job that we need the tools that we have to have to make decisions to govern the province. This is within the Constitution. It has not been used often across this country, and I have a hard time imagining a situation where it would need to be used for public-sector collective bargaining in any other situation. That's how unique this is with the teachers.

**The Speaker:** For the third set of questions, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Let it be noted that the minister said that he finds it difficult to imagine that this will ever be used in any other situation. Let's just remember that, shall we?

## School Class Sizes

**Mr. Nenshi:** However, today parents across this province have mixed emotions. They're busy looking for lost runners and gym clothes and workbooks. They're figuring out what they want to do for Halloween, getting lunches and getting ready for school, but they know that their kids are going back to the exact same situation that caused this strike in the first place, overcrowded classrooms and complexity. What's the government's plan to fix the school environment today, not wait for the never-ending task force reports?

2:00

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity to talk about the things that we're doing today to help address some of these challenges in our schools. First and foremost, after the bill was passed yesterday, that means we'll be hiring 3,000 additional teachers, including a thousand this year alone. That also means that we'll be hiring over 1,500 EAs as well. These are immediate changes that our schools will see. They'll see more teachers coming into the classroom over the next few months. They'll see more teachers and EAs. That'll help decrease class sizes and provide students with a tailored support that they need to succeed.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Magically a commitment he made in the budget only happens yesterday. Magically 3,000 new teachers will appear because every teacher wants to work in this environment for this government that does not respect their rights.

There have been endless task forces. There was one in 2003 that talked about classroom caps and complexity modifiers. This government ignored it; subsequent governments, too. This minister tells us there's all this money for new schools, but he was unable to get one dollar of that money into the budget. Could the minister precisely confirm how many dollars have been allocated for the next three years for . . .

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, we've committed over \$8.6 billion to build and renovate 130 schools in this province because we recognize that our student population is growing at unprecedented levels and we're stepping up to meet the challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure why the member opposite is quoting a study from 2003 because when they were in government, they didn't implement the recommendations from that report. They made no progress on improving teacher-student ratios. They made no attempts to legislate teacher-student ratios or do anything to improve the circumstances. We are and, as I mentioned, parents will see changes very quickly.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Mr. Speaker, this minister has been an utter failure. He's accomplished something no one thought could be accomplished. He's been a worse minister than the last one. He's failed to build any schools.

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** He's failed to even report on class size and complexity, let alone even try to fix the problems. Under his watch funding has dropped to the lowest level in Canada and our schools are less safe for students and for teachers. Will the minister do the right thing? Will he admit his failures and will he resign today, or will he wait to be recalled? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hey, it's your question period. If you want to bang the whole way, then you just go right ahead. But I think you'd probably rather ask questions.

There was a point of order noted at 2:02.

The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I commended the Leader of the Opposition for a change in decorum in the way that they pose questions and communicate in this Chamber, but I would like to withdraw and apologize to the Chamber for making that comment because, apparently, it's the same old story with the members of the opposition making personal attacks on members of the government.

This minister is not going anywhere, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you that the commitments he and this government have made will reduce class sizes, improve the quality of education for students. We're on it. They have no idea what they're doing over there.

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

#### Alberta Forever Canadian Citizen Initiative

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Thomas Lukaszuk announced that in 90 days his Forever Canadian campaign gathered signatures from over 450,000 proud Albertans who want Alberta to forever be part of Canada. My, my, what a pickle for the Premier. She

wanted a referendum on separatism. She made the rules easier for her pro-separatist friends to get one. She launched a government panel to encourage it. But once again the Premier has been listening to the wrong people. The vast majority of Albertans are proud Canadians. To the Premier: does she regret putting separatism on the table when Albertans clearly aren't interested in what she's selling?

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order was noted at 2:04.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member opposite for asking the question. I think it's still very early to speculate on the results of this petition. There were a tremendous number of signatures on there, over 450,000, which shows a lot of interest, but there is a process to go through to make sure those signatures are all verified.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has always been clear and will continue to be clear, no matter whether she's speaking here in Alberta or speaking abroad, that Alberta believes as a province in being sovereign within a united Canada.

**Ms Pancholi:** Let's be clear. A referendum on separatism would be terrible for Alberta's economy. Just look at the economic impact in Quebec from their separatism debate. The Premier doesn't have to call a referendum in response to the Forever Canadian petition. She can instead decide to put that question before this House so that each of her MLAs has to go on the record with their position on separatism. So will the Premier commit today that there will be no referendum on separatism in Alberta, or will the UCP continue to act with cowardice?

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, I would say the definition of cowardice is refusing to consult Albertans as the members opposite have done, and the reason why they're showing cowardice is because the last time the NDP put any question to the public in Alberta, they lost government and were the first one-term government in the history of the province of Alberta. We're not afraid to have tough conversations, but we have been very clear from the beginning that Alberta believes in a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada.

**Ms Pancholi:** I believe the kids call that selling.

The collection of over 450,000 signatures from Albertans in 90 days is an astounding accomplishment. It only happened because of the 10,000 incredible volunteers who stepped up. If you went to any community event this summer, you saw them. These were not paid workers or political operatives. They were average Albertans from all walks of life, and they did a helluva job. Albertans everywhere are mobilizing against the UCP's out-of-touch, authoritarian agenda, and it is inspiring. So will the Premier admit that it's time to stop listening to the people who serve her and start listening to the people she serves?

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to listening to all Albertans. That's why the Premier spent the entire summer with the Alberta Next Panel travelling the entire province on a listening tour, a tour, I might add, that the Leader of the Opposition called a sham. If consulting Albertans is a sham, then that member is in the wrong place. I'll tell you what. On this side of the House we're listening to all Albertans, whether we agree with them or not, because, again, we believe in a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada.

**The Speaker:** Okay. We're on question 5, and I know we all know there are no preambles after the first question, so we won't hear any.

I'm happy to recognize the Member for Edmonton-South West.

### Education Funding

**Mr. Ip:** The education minister claimed his government can't invest a penny more in public education to meet teachers' very reasonable demands, and then he dropped the nuclear option on teachers just looking for a fair deal for students. Strangely, they were able to find over \$240 million to fork over to coal companies because of this government's bungled coal mining policy, including to an Australian billionaire's firm. Will the education minister explain how his government has found lots of money for coal billionaires but nothing more to invest in our public schools for Alberta's children?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to talk about how our government has been able to find \$400 million in Budget 2024 to increase spending to our education system. I'm happy to talk about how our government has found over \$8.6 billion to invest in building and renovating new schools. I'm happy to talk about how in Budget 2025 our government found over \$450 million to invest in our public education system, including \$55 million to help support classroom complexity. We're working to ensure that our education system has the resources it needs.

**Mr. Ip:** Given that this government spent over \$6 million of precious taxpayers' dollars on an ad campaign that attacks the very character of teachers and given that this money should have been spent to fix conditions in our classrooms and given that after all of that wasteful spending the minister failed to engage in good-faith bargaining that recognizes the efforts of teachers rather than attacking them, will he apologize to the hard-working teachers across Alberta for running millions of dollars of attack ads and taking away their bargaining rights?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, to characterize the government advertising that provided Albertans with clarity over what the government's position was in the bargaining process as an attack ad is an incredibly irresponsible mischaracterization. I would truly expect something much better from an hon. member of this Assembly. That being said, our government has invested \$55 million this year to the classroom complexity grant to help ensure that students have the supports they need.

2:10

**Mr. Ip:** Given that this government has spent its entire time in office underfunding public education and given that the minister should recall that it is his government's funding formula that leaves thousands of students unfunded and given that the UCP government severely cut program unit funding, undermined the voices of teachers, and wasted money running ads against them, will the minister admit that this strike was the result of his government's incompetence? When will he apologize to the parents, teachers, and students for waging war on public education?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, students need additional supports in our classrooms. Students need more EAs. Students need more teachers. Students need more supports from other professionals. Our government is working to ensure that we have the right professionals, more teachers, more EAs in the classroom, that we're delivering through increased spending over other provinces. For the member opposite to stand up and characterize a war on public education again is beneath the member, and I think the member should behave himself more appropriately.

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:11.

Next question is Red Deer-South.

### Complex Classroom Supports

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Teachers are reporting complexities in classrooms, including students who act in disruptive, even violent, ways. Given that these behaviours are not right and they are unfair to other students seeking to learn in Alberta classrooms, to the minister: how will the Aggression and Complexity in Schools Action Team support better learning environments for students and teachers?

**The Speaker:** The minister of education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We convened the aggression and complexity action team back in June, and I understand that the team is now finalizing their report. I'm very eager to receive the final report. The team has been comprised of teachers, school board trustees, superintendents, and other professionals. We've asked them to provide us with some direct recommendations as to how we can improve complexity and manage aggression in our classrooms. We've asked them for immediate short-term solutions as well as long-term plans. I'll be delivering that report in the coming weeks.

**Mr. Stephan:** Given that teachers and educational assistants are important partners in Alberta's world-class educational system and given that they support parents in the educational success of Alberta's children, who are the heart of the education system, and given that we have seen 80,000 children come into Alberta schools in the past three years, to the minister. Please share the plan for more teachers and educational assistants in Alberta's classrooms.

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member as well for the important question. Over the next few years we'll be delivering thousands more teachers and more EAs into our classrooms, 3,000 more teachers and 1,500 more EAs. We are collecting a comprehensive data set from our school boards to get a better understanding of the dynamics in every single classroom across the province. This data will be key and instrumental in helping us determine how best to allocate these new teachers and these new EAs so that every student has the support that they need.

**Mr. Stephan:** Given that school enrolment has increased dramatically due to skyrocketing, sometimes negligent, immigration and given that there are more students with complex learning needs, including not speaking English, and given that these needs are more concentrated in some areas in Alberta than others, to the minister: how will classroom complexity data be gathered so resources are best directed to support Alberta classrooms where complex needs are most great?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, that's precisely what we'll be doing. We'll be able to have a direct window into the composition and complexity of every single one of our classrooms across the province. This type of information we haven't had in significant detail at any other time in our province, so it will allow us to really zone in on the classrooms and communities that need additional assistance, and then, of course, we can deploy our resources. We need to know if a particular classroom needs more support with

English as an additional language or other complex needs, so this information will be critical.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### 2025 Municipal Elections

**Member Miyashiro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government forced through two terrible bills last spring and imposed their conspiracies on municipalities for the recent elections. The results speak for themselves. Most voters stood in long lines, sometimes for hours, just to fill out this new form. Some voters just simply walked away. Turnout dropped dramatically. In Lethbridge it was just 19 per cent. This was by UCP design. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: was it all worth it to see voter turnout collapse in this month's municipal elections?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, by design we want to make sure we have an election process that we can have confidence in, which means the gold standard across every western democracy of hand-counted paper ballots. This is how they count 19 million ballots in a federal election in one night across multiple time zones and 13 different jurisdictions. If we can do it as a country, we can do it here at every municipality. We passed these laws over a year and a half in advance, and we worked closely with every single municipality and their elections authority to make sure they were up to speed. If we need to in our after-action report look at how we can better support municipalities, we'll do that, but the rules were clear, and they're transparent and accountable.

**Member Miyashiro:** Given that the on-site filling out of forms and hand counting didn't just take a really long time but the system's reliability has been questioned and given that in Edmonton one candidate initially led by six votes only for election workers to discover more than 600 miscounted votes and given that the whole vote tabulator machine conspiracy was legislated in Bill 20, why won't the minister just admit to believing extreme conspiracies which cost municipalities money and left Albertans with serious questions about the vote's integrity?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, confidence in the election process at every level is nonnegotiable for a serious democracy. This government takes that very seriously, which is why we passed this legislation. Attestations are a normal part of every election process, including our own, provincially and federally, and we saw hundreds of municipalities get those results in with votes counted in a reasonable hour, in the late hours of the night or early the next morning. The truth is that this is an important part of making sure that when the election is run by a municipality, we can make sure we have oversight with clear, accountable rules at the provincial level.

**Member Miyashiro:** Given the historically low turnouts, long waits for results, exhaustingly long lines at the polls, unhinged and disproven conspiracies about vote tabulators, additional financial costs and lack of election staff, repeated calls for investigations, and the utter failure of running political parties in the big city elections, will the minister listen to Albertans and repeal bills 18 and 20?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, the conspiracy theorists in this Chamber are on that side of the House. The election process is accountable, transparent, and we all know we can have confidence in it. They're looking for reasons to question democracy when we can see it work. Because of hand-counted paper ballots we know the results are legitimate. If we had tabulators, those lost boxes in

Edmonton would have been a much bigger problem. The conspiracy is on that side. The legislation on this side allows accountability and transparency. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Thank you.

### Bill 2

(continued)

**Ms Wright:** Mr. Speaker, in grade 6 social studies students learn that their rights as young people, as Albertans, as Canadians are protected, but students tuned in last night to watch this government drive a wrecking ball through the rights of teachers to collectively bargain a fair deal. They saw how their government disregards the very concept of protecting rights and freedoms. Why did the minister of jobs, economy, and trade think it was a good idea for students, including future teachers, to see this UCP government weaken and not protect their rights?

**Mr. Horner:** Like I said in a previous answer, Mr. Speaker, this is about balancing rights. We obviously support teachers in their right to strike. We just witnessed the longest strike in Canadian history. At some point it passes this very high bar of irreparable harm, where it's making it hard on the educational rights of Alberta's children. You know, we've heard the studies about what it does for their long-term job prospects, about getting into universities and about early development. So this is about balancing rights. It's not easy, but that's what governments have to do.

2:20

**Ms Wright:** Given that workers from across Canada, not just teachers, watched the unprecedented dismantling of rights and freedoms from this government and given that this deliberate choice to attack the constitutionally protected rights of teachers doesn't just impact them as workers but all Canadians who deeply uphold the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and given that this government has already signalled that they'll use the notwithstanding clause again and again and again to run roughshod over people's rights, will the minister tell Albertans whose Charter-protected rights this government will be trampling on next?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One thing that is obviously clear is that this government puts the rights of children first. This government is absolutely committed to getting Alberta's kids back in the classroom, where they belong. There were months of negotiations. There were two settlements that were put to teachers in the past, one in March, one in September. They didn't proceed. As the Minister of Finance said, we respected the teachers' right to strike. They engaged in the longest strike in history. Children have to go back to school, full stop.

**Ms Wright:** Given that the government's use of the notwithstanding clause to violate Charter-protected rights turns back the clock on workers' rights and given there are now profound implications for fair pay, pay equity, worker safety, and pensions because of this erosion of these basic rights and given that every Alberta worker should be able to work, get paid fairly, and come home safely at the end of every day, when will workers know their rights are safe? Or will the minister tell Albertans who's next to lose their rights and freedoms?

**Mr. Horner:** Like I said, this is a very unique situation to the teachers' table: 18 months, two agreements the government said yes to, an offer of enhanced mediation to end the strike in the final days.

That was refused. Very different from every other table with which the government bargains. Like I said, we have a track record: 87 out of 155 deals settled, the biggest salary increases in two decades. This government is about fair deals, and I encourage all the other unions to look at that. Come to the table.

### Health Services Procurement Process

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, high-cost sole-source contracts have become this Wildrose government's Achilles heel. This isn't just the appearance of corruption; it's a recipe for waste. Deals rushed without due diligence destroy public trust. The Wyant report proves it. The Premier's office pushed an overpriced, unvetted contract to friends at MHCare, wasting 70 million taxpayer dollars. Premier, why is your government so committed to sweetheart deals, a direct violation of policy, at the expense of AHS executives who tried to expose wrongdoing?

**Mr. Jones:** First, I want to thank Judge Wyant for his investigation into the procurement of children's pain medication and chartered surgical facility contracts. In short, AHS's procurement of the pain medication and select surgical facility contracts was not consistent with their own policies and practices. Decision-makers should have exercised greater due diligence to ensure procurement policies were followed, including conducting legal reviews on the purchase order and contracts in question. People involved in these procurements did not properly disclose, investigate, or manage conflicts of interest. This is clearly unacceptable. As procurement is transitioned out of AHS into Acute Care Alberta, it will improve . . .

**The Chair:** Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, given that sole-sourcing means no bids, no competition, and no guarantee of value for taxpayers and given that this government has skirted the rules for surgical contracts, PPE, pharmaceuticals, and more and given that the Wyant report reveals a pattern where this Wildrose government uses public dollars to reward allies and given that the UCP caucus knows where this is heading but they haven't yet found their voice, to the Premier: why should Albertans trust any promise of reform when your administration was aware of these issues and chose not to act?

**Mr. Jones:** Mr. Speaker, in addition to implementing Judge Wyant's 18 recommendations, we've also launched an RFP for a third party to help us implement best practices as we refocus procurement in our new health system. The contract was awarded to RSM, who began their work on October 7. In addition, we will pursue fair, open, and competitive procurement to the broadest extent possible. All perceived and actual conflicts of interest must be managed, disclosed, and we will be enforcing them both on individuals and on our suppliers and service providers. We will ensure that legal reviews are done on all contracts to ensure every applicant and contractor . . .

**The Chair:** Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, if Albertans think the worst is behind us, think again. Given that the UCP plans to limit competition in urgent care, gambling, and land deals and given that grants, operating contracts, and newly minted Crown corporations are easy ways to sidestep the rules and given that Justice Wyant found major conflicts of interest with staff representing both government and vendors simultaneously – these were not mistakes – to the Premier: will you commit today to retendering all MHCare sole-source health contracts and any other affiliate contracts from all departments?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of hospitals.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can confirm that AHS has no current contracts with MHCare for PPE or anything other than the remaining pain medication. As with all procurements of products and services involving government entities, including AHS, I expect every effort to be made to receive the products and services ordered and to use all contractual and legal mechanisms if necessary to ensure that taxpayer value is protected and those products and services are received.

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

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate the new Minister of Advanced Education. He's been given a rare chance to correct some serious mistakes made by the last two UCP Advanced Education ministers.

Since 2019 this government has stripped nearly half a billion dollars from our colleges, universities, and polytechnics. "Post-secondary . . . is a critical provincial investment" and "funding challenges need attention." Mr. Speaker, these are quotes from the Mintz report for goodness' sake. Will this minister acknowledge the overwhelming evidence . . .

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

**Mr. McDougall:** Mr. Speaker, the Mintz report indicated that funding by this government is now in line with other universities and colleges across Canada. Now, the Mintz report also indicates a number of other recommendations to move forward, recognizing that there will be a need for increased seats in education and many other areas from the trades to health care and other areas and how we are going to fund that going forward. So it has a number of recommendations. We'll be looking at those recommendations, talking to stakeholders about that, and the government will be coming back with policy in a short period.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, that's interesting, Mr. Speaker. Given that the University of Calgary, for example, received some provincial funding for a new veterinary facility but the former minister forgot to provide funding to actually staff and make the veterinary school function – now, I know that many people are angry about this veterinary project, how it was handled, including some of the MLAs sitting right across the way. When will the University of Calgary's veterinary school get the long-term operational funding it needs to function properly?

**Mr. McDougall:** Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend the opening of the expansion of the veterinary clinic in the University of Calgary just a few weeks ago. It's a beautiful facility. The money is in place for its operations, so I don't know what the member opposite is talking about.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given it's good to know that you don't know and given that the University of Calgary, again, needs to create spaces in the bachelor of science program while the UCP is only committed to a three-year project-based funding model and given that a bachelor of science is actually a four-year degree, students starting now would have the rug pulled out from under them a year before they're done. What about all the years after that, Mr. Speaker? What about the thousands of students in high school that need those positions in coming years? Will the minister admit that

the U of C is packed to the rafters and needs proper provincial government support?

2:30

**Mr. McDougall:** Mr. Speaker, the University of Calgary is undergoing an expansion to the science facility as we speak right now. You know, it is a process of government that we annually look at our budget and look forward to future years with that. Funding is in place and will be in place for this facility when they expand. As I indicated, we expect to expand . . .

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

### Youth Employment

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's youth are the future of our province, and many are struggling to find meaningful employment despite having the skills and education to contribute to our economy. A nation-wide youth unemployment crisis has hurt young Albertans' ability to be part of our workforce, with the most recent youth unemployment rate at 14.7 per cent. Can the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration explain what targeted strategies are being implemented to address the growing employment gap among young Albertans?

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member for the incredible question. Yes, youth unemployment is a problem in this province, as it is across the nation, but that is why we're taking serious steps to invest in Alberta's youth. Getting that first job is so important, making sure they learn those soft skills like communication, showing up on time, wearing clean clothes. That first job is a gateway into the next and the next and the next. That's why we introduced the youth hiring incentive to help employers derisk hiring youth in this province ages 15 to 24 and get them that critical first work experience.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the minister for the answer. Given that youth unemployment is affecting communities across Alberta, including Calgary-East, and given that many face barriers such as limited access to transportation, lack of local job training programs, and fewer entry-level opportunities, to the minister: what steps is our government taking to ensure that young people in urban and rural areas alike have equitable access to job opportunities and career development programs?

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

**Mr. Schow:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I appreciate the question from the member. It is so important to support youth in Alberta on their path to employment and making sure they're gaining that experience at a young age to help them and support them throughout their entire career. That's why we're also making sure that there are jobs in this province. The NDP when were in government shooed people away and told them to go to other provinces around Canada. We have the investment growth fund that is incentivizing businesses to come right here to Alberta, set up shop, and create meaningful employment not just for youth but for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the minister for the answer. Given that the Alberta youth employment incentive

program is a welcome initiative and given that it's critical that we look beyond short-term job placement and focus on long-term outcomes for our youth, can the same minister provide clarity on how its effectiveness will be measured and whether additional supports will be integrated to ensure long-term success for young job seekers?

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are a number of metrics that we look at as a government to make sure that we're on the right path. One of them just came out recently that said that in Alberta we added 40,000 new jobs in the month of September. That's over 70 per cent of the jobs created country-wide. Alberta is clearly the best place to live, to play, and to visit. In addition to those job numbers, we're keeping track of numbers year over year – we're up there – and also looking at investment. People are making their decisions with their money. It follows the path of least resistance, and that money is coming right here to Alberta, where they feel it's a great place to invest and create jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

### Grizzly Bear Management

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a year ago the Minister of Forestry and Parks introduced the Wildlife Management Responder Network, that provides opportunities for members of the public to hunt a grizzly bear that's been engaged in conflict. The program has now been used four times, and recently a grizzly bear was killed. While the program has been flawed from the start and will not work to reduce conflict, it's also an ineffective spending of tax dollars, and it's only worked 25 per cent of the time. To the Minister of Forestry and Parks: how much money is being wasted annually on this utterly useless, ineffective program?

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

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, and thanks for the question. Appreciate the member opposite paying some attention to the grizzly bear program that we have in Alberta. The fact is that it doesn't cost us anything. In fact, it actually saves officers time and energy so they can focus on catching poachers instead of dealing with problem wildlife. We have Albertans that are willing to do this job, so why would we not take advantage of that opportunity? What this does show is that the NDP were wrong about the wildlife responder program right from the start, and we were right. It will not cause the destruction of the population of grizzlies. It is just used when necessary.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Well, given that some capacity is allocated towards the program, Mr. Speaker, it therefore does cost taxpayer dollars.

Given that the science clearly shows that killing grizzly bears does not reduce human bear conflict, given that the minister repeatedly claims the program is effective, grizzly bear populations and densities are growing, and conflicts are increasing, yet there is absolutely no data to support any of that and given that there has also been no public consultation to measure Albertans' support for this ridiculous program, can the minister enlighten us on how he has gauged public support or how he knows grizzly bear populations are increasing?

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

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate the question again. In mid-June a grizzly bear responder was

authorized to remove a grizzly bear near Twin Butte as part of the Wildlife Management Responder Network. This followed an investigation by fish and wildlife enforcement services, which confirmed that the grizzly was responsible for the deaths of multiple livestock. We have more and more incidences of grizzly bears taking livestock. We have more and more incidences – we had somebody mauled this year. We just had a person in British Columbia that was killed by a grizzly bear. We've had multiple attacks that have happened in this province this year.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the fearmongering coming from this minister about an army of grizzly bears coming to get us is completely unfounded – the grizzly bear recovery plan speaks to the need to prioritize education to reduce grizzly bear conflict and property damage – given that the government has chosen to cut and undermine grizzly bear related education programs, given that the handful of BearSmart programs in Alberta have yet to receive their 2025 funding because the minister has not signed off on it, can the minister admit that he'd rather waste tax dollars killing grizzly bears than spending that money wisely to help Albertans coexist?

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's completely untrue. We've actually increased the spending on those programs. The money goes out when the money goes out within government spending. That's just standard procedure there.

The member opposite knows the problems that rural Alberta is having with grizzly bears. We hear it all the time. I want her to actually go to some of these communities and talk to the people that are losing livestock, people that won't allow their children to walk to the bus stop without driving them down there because they're worried about grizzly bears interfering. This member is not in touch with rural Albertans.

### AESO Office Relocation Project

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are treading water, struggling with grocery bills and energy bills, demanding this UCP government to make life more affordable, yet under the UCP's watch the AESO, the Alberta Electric System Operator, is spending out of control. Albertans are paying \$9.3 million for the AESO to move its Calgary office. Can the minister explain why an agency responsible for delivering reliable and affordable energy is using \$9 million of taxpayer money to move chairs and desks across the street?

**The Speaker:** The minister of affordability.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's not taxpayers' money. The AESO is an independent regulator. They get funded through the industry. If during all the population changes that Calgary has foreseen over the last couple of years, they are moving offices to serve the people of Alberta better, that is their decision. They're free to do so within their budget. It is not taxpayers' money, and I ask the member to make sure that she understands how the system works before asking a question outside of government policy.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Given that the minister continues to tell us that, quote, the AESO is not a government reporting entity and has separate corporate reporting procedures, end quote, from budget estimates and given that Conservatives are fond of saying that there is only one taxpayer, but now they're trying to wiggle out of accountability for the AESO's wild and rising costs, where is the Finance minister? How is he allowing this irresponsible spending

all while he's bargaining with teachers to keep Alberta at the lowest funding per student in the whole country?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The affordability minister.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, independent regulators are paid through the ratepayers, not the taxpayers. The system operator is making sure they work on reliability by serving Albertans, covering up for all the mistakes the NDP made which drove prices to the highest levels in Alberta's history, to make sure that they have a reliable system by procuring fast frequency response, which is often storage, on behalf of Albertans so they have the reliability of the electricity system that they need. We're happy to say that our electricity prices are down 63 per cent from . . .

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

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Given that the AESO's costs continue to spiral because of complex market designs in the last two years and now we're hearing about new software costs between \$200 million to \$400 million, given that Albertans are treading water with the cost of living while their kids suffer from crowded classrooms because of underfunded public education all while the AESO spends, spends, spends ratepayer money, does the Finance minister know what other costs are hiding in the AESO's \$9 million office move bill? Has he talked to the UCP-appointed CEO? Are there Oilers box seats in the bill, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** The Affordability and Utilities minister.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud that the AESO is doing a lot of work to repair the mistakes that the NDP made when they were in power. They cost Albertan taxpayers \$2 billion because of their mismanagement of the system. Every year we pay \$100 million to cover up their mistakes. Mr. Speaker, the AESO is doing terrific work bringing reliability back. Not only are we serving Albertans well, but because of the work that we're doing, we're able to support Saskatchewan, we're able to support British Columbia, and we're able to export our additional power to the United States.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements. No. We're finished those. Please, if you have to exit, do it as expeditiously as you can.

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

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:42 p.m.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice pursuant to Government Motion 4 that there will be no evening sitting today, October 28, 2025, or tomorrow, October 29, 2025.

I also rise to give oral notice of Bill 4, Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2), sponsored by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

### Introduction of Bills

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

**Bill 3**  
**Private Vocational Training Amendment Act, 2025**

**Mr. McDougall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to move first reading of Bill 3, the Private Vocational Training Amendment Act, 2025.

The Private Vocational Training Amendment Act will help strengthen the vocational training sector and enhance protections for postsecondary students attending private vocational schools.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** Do any members have tablings? Hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the projected government business memo for the week of October 28, 2025.

**The Speaker:** Any other tablings? Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. I rise to table copies of some of the e-mails that I referenced yesterday in my remarks around Bill 2, the egregious legislation passed yesterday. These are from Kara from Grande Prairie, Jessica from West Yellowhead, and a mom from Drayton Valley-Devon. Thank you, all, for writing, and thank you to the tens of thousands of Albertans who are writing.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I think I caught Calgary-Currie, did I? No. Please go ahead, then, Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Chapman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a letter from a teacher facing aggression from students, a lack of support in her classroom. She is being sent back into those same classrooms.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite copies of a letter from a teacher in Rocky View, ATA local 35, who's exhausted and is not fulfilling her work like she wants to support students, and it's very disturbing what's going on in the education system.

**The Speaker:** Banff-Kananaskis.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a letter from a grade 3 teacher who describes their work as invisible, countless hours spent adapting to student needs, and she's going back to those . . .

**The Speaker:** Lethbridge-West.

**Member Miyashiro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of 76 letters from representatives of my constituency and Lethbridge-East expressing their support for teachers and the public education system.

**The Speaker:** And did I see Edmonton-McClung trying to pop up there? Yes? No? Do you have a tabling?

**Mr. Dach:** I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much. I have the requisite number of copies from a number of constituents who have

expressed their concerns by way of e-mail letters regarding the way the government has handled the teachers' negotiations. Susan . . .

**The Speaker:** No. I think that's good. That's how we table. Good job. Thank you.

The next tabling is Calgary-Currie.

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to submit the requisite copies of a letter from a teacher from Rocky View county who says that the only reason that school has been kept together is because of their work, not the government's.

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

**Ms Hayter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I present the requisite copies of a letter from a frustrated teacher who describes the current education system as a place that teaches students who are eager to learn that only bad behaviour gets attention and support.

**The Speaker:** Any more tablings? I don't see any. Oh, do I? Is that St. Albert, a tabling? Okay. Please go ahead.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a letter from a teacher from Rocky View local 35 talking about her very complex classroom that she can't keep up with.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Oh, are there more tablings? Okay. Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. One is from a teacher that has a grade 1 classroom with 42 children in it, and another is an article called Back-to-School: Hunger Hits Alberta Classrooms.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Ms Wright:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got the requisite copies of a letter that comes to us from a teacher who teaches in the Rocky View district, talking about how classroom conditions are unsustainable.

**The Speaker:** Okay. We have Calgary-Falconridge.

**Member Boparai:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I present the requisite copies of a letter from a teacher of 25 years who states that the state of education has left their mental health so poor that they required sick leave.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of a letter from a teacher of four years who states that due to the difficulties they're finding in the system, they don't know if they will reach their fifth.

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

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present the requisite copies of a letter from a teacher who states that they should not have to pick between keeping up with the cost of living or providing proper learning conditions for students.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Thank you, hon. members.

I have a tabling. The chair of the '25-26 Electoral Boundaries Commission, the Hon. Justice Dallas K. Miller, submitted the commission's interim report to me on October 27, 2025, in accordance with section 6(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of

the interim report, which sets out the commission's recommendations for the areas, boundaries, and names of the 89 electoral divisions proposed for Alberta. In so doing, the interim report is now made public in accordance with section 6(2) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. I'm instructing the pages to distribute copies of the report to Members of the Legislative Assembly at this time.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Amery, Minister of Justice, pursuant to the Alberta Firearms Act Alberta chief firearms office annual report 2024-25.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Points of order. I think we have two today. Let's start with the one at 2:02. The hon. Government House Leader, I think, rose and called that point of order.

**Mr. Schow:** Sure. I'll withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Withdrawn. Thank you.

The one at 2:04 was withdrawn by the Opposition House Leader.

There was another point of order at 2:11 p.m. called by the Opposition House Leader, I believe.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At 2:11 a heated exchange was taking place in this Chamber. Tempers do get high, but under 23(h), (i), and (j) and language likely to create disorder, I felt I needed to rise to raise a point of order when the minister of education said to my colleague: the member should conduct himself more appropriately.

Telling other members what they should and shouldn't do, how they should feel is something that has been ruled out of order in the past. We do want, wherever possible, to try and speak through the chair and not refer to individual members directly as much as possible. Obviously, we talk about ministers, Premiers, government, and so on, but the language "the member should conduct himself more appropriately" puts us down a path and in a direction that I think leads to disorder in this House, so I rose on a point of order. I look forward to your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is commonplace in this Chamber for members of one side or the other to suggest that members opposite conduct themselves in a better manner. I already said it myself once today when I was referring to the Leader of the Opposition, when I felt his line of questioning went from asking about government business to far more of a personal attack on the minister of education. Though I did withdraw that point of order, I think it's important to note that what we say in this Chamber matters.

I do think that this is a matter of debate when the hon. minister of education is suggesting that one of the members opposite should conduct themselves more appropriately, particularly when asking a question that should be about government business.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I understand why the point of order was called; I also understand the Government House Leader's defence of it. Let me say this. It's not helpful. We don't need advice from other members during question period on how to behave. I would counsel people not to do that. I think we already have kind of an established tradition here of: if you're going to give that kind

of advice, you could either give it to the government or to the opposition without personalizing it to that level. It's more helpful. It's less unhelpful that way. My advice to all members on all sides is to use that as a guiding principle.

We don't have to agree in here, but we do need to show some respect and get along the best we can, so let's aim for that, please, in the future. I don't think this rises to a point of order, but I think it's a good place to give a caution on how we conduct ourselves and how we address one another.

Another point of order, number 4, called by the Government House Leader right at the end of question period, I think.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Schow:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I did. I will be brief, but the point of order I called was on the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. When the Minister of Affordability and Utilities was answering the last question, the second supplemental, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford could be heard saying: the minister is gaslighting. We have said many times that suggesting a minister or a member of the government caucus or opposition is gaslighting someone else would be inappropriate. So without the benefit of the Blues – but as I have heard, there are new ambient mics in this Chamber that may have picked up the comment – suggesting someone is gaslighting I think would be a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j).

**The Speaker:** Great.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid I did not hear this, so I don't know if that is correct or not. So I will leave it to you.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, and I didn't hear what was just reported as the offending comment. I think we can all agree that accusing other members in the House of gaslighting is not parliamentary language, so if indeed that happened, I'll ask the House leaders to advise their members to not use that language in the future. I'll consider this matter for today to be dealt with.

Yesterday there were a couple of points of order that were made, and since we had an early exit from Routine to Orders of the Day, we didn't get to those. I will report to the House, you know, that nothing was missed, that all those who called a point of order yesterday withdrew them before the House started today. So those things have not been ignored; they have been withdrawn, and I don't want anybody going home thinking that an important point of order called by someone was ignored. That is not the case. That indeed is also dealt with now.

## Orders of the Day

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Sawyer moved, seconded by Mr. Dyck, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, His Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise in front of this House and introduce myself to my colleagues and to

Albertans as a whole as the newest Member of the Legislative Assembly for the United Conservative Party. I am deeply honoured to serve my province and the hard-working people who define it. It is a responsibility I hold close to my heart and a responsibility I don't take lightly.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by extending my sincerest thanks to the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for making this day possible. From the volunteers who gave their time campaigning with me, the friends and colleagues who offered encouragement, to the constituents who listened as I shared my vision of the Alberta promise, a vision for a strong and prosperous province committed to protecting Alberta's autonomy and ensuring our province has the freedom to make decisions that reflect our unique values: I thank you.

I made a commitment to be a strong voice for the rural way of life and our agricultural community, and I am here to honour that promise. I know the work will be challenging. I follow in the footsteps of remarkable former members such as Bob Clarke, who championed Alberta's farmers and earned the title master farming constituent, and, most recently, Nathan Cooper, whose dedication to public service and to the people of Alberta set a high standard of what representation should look like. I plan to serve as he did, with compassion, encouraging honest and respectful discussion along with a good dose of reality and strength. I also want to thank Nathan Cooper for his support and encouragement as I stepped into this new role and for his contributions to our constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I wake up each day deeply grateful for my family, friends, and everyone who has supported me on this journey. To my husband, Matt: thank you for standing by my side for the past 27 years. It is from you and your parents that I learned what Canadian agriculture is and how important the people growing our food are to this province, this country, and to the world. You show me every day the deep and resilient spirit of farmers, and it was your passion for the farmers' voice being at every table that inspired that same feeling and passion in me. You have been the best example to our children of the value of hard work, the importance of finding humour in any situation, and together we taught them the importance of giving back to our community.

To my children, Emmett, Cassidy, and Quin: you are my greatest achievement and my deepest pride and joy. You all lead your lives with integrity, kindness, and strength, and your encouragement and patience as I navigate this new job have meant the world. You represent the hope and pride of the next generation of Albertans.

**3:00**

To my dad, who came to Canada as an immigrant but is so much more than that story: you encouraged me to be bold in my convictions, to give more than I receive, and to live with integrity. Thank you. Your example shaped the values I bring into this Chamber today.

Mr. Speaker, to my colleagues in the agriculture industry, beginning with the board and staff at Alberta Grains, the alumni of Canada's outstanding young farmers, the farmer-led commissions across Canada, especially Grain Growers of Canada, and the many industry partner organizations we collaborated with: thank you. Many of you were mentors when I first stepped into this space, and today I am proud to call you friends. You welcomed me to the table, often one of the few women present. You never saw my gender but my strong voice, experience, and commitment. Together we work tirelessly to advocate for policies that reflect the realities of conventional agriculture. Your dedication, your time away from your own farms, and your belief in the collective good are what make this industry strong. Keep fighting the good fight. Our sector is better because of you.

To all of you: your support of me goes beyond what I could possibly put into words, and I hope to make you proud.

Mr. Speaker, my family has been rooted in Alberta since 1903, working on our farm near Acme. The challenges and triumphs we've faced are shared by so many Albertans. Generations of families like mine have cultivated the land, contributing to our rural economy and feeding not just our province but the world.

In this Chamber we all know first-hand the wonders and community that Alberta offers. Our pride as a province is built on enduring values of hard work, leadership, faith, empathy, and charity. Although, Ottawa mistakenly thinks our charity is a bottomless well.

Throughout my career I've focused on sharing the story of the typical Canadian family farm openly and honestly, highlighting what it truly takes to produce the high-quality food Canada is known for. I will continue to champion the farming legacy that defines our region and ensure that the voices of those who feed our province are heard and respected.

Mr. Speaker, as a rural area we don't have the luxury of extensive resources in our communities. Instead, countless hours of community effort are poured into making our towns thrive. Out of necessity and tradition we step up, supporting our schools, coaching teams, organizing outreach, running playschools, bible studies, food banks, and serving as volunteer firefighters, to name a few. In Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I see volunteers who are mentors and leaders, proving that when people get involved, communities grow stronger. Often it's the only way we can offer the services and experiences our residents deserve.

Mr. Speaker, this spirit of service and pride is what makes our rural communities so special. The rural Alberta perspective is often overlooked, but I intend to be a strong voice for it, especially our agrifood sector, which remains the backbone of this province, our country, and in my constituency our way of life.

As I prepared this speech, my son reminded me of former member Nathan Cooper's tradition of calling our riding the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. He made me promise I would continue that tradition. Upon reflection I realize that he is right. There is no better description of my constituency. It truly is outstanding. Nestled in the heart of south-central Alberta, our riding stretches from the banks of the Red Deer River in the east to the foothills near Cremona in the west. We are outstanding in community building, as seen with the lodges of the Royal Purple, the Elks, the Lions, the Rebekahs, and the Masons, which have chapters in most of the towns in my constituency.

There are our agriculture societies, like the ones in Acme, Carstairs, Cremona, Linden, Olds, Rockyford, Three Hills, and Trochu, each playing a vital role in preserving our rural heritage through steer shows, rodeos, pancake breakfasts, sports days. These societies not only celebrate our traditions but also help fund recreational facilities and foster community pride. Our many 4-H clubs encourage youth to explore, learn, and lead. The Olds Regional Exhibition hosts events year-round and is home to the world's only Bavarian rodeo. The Rockyford Rodeo, now in its 66th year, welcomes visitors from across Canada and beyond. Some volunteers are children of the original founders. We are outstanding in volunteerism. These organizations instill leadership, service, and learn to do by doing, principles that my constituents live by and that I will bring to this House every day.

Mr. Speaker, we are outstanding in the arts. The cultural gems like the Rosebud theatre and the Three Hills Arts Academy enrich our lives, nurturing creativity. We are outstanding in education, offering diverse learning options from home-schooling to public and charter schools. At the heart of it all is Olds College, a world-renowned centre for agriculture, technology, education, and

research. It continues to shape the future of farming in Alberta, ensuring youth have the opportunity to build careers, provide for their families, and carry our legacy forward.

Our communities are outstanding in the celebrated destinations they offer, drawing locals and visitors to experiences that reflect our creativity and pride, like the whimsical gopher museum in Torrington, the beautifully cultivated Trochu arboretum, and Pioneer Acres in Irricana where Alberta's agriculture heritage is brought to life. Each stands as a testament to the bold ideas and local passion that shape our communities.

Mr. Speaker, we are outstanding in our innovative thinking, deeply rooted in tradition, in faith and conservative values. This is reflected in Prairie Bible Institute, a well-respected institution that draws students from around the globe to Three Hills to learn and share their ministry.

Mr. Speaker, the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has been described as perhaps the single most steadfastly conservative district in Canada. That steadfastness is not just political. It reflects a deep commitment to tradition, personal responsibility, and community.

When asked what makes my constituency special, my answer is always the same: the people. I've had the pleasure of meeting and building relationships with incredible people who believe in the Alberta advantage and promise. These are people who serve in countless organizations, who welcomed me with open arms, and who inspire me daily with their unwavering commitment, looking out for their neighbours. While we may not have the same access to resources as urban centres, we have an abundance of faith, family, and community spirit.

Despite the excellence we exhibit, we still face very real challenges, particularly in funding and infrastructure. Rural communities like Standard and Huxley cannot be measured by the same models used in Calgary and Edmonton. Our smaller populations require tailored solutions. We also face realities of an aging population which requires housing and health care close to home. I am proud of the work being done in towns like Olds, Didsbury, and Trochu, whose new senior supportive living St. Mary's health care centre is set to open in 2027. We are attracting doctors and building facilities that meet these community needs. Towns like Carstairs and Crossfield are growing, and with that growth comes a need for infrastructure renewal, which I will be advocating for in this Chamber.

I'm proud of the partnerships between schools and small businesses that give youth real opportunities to apprentice, build careers, and stay in our communities. The modernization of Acme school is a prime example. The focus of the school is to expand career-readiness programming and skills training in fields relevant to the surrounding community of agriculture, finance, and engineering. Already we have more students enrolled in dual-credit courses than any other school division.

Mr. Speaker, many in my constituency work in the oil and gas sector, a sector that has been under attack for the past 10 years. These are hard-working Albertans who have faced uncertainty, layoffs, and policy decisions that seemed designed to push them out of the industry. But today they are finally feeling a measure of hope that comes from a government that understands their work, respects their contribution, and is committed to getting our resources out of the ground and into the world.

I am proud to be part of a government that is standing up for Alberta's energy sector, not just in words but in action. We are pushing back against federal overreach, defending our right to develop our resources responsibly, and restoring confidence in an industry that fuels our economy and supports thousands of families.

3:10

Now, I'd be remiss not to speak to the federal government's continued failure to reflect the realities of modern agriculture. Their policies often ignore the science-backed practices Canadian farmers lead the world in. A government that was more interested in electric vehicle mandates and completely ignored how it would decimate the canola industry, an issue they still haven't rectified even as farmers are completing harvest and feeling the repercussions to their businesses.

To be frank, Mr. Speaker, the party on the other side of the aisle was equally dismissive of agriculture and oil and gas during their time in government. I saw it first-hand in my previous role, where rural voices were sidelined and practical solutions were replaced with ideological talking points. It is my hope that my colleagues across the aisle will move past rhetoric and embrace a shared vision that recognizes the indispensable role these industries play in funding our public services and shaping our future.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and humility that I rise to speak about my constituency, a place where hard work meets heart. As the elected representative I am committed to ensuring that the voices of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are heard loud and clear in this Chamber. I will be a tireless advocate for agriculture, for oil and gas workers, and for the families and small communities who feel forgotten. I will advocate for rural health care, infrastructure, education, small businesses, and economic opportunities that reflect the needs and aspirations of our communities.

Under the leadership of our Premier and alongside a caucus of accomplished individuals we have made significant strides in shaping Alberta's future through fiscal responsibility, infrastructure investment, and social support. On this side of the House we will continue to fight for Albertans, not sit idle repeating divisive rhetoric meant to fracture our province further. Despite all this, Mr. Speaker, Alberta and our government remain committed to working hard to deliver meaningful results for Albertans. I believe that if we want real change, we in this Chamber need to keep our communities' best interests in mind, keep our word, and be willing to make tough decisions. We need to let common sense lead the way, where we can disagree and still have respectful debate.

Albertans are frustrated. We're tired of being ignored, tired of being told what's best for us by people who don't live here and don't understand our way of life. We want to see a strong and prosperous Alberta, one that's free to make decisions that reflect our values and our industries. To my fellow Albertans: you are the backbone of this province. You feed our families, fuel our economy, and raise our next generation of leaders. Whether you're a farmer in Acme, a small-business owner in Beiseker, or a student at Olds College, your contributions matter, and I will fight every day to make sure they are respected and supported.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mr. Dyck:** Thank you so very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to the throne speech here today and to second that motion here. I just want to say thank you so very much to the Lieutenant Governor for giving that speech. It was a great honour to hear and participate in our democratic process here over the last week.

Mr. Speaker, friends, it is a great honour to rise here today, and I just want to speak today on a few things, on our international relationship with the United States and abroad. We have a significant relationship with the United States and one that Alberta has always stood very tall in. We are a province that's built on freedom, built on hard work and the belief that prosperity truly is earned and that opportunity to earn that prosperity is available to

each and every single person and not just handed out. This is what makes Alberta such a great destination of choice for individuals and families and entrepreneurs and investors. These are cornerstones of what make the Alberta advantage, and they're part of what makes me so proud being the MLA for Grande Prairie. Grande Prairie has a cornerstone of our energy market, and the energy market and Alberta's reputation for clean and strong energy are a significant portion of what drives this relationship with one of our closest neighbours, the United States of America. We share more than just a border; we share many similar values. We share values of freedom, of democracy, the opportunities and energy that keep both our nations moving.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, Alberta is home to the world's fourth-largest energy reserves and oil reserves on Earth and vast natural gas reserves, some of which are right underneath northwestern Alberta. What's interesting to me, Madam Speaker, is that just over half of all oil imports to the United States, about 60 per cent, come from Alberta. This is more than Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq all combined. This is significant, natural gas imports. What this means is that when an American flips on the lights, when they drive their car, go to work, heat their home, chances are that it's powered by Alberta energy. We have a significant relationship here between us. We sell roughly \$100 billion worth of energy to the United States, and they up and transform that into roughly \$300 billion in value-added products for American workers in multiple different states such as Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, several others, creating jobs on both sides of the border.

The significance cannot be understated. We supply, through our energy, in both direct and indirect jobs just over 900,000 jobs to the United States economy. Let me say that again. Alberta supplies just over 900,000 jobs, direct and indirect, to the United States of America, jobs throughout the United States. Madam Speaker, this is a win-win partnership. This is something that is significant and that we are not going to slow down on.

By doubling our energy market, we have opportunity to expand exports into both the United States but also further abroad. OPEC has researched this a bit, and over the next several years they're looking at a 23 per cent increase in energy until 2050. That's a significant amount, and Alberta can be part of that solution. Over the last several years the percentage of energy, while it has shifted, has always been around that 80 per cent. That's been both natural gas and oil. Now, as we've said, global energy is growing.

Madam Speaker, we're not just meaning that this is something that we're going to sit around and wait on. This means Alberta's role, our oil and gas, our innovation have never been more important. I've been able to see this first-hand myself through the appointment to CSG Midwest, a transboundary group of a few provinces – Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba – and then also several midwestern states. Together we've been able to this last year craft some policy suggestions that get sent to the federal government, collectively to the United States of America federal government, to give them an idea of what we can work on together but also align our policies so that we can see growth in these areas. This is important work. This is about local people, local representation in Alberta, having significant opportunity to craft policy and be able to bring significant international opportunities and advocacy to our largest trading partner. We are working together to create strategic opportunities.

Now, I've spoken quite a bit about Alberta's leadership in energy and our determination to responsibly double our production and expand our reach to global markets. As this work continues over the

next several years, it remains the foundation, in many ways, of our prosperity as a province. Madam Speaker, we really have a vision that expands beyond just the wellhead here across Alberta. It's about more than just what we produce in the energy market but about what we are creating: the partnerships, the innovation, and long-term sustainability.

We have a goal of being fiscal stewards long term as well, and part of that fiscal stewardship is expanding the heritage savings trust fund to \$250 billion by 2050. This isn't just a target, but it's a reality that we can get to. Savings in good times and in challenging times, investing wisely can secure the future for our children.

3:20

As a father of three young boys I really am convinced that the Alberta that they grow up in is a province that encourages the opportunities for them to have a great life, to have a hope of a great future, and a hope of building something. This is what we're doing, Madam Speaker.

As a young person I grew up in a fairly poor household. At some points I remember my family and my parents receiving food hampers from some local church leaders. I recall tears of thanks, but my parents were amazing and continued to pursue the opportunities that Alberta presented them, building a business, and then also engaging in the public service. I'm thankful that they've continued to make smart choices and are able to be in a position to give back to the community because every single person matters in Alberta. My parents mattered, and they have continued being able to give back now, too.

Now, as a young man I was able to take hold of some of those opportunities. Starting a business at a young age, I took strategic risks. I started a business at 18 and hired a few people. These decisions that I made at a young age showcased just the opportunities and the strength of Alberta across our nation. It was an opportunity that was afforded to me, but it's also an opportunity that is afforded to my children as well. I took it, and I hope that other young people are able to continue to take that today.

But in the same way, by expanding those opportunities and bringing sustainability to family – my parents did it, and thankfully I've been able to have some opportunity to do that, too. Expanding the Alberta heritage trust fund brings sustainability to our future, just like my parents did as well. It gives us the strength to know we have money set aside for our future, a future that Albertans can know that the investments made today bring a continued sustainable future for Albertans, fiscal responsibility now and in the future.

Now, there are some challenges. I won't deny that, Madam Speaker. Some of those are the immigration and infrastructure we do see. When people from across Canada and around the world see the prosperity and opportunity here, they want to be part of it. They see the opportunity, they see the Alberta advantage, and honestly who can blame them? People want to come to Alberta – as I've said, the Alberta advantage and the prosperity here allowed me to start and build a career and build businesses and to be part of the incredible culture, both in southern Alberta, where I grew up, and in Grande Prairie – to be part of the business community that encourages entrepreneurship, encourages hard work, encourages this can-do attitude, and is willing to reward those things.

For several decades the Alberta advantage has been a magnet for growth. New Albertans have strengthened our economy and our communities historically, but in recent years federal immigration policies have driven unsustainable numbers without matching support for housing, for health care, or education. The result, Madam Speaker, is that infrastructure has been strained. There have been rising costs, and families are feeling stretched.

That's why the government of Alberta is taking action and asserting our constitutional authority to bring balanced sustainability and common sense back to immigration. Our goal is clear, to return to a stable number of primary economic migrants, newcomers who come ready to work, come ready to contribute, and build a life here. This is what Alberta has always been, and I hope we can get to that in the future. This isn't about closing doors. This is about opening doors but opening them responsibly, ensuring growth serves everyone who calls the province home.

As someone who has put a bill forward prior on a foreign credentialing advisory committee, a committee to help those who are here to work in areas that they're qualified for and not be working in areas that our youth could be working in, these steps are powerful by allowing them to work in areas that bring them joy, that bring them satisfaction but also allow that skill to be used.

Many of these jobs, Madam Speaker, are high-paying jobs that need qualified people to work in. Alberta is a land that has continued to be built by skilled people, people that are passionate about these skills and want to execute on these skills. We need to see people work in these areas that they're qualified in and skilled in. As we manage growth, this is an opportunity also to keep Alberta moving, to keep our young people, give them jobs and an opportunity for them to be able to have a hope and a future here in Alberta as well by melding these ideas. Responsible immigration and migration and responsible infrastructure growth, which is what this government is doing, go hand in hand. The people who build Alberta and the foundations that support them are going to continue to grow. That's how we're going to protect the Alberta advantage and ensure that growth continues to lift everyone.

Now, talking locally about some of our investments in infrastructure, in northern Alberta we've seen some really key investments improving highways 88 and 686 in the north. We've seen it down in Calgary with the Deerfoot, the Yellowhead in Edmonton, and the twinning of highways 3, 11, and 63. Across Alberta every area is important, Madam Speaker. We don't just focus on one, but every single area brings value and has a place in Alberta. Alongside the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, we've been able to continue the advocacy for the development of the highway 40X bypass around Grande Prairie. It is significant to get our large commercial drivers out of the centre of the city and around the city to both protect our citizens but also to take some of that stress off our inner-city roads. I'm very happy that we're in that design phase of this. It is significant work that's been happening, but these are the significant opportunities that we've seen.

Not only that, but we're putting money into infrastructure in postsecondaries. Once again at our Northwestern Polytechnic we've seen growth, and just recently, a few weeks ago, they expanded into the bachelor of education for their secondary degree, which I'm super thankful for and proud of. As well, they've been able to find creative ways to train tradespeople by training people in company shops, being able to partner with them, expand that training, giving them a high-quality education in their work areas. These are, Madam Speaker, local areas coming up with local ideas for local solutions to implement success. I'm super proud of our local leadership team at Northwestern Polytechnic, both the leadership there and also the board. They have done incredibly well.

Now, there are a couple of other areas, too. Health care is really important to me. I think we've all seen, Madam Speaker, where families have waited for surgeries, where parents can't necessarily find a family doctor, or where seniors must travel several hours for care. Grande Prairie has been able to be a corner piece in the northwest in this area, and I'm super thankful and super happy about some of the continual things we've done. Recently, just this fall, we've been able to launch the northern Alberta medical

program; 30 new doctors are being trained right now in Grande Prairie. This is a significant investment that this Conservative government has made for health care for northern Alberta. These students have been welcomed by the community, and we have seen just so much engagement across our community.

Now, Madam Speaker, I don't just want to talk about northwestern Alberta, but I also want to talk about southern Alberta. The Member for Lethbridge-East has put in significant time to also see a similar medical school start in 2026 down at the University of Lethbridge. He has advocated hard and continues to see those medical students, hopefully, start this next year. That's a partnership through U of L and U of C, and I'm looking forward to continuing to see rural health care expand. These are the aspects that pinpoint the importance of health care for our community.

Going back up to northwestern Alberta just for a moment, we've also seen the expansion of our kidney care centre in an announcement this last week with several million dollars taking care of people in need of dialysis. This one hits home to me, Madam Speaker, because, as someone whose grandpa spent over a decade on dialysis several days a week, I've seen the impact but also the care of everyone involved. Also, the longevity of his life was expanded, so I'm very thankful for these investments. These are significant health investments that we have seen.

Also, I do want to talk about justice and public safety. I think what makes Alberta such a special place is our freedom. I think about freedom and the responsibility that comes with it: freedom to raise our families as we choose, freedom to speak the truth without fear, and freedom to live in strong, safe communities. This doesn't mean that we do this without safety and accountability, and that's why this government is funding police, not defunding them, Madam Speaker, because strong communities need men and women in police services across our province. Victims deserve justice and not excuses for the guilty.

Madam Speaker, once again, in northwestern Alberta we've seen the support for police services, partnering with the city of Grande Prairie for the Grande Prairie police service. With investments into the transition we have been able to see local men and women be able to expand their work and make a difference in Grande Prairie. This is growing local leadership, local oversight, faster leadership decisions, and a greater service. These young men and women across the ages reflect the understanding of our community but also the type of community we are.

3:30

Madam Speaker, we're also standing up for lawful gun owners, for farmers, for hunters, and sportsmen who follow the rules. Ottawa's gun seizure program targets the wrong people. Alberta won't enforce it. We'll focus on real criminals and on border security.

Now, Madam Speaker, we're also expanding addiction recovery and mental health supports. Once again, in northwestern Alberta, just outside of Grande Prairie, we're looking at building a recovery centre to help those who are struggling with the deadly disease of addiction, helping those people be on their path of recovery, to get on a journey of healing so that they can be able to get back with their families, get back into the community, and get back into a spot where they are able to input back into the community. I'm greatly looking forward to that investment. These are investments this government is making.

Just to wrap up for a couple of minutes here, I just want to say that I do love this province, and I do love this country, Madam Speaker. I love that our entire province is built on a couple of ideas. We are built upon the promise of hope, of building a future here, of a province that allows each of us to craft a life that we're proud of

and that we have an opportunity for continued growth in our communities, in our ideas, in our families. Those are important aspects of what makes us Albertan. I also deeply love this country. I love the incredible opportunities to showcase the incredible heritage across the incredible, dynamic people across this great land.

Madam Speaker, in all of this I do believe that Alberta's best future comes when we are strong, free, and sovereign within a united Canada, standing tall and never bowing to Ottawa when it oversteps. Sovereignty does not mean separation. It means taking responsibility for our own future, our own prosperity, and for the people of Alberta. For far too long federal overreach has been there, from carbon taxes to energy caps, and this has punished Alberta's industries and families. That's not just bad policy; it weakens the entire nation. When Alberta succeeds, Canada succeeds. Now we're negotiating for greater control over pipelines, over trade and natural resources, expanding access to Asia, to Europe, and U.S. markets, and dismantling some of those federal barriers that have crippled Alberta's economy thus far.

Madam Speaker, Albertans don't need permission to prosper. We are people who have freedom to do what we've always done best: to build, to work, to innovate, and to lead. In the end, I do believe that Albertans will decide the future of this province through their voice, their vote, and their vision, and I have no doubt that this province has a great future ahead of us. To wrap up, I do believe that this province will always be strong and free.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Take two, if I may. I'm pleased to rise today in response to the Speech from the Throne. As I mentioned last night, sitting there, listening to the Speech from the Throne – and I'm sure that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie and the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, who just gave us that marvellous and eloquent address, probably felt the same as I did. The pomp, the circumstance, the trumpets, the military uniforms; the head of the RCMP, someone I know very, very well, standing still and not talking for so long; and all of us together in this room feeling the weight of the opportunity and the remarkable responsibility that has been placed in our hands by our neighbours, by our voters.

Unfortunately, the speech itself let all Albertans down significantly. The speech described an Alberta that I didn't recognize, an Alberta that exists perhaps in the minds of this government or in the minds of the bubble in which they live, a speech that certainly doesn't describe the Alberta I grew up in, the Alberta I live in, or the Alberta that our neighbours, nearly 5 million of them, experience every single day.

I'll start by talking a little bit about that speech. Things that stood out in that speech for me: there are massive cuts to come. This government's agenda of chaos, corruption, and cruelty will be added by cuts. The government admitted that they will increase spending by less – not the same as, by less – than population growth and inflation. So all the problems that we've heard about, all the problems with not enough schools, not enough health care facilities, not enough capital spending, not enough public transit, not enough roads, will be exacerbated in the years to come.

The speech said that this government will build no new hospitals. No new hospital in south Edmonton, no new hospital in north Calgary or Airdrie, those hospitals that have been on the docket for so very long. Instead, they will double down on the failed strategy of private health clinics. Even after the Wyant report said that

hundreds of millions of dollars are unaccounted for, they're going to double down on this failed strategy.

Perhaps most troubling, the throne speech for the first time in Alberta history included significant anti-immigrant rhetoric. The irony of that throne speech being read by someone who has contributed so much to this community but who arrived here as a stateless person, who often talks about coming here as a refugee: for her to have to read this government's words of that anti-immigrant rhetoric was cruel, and it was evil, and it is foreshadowing what is yet to come.

Do I believe that members opposite are anti-immigrant? Do I believe that members opposite don't believe that people who look like me or look like so many people in this House can't contribute to the community? Of course I don't believe that. Yet they do it. Yet this government talks about it. Yet this government, which takes all its cues from right-wing provocateurs and podcasters in the United States, is now doing this.

You know, I was a political commentator for a long time, Madam Speaker, internationally. I would speak around the world about Canadian politics and what was going on, and people would always say to me: do you have the same rise of the alt right in Canada that we've had in other parts of the world, in Hungary, all over Europe, even in India and other places? And I would always say: "You know what? The one thing that sets the Canadian right apart is that they don't delve into anti-immigrant rhetoric, they don't actually demonize the other, they don't demonize migrants, they don't demonize refugees."

I often tell the story of the 2015 federal election in which Canadians were completely compelled by one photo, a photo of a little boy's body washed up on a beach. When we learned that that little boy's family was in Vancouver, that that little boy could have been in Canada safe and warm and dry: I would argue that the 2015 federal election turned on that. I would argue that it was the only election in that decade anywhere in the world where the parties were competing to outbid one another for how many refugees we would accept. It made me proud to be Canadian, which makes it so much more disappointing that this government is reaching for that kind of rhetoric.

There was something hidden in that speech – not hidden; it was there in plain sight – which said that this government will for the first time in Canadian history restrict certain services to Canadian citizens. In other words, legal permanent residents of Canada will not have access to some services according to the throne speech. It's the first time in Canadian history that any government has dared to do that. Even the government of Quebec, which can have xenophobic tendencies, has never dared to do that.

It is, of course, blatantly unconstitutional, but as we learned from this government yesterday, they don't particularly care about blatantly unconstitutional. They were willing yesterday, and they will be willing in the future, despite the Minister of Finance's protestations that he cannot imagine another instance when they would use it. Perhaps he needs to go back and read his own government's throne speech, because it was right there. This government signalled in that throne speech that they're happy to cut back on people's freedoms in the same breath as saying we are the freest jurisdiction in Canada. Remember, we have a Premier who loves to talk about how she's the most freedom-loving politician in Canada. The Premier that I knew 30 years ago was that, but her actions certainly have not reflected that.

3:40

The very next paragraph in the throne speech said that we're the freest jurisdiction in Canada but not when it comes to trans kids, not when it comes to parents who want to give their kids the health

care that their health care provider says is the best treatment for them, not to health care providers who have sworn an oath to give their patients the best possible care. No; those people don't count. Not to people who – I don't know – want to be able to read anything. Those people don't count. Those freedoms don't matter. Only the freedoms matter that make this government more powerful and that push forward on what this government is.

This is not what Albertans want. It's not what Albertans need. It's not what Albertans are asking for. It's not what Albertans require right now. My colleagues and I had a pretty big summer. We spoke to Albertans in every corner of this province, in small towns and big cities. We knocked on over 200,000 doors this summer. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was only 140,000 of those 200,000 doors. She is, in fact, tireless. We showed up this summer. We showed up everywhere. We showed up at every small-town rodeo. We showed up at every dog park. We showed up at every music festival. We showed up anywhere people were gathering in community and spending time with their neighbours.

We also had a series of community gatherings. I don't like calling them town halls. But we had a series of community gatherings that looked very different than the ones the members opposite had. They were the same in one way: just about the same number of Albertans came, and we managed to do that without a million dollars of taxpayer money going to advertise these town halls. Thousands of Albertans showed up, and they surprised me.

The reason we were doing these community gatherings – oh, and I should say that we ran these very differently. They weren't an opportunity for monologues, for hateful tirades that my panel and I would smile and nod knowingly and never challenge anyone unless they disagreed with one another. I can guarantee to this House that we never threatened any Albertan with violence for having an opinion different than our own. We certainly did not threaten a child with spanking because we disagreed with what they had to say. We didn't do that. In fact, what we asked people to do was pick up their chairs, turn them around, talk to their neighbours.

What surprised me about this summer is – we called this series Better Together. Of course, that was meant to be about separatism. It was meant to be about how Alberta is better together with Canada. But what we quickly learned is that Albertans had a deeper meaning to those words, that Albertans were deeply frustrated with this entire scene of division and anger and hatred that governments around the world but this government in particular have been putting on them, a politics of endless anger, a politics that feeds on rage. They said: we've had enough of it. Alberta is the place where you didn't get a barn built unless your neighbours helped you put up the barn, and what this government does does not reflect who we are as Albertans.

Look, Albertans are treading water. A lot of our friends and neighbours are struggling. They're just trying to get by. The cost of living is going up and up and up, and a decent life free of financial fear is out of reach for far too many.

Albertans see wait times going up, not down. Certainly, the throne speech talks about underutilized hospitals. I have yet to see an Albertan who says: "There are not enough people in my ER. Gosh, I wish we could rent out those extra empty rooms in the hospital." This does not reflect the reality of Albertans.

Albertans see the overcrowded classrooms. They see the absolute dereliction of the dream of Peter Lougheed, that we could have the best public education system in the world. They see massive job losses. They see that unemployment is increased by three points under this government. They've seen this government chase away jobs in the energy sector, chase away jobs in renewables, and chase away jobs because no one will invest in a place if they don't know

what country they're investing in. Their endless pandering to separatists, to extremists hurts investment and chases away jobs.

Albertans are proud Canadians. Today we got the news that 10 per cent of all Albertans signed a petition, the largest petition in this province, probably in this country's history, denouncing this government and saying that they are proud Canadians. Indeed, they are forever Canadian.

Madam Speaker, I didn't recognize Alberta in that throne speech, but it's why I stand proudly here today as Leader of the Official Opposition in what I'm calling my first formal speech – never mind yesterday – to defend all Albertans who want and deserve better. It's my hope that everyone out there watching and listening can see how we are presenting a better vision, how my team and I, Alberta's New Democrats, are standing up and defending the real priorities of our province.

But before I get into that, I should actually go back to where I wanted to start, which is with deep gratitude to everyone who's worked to get me here. It is such a privilege to be the 987th member elected to the Legislative Assembly and the 39th Leader of the Opposition in Alberta. You heard me talk yesterday about the systems that got me here, and I'll come back to that, but it's not just systems; it's also people.

Madam Speaker, I'm thrilled that, even though I told them to stay home and watch this on TV, my family made the trek up today. We lost my dad in 2012, and a lot of what I owe I owe to my dad, but we persevere. Mom can't be here with us today, but mom, who I sometimes call my 84-year-old roommate, has been the pillar of strength for me and for my family. Today we're joined here by the kindest person I know, my brother-in-law, a professional ethicist. He's also the most patient person I know because he has to deal with the rest of our family. We're joined here by my remarkable nieces. Asha's on reading week. She's in her first semester of law school at the University of Toronto. Sofia is happy that school is not starting until tomorrow: grade 11 student at Sir Winston Churchill high school, a champion debater, a brilliant human, and the source of much of my best political advice.

Oh, and then there's my sister. I often tell the story of how when my parents came to Canada my mother was pregnant with me. So I was born in Canada but made in Africa. But when they came they left my sister behind, and I often finished telling the story of much to my regret, they then sent for her. But she's been there next to me my whole life. Those of you who know her know that I have no bigger fan, no bigger cheerleader, and no bigger supporter. That's a big sister. By the way, she has something posted on the wall at her home. It's a T-shirt from one of our campaigns that I signed. On that T-shirt I wrote some life advice for my big sister: avoid social media. She has not taken that advice.

**3:50**

Now, I'm defining these folks in their relationship to me, but I need you to understand that my family and the community around me are extraordinary leaders in their own right. They are extraordinary people who do extraordinary things in the community. Both my sister and brother-in-law work in the health care system. They're leaders in the health care system, making Albertans safer and healthier every single day, working with families at some of the most difficult moments of their lives and helping them understand that the community is putting their arms around them. I'm deeply grateful for that work.

I'm deeply grateful for the hundreds of volunteers who helped get me elected. You know, Madam Speaker, in the last year I've had five elections. That is too many elections, but in every one of them we've had extraordinary volunteers come forward. They don't get paid. They probably don't even get a T-shirt. But what they do

get is to work with like-minded people who just want a better Alberta. Thank you to all of our electoral volunteers on all sides of this aisle for making democracy.

And I want to thank the residents of Edmonton-Strathcona. They accepted a weird guy from Calgary into their fold. I was a little worried that they would say: who and what is this? They did in fact say, “Who and what is this?” but they welcomed me with open arms, helping us get one of the largest vote percentages we’ve ever had in that riding because they believed in me, too. I’m deeply grateful to them, and I promise today to represent the residents of Edmonton-Strathcona as best I can.

Listen, I’ve got some great footsteps to fill in. Edmonton-Strathcona has been represented by two former party leaders, and both of them really showed me the way: their leadership, their humility, their love for this province. Of course, we lost Raj Pannu on January 30 of this year. Before there was a Naheed Nenshi in politics, before there was a Rakhi Pancholi in politics, there was a . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but proper names are not good.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Oh, I’m so sorry. I apologize.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Before there was a me in politics, before there was a Member for Edmonton-Whitemud in politics – I’m still getting used to the new rules, Madam Speaker; I apologize for that – there was a Raj Pannu in politics. There was a Raj Pannu really providing us that kind of leadership. And, of course – I can name her now after so many years that I couldn’t say her name – Rachel Notley. As Leader of the Opposition and as Premier of this province she showed us that it is possible to do great things without ever, ever, ever compromising on what you believe in, and that is a lesson I will never forget.

I also should shout-out the previous Leader of the Opposition, who I get to sit next to every single day. I think I may have almost broken my House leader on my very first day in the House, but she is still here. The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is an extraordinary public servant and a leader the likes of which I’ve never seen and, honestly, the greatest gift I’ve been given in the last year and a half.

Every one of us is driven here not because of the fame – there isn’t any – or the power or the cushy job. None of those things exist. We’re driven here because of the need to serve. I never ever speak in public without using the word “sevā.” It’s a Sanskrit word. It doesn’t mean service, which most people think it means. It means selfless service. I’m deeply grateful for the sevā of everyone in this House, and I hope that I will be able to conduct my sevā, my selfless service, to this community. I promise that in giving that sevā, I will uphold respect for the rule of law, respect for the peoples who’ve lived on this land for thousands and thousands of generations, respect for the people who’ve just arrived here seeking a better life, respect for the people from every corner of this broken Earth who’ve come here, who’ve come here because this is the place where we know that regardless of what you look like and regardless of where you come from and regardless of how you worship and regardless of whom you love, you belong here. You deserve to be here. You deserve to live a life here of safety, of dignity, of authenticity, of prosperity. You deserve to thrive here, and it is our responsibility to make sure that happens. I will uphold respect for voters. I will uphold respect for democracy. I will uphold respect for Canada.

But I have to say, Madam Speaker, what a way to start. It’s only day two and the people in this House have already been subjected

to a never-ending speech from me yesterday, and they’re getting another one today.

I have to say that when the fall session began and I finally got to take my seat, I knew we’d hit the ground running. I spent a year watching the proceedings of this House in the House every day, but I didn’t expect this. I sure didn’t expect that on my first day in the Legislature, the day of the Speech from the Throne, that I would be joining the largest rally in Alberta’s history. Tens of thousands of people standing outside on the steps of the Legislature that day and other days at rally after rally after rally as citizens rise together against this government’s fight against them, against teachers, against parents, and against students. I certainly did not expect to be sitting here until well past midnight last night speaking out for basic fundamental human rights. I certainly did not expect that my very first day in House business would be a day where the government did so many unprecedented things; where this government that loves to show how tough it is, that loves to have the image and the brand that we are the ones standing up for Alberta, has shown itself to be so very weak, has shown itself to be defined by so much cowardice, afraid to hear dissent, afraid to hear anything that might shatter their closely held world view.

Yes, Madam Speaker, Albertans noted one thing last night: that limiting the debate didn’t shut us up, but it certainly shut them up. Not one member of the caucus, other than the mover and the minister for a brief intervention, stood up; not one member of that caucus used their voice to defend what was happening. I sat here all night and I looked over at their faces all night. It looked like an undertakers’ convention. You saw a lot of people questioning their life choices and questioning the government that they are in.

Now, I should apologize, Madam Speaker, because I used that line earlier – the undertakers’ convention – and I immediately got a text from the re-elected mayor of High River, Mr. Craig Snodgrass, who is in fact a funeral director, and the text merely said: undertakers’ conventions are fun. I will take him at his word. Why do I feel like I just got myself a ticket to be the keynote speaker at the next undertakers’ convention?

But I think that the members opposite felt what I felt. I felt the ground shifting underneath us. The government may have thought that at 2:30 in the morning this horrible situation of their own making was finished. Albertans certainly didn’t think that. You know, those of us who live in southern Alberta and the Member for Banff-Kananaskis will attest to this: if you happen to be out in the spring, if you happen to catch the exact right moment, you’ll hear a crack and that crack is the ice breaking and the water beginning to flow. Last night I heard that crack in the electorate. I heard citizens saying: “The veil has been dropped. This government is not who we believe they are.” Despite their honeyed words about respect, despite the words that they mouth about responsibility, Albertans figured out exactly who this government is. As the Member for Edmonton-City Centre said yesterday, in the words of Maya Angelou: when someone tells you who they are or shows you who they are, believe them.

**4:00**

Albertans now believe and they know exactly who this government is. Late last night I said: this government will rue this day. Members of this government will look back on this day as the day that it all fell apart, as the beginning of the end. I still believe that, Madam Speaker, because Albertans are so much smarter and so much better than this government gives them credit for. They understand exactly what’s going on, and they understand exactly what they value.

Maybe those values are encapsulated just a little bit in my story, a story that is reflective of so many in this community. As you

heard, my parents immigrated to this country when my mother was pregnant with me. Money was tight. Those first few months were hard. That first winter was almost impossible. My parents ended up in Toronto, a smaller city then than it is now. Actually, maybe – I’ve got a bit of time – I’ll tell the story. I’ve told this story many, many, many times.

Why in the world did they end up in Canada? See, my parents used to run a hotel in a place called Arusha, Tanzania. That’s the base of Mount Kilimanjaro. In fact, I’m excited that the minister of education is going to go to my family home very, very soon to do some very good work. But they met a lot of people from all over the world, and some of the people they met were aid workers from the former Canadian International Development Agency.

Now, these aid workers, Madam Speaker, used to get the *Toronto Star* newspaper delivered in their diplomatic pouches. For those members in the House and those listening today under the age of 40, a newspaper is sort of like a tablet, but it’s on paper; you can’t change it. When they were done, they would give these newspapers to my dad. My dad was always a voracious reader, so he would read about this place on the other side of the world. He said: someday I’m going to go there. After many, many, many years my dad and my mom had the opportunity to be the representatives of their giant family at a family wedding that was going to be held in England. First time they ever got on a plane. First time that they ever set foot outside of their country. My dad said: well, if we’re getting on a plane, we may as well see this Canada. I don’t think they had Google Maps then. I don’t think he knew how far that was.

The thing that he was most excited about seeing in Canada was that he had seen pictures of the opening of the Toronto city hall. Now, I want you to picture that building: Nathan Phillips Square, the ice rink, and the building that is kind of curved going around it. Dad in those days couldn’t imagine how you could build a building that tall that had a curve in it, so he wanted to see that city hall, and see it he did. Don’t let me forget to come back to that.

They got here. They didn’t have anything. They looked in the phone book – for people under 40, just google it – and they found names that may have sounded familiar, names that may have been Ismaili Muslim names, and they called. They found a tiny community. They said: “Well, let’s organize prayer services. Let’s organize times that we can get together.” Every Friday morning my mom would wake up heavily pregnant or with a newborn, and she would strip the sheets off the bed and wash them, and then she would hang them to dry because they didn’t have a nickel for the dryer. She would pray that they would dry in time. In time for what? In the evening she’d fold up these sheets and put them in a bag, and they would take the subway and they’d go to someone’s house for prayer services, and those sheets would become the floor coverings to lend just a little bit of dignity to that basement. That’s where they started.

Not a year later Asians were expelled from Uganda, and for the first time in Canadian history we accepted a huge wave of non-European immigrants. It changed Canada forever, but it also changed my family forever. One of those immigrants is now the representative of His Majesty here in Alberta.

This little, tiny group of people who could barely get by, who had been through one winter, who didn’t really understand how the rest of the society worked: they found themselves suddenly responsible for thousands of newcomers. And they just did it. No matter how hard life was, they knew that there were others who needed them. They knew that in a time of struggle there was also a time for service, and they did that every day.

When I was 18 months old, I did my research. I wrote the briefing books, presented them to my parents, and convinced them that the future was in Alberta, that the future was in the west. My mom tells

me the briefing book was not really very convincing. It was mostly crayon. My family packed up all our belongings into a 1974 Dodge Dart and drove across the country to start a new life here underneath that endless sky.

We didn’t have much growing up. We went with the ups and downs of the Alberta economy, like so many Alberta families. Sometimes we were poor. Sometimes we were very poor. But growing up in Marlborough and in Red Deer county, I knew that I was growing up in a community that believed in me. I graduated from outstanding public schools, the best public schools in the world. My diploma was signed by a Conservative minister of education, Mr. Dinning, who I spent a lot of time with in the years after that, sometimes together, sometimes arguing a little bit. But I never doubted his or his government’s commitment to public education.

I explored the city I grew to love on public transit. So many bus drivers just spending a moment in their day trying to make my day a little bit better.

I spent my Saturday afternoons at the public library, where the librarians indulged me and allowed me to sign out more books than would normally be provided. By the way, years later – years later – I was awarded the freedom of expression award in Calgary. A bunch of librarians were there. One librarian came up to me and said: “You know, I remember you. I worked at the Forest Lawn public library.” I said: “Yeah. I always tell the story.” She said, “I know,” and she said: “Now I need to tell you the truth. There was never a limit on the number of books you could take out for reading. We just let you think there was so you would read more.” Those are librarians.

I learned to swim very badly in a public swimming pool.

I went to an incredible public university and got the best education. Trust me. I know. Years later, when I went to graduate school at a very fancy, very famous university, I was very nervous because all the other kids had gone to schools with fancy famous names. I realized that my education from the University of Calgary was so much better than anything that they had received. Every step of the way I was lifted up by the public systems that make life work for young people in this community and in every community.

In 2010 my dad, who always wanted to see that Toronto city hall, got to sit in another city hall, and he got to watch his son get sworn in as the mayor of the greatest city on Earth. I don’t tell that story because it’s extraordinary. Maybe it’s interesting in its details. I tell that story because of how ordinary it is, because it’s the story of every family in this community, or it should be. The story of everybody: if you work hard, if you serve, you can succeed. It’s the promise of Canada. It’s a promise that we haven’t always fulfilled. It’s a promise we haven’t fulfilled to Indigenous people. It’s a promise that we haven’t fulfilled to everyone who comes here. But it is a promise, and it’s a promise that we need to work on every single day.

#### 4:10

This country is messy. It’s bruised. Sometimes it’s battered. Sometimes it feels a little broken. It doesn’t work all the time, but it’s worth fighting for because it is one of the few places on Earth that this happens and we take it for granted, a place that says that that kid in Marlborough, that kid growing up on-reserve, that kid on a farm, that kid in a downtown of a major metropolis: every single one of them deserves to be a great Canadian and live a great Canadian life right here, right now. Kids from neighbourhoods like Marlborough and other places don’t get that. Kids from neighbourhoods like Marlborough can grow up in cyclical generational poverty. Kids from places like Marlborough can live in a place where no one expects anything of them. Not here. Never

here. Never in Calgary. Never in Alberta. Never in Canada. That's what we fight for in this House every single day.

I loved being the mayor. I really did. Fewer rules on what you could say and do. The timer was still pretty bad, though. I really loved it. I love the opportunity to fix stuff. I love the opportunity to make the community better. But then I was done. But then I was done. I was done because I'm a Gen-Xer and I've spent my whole life waiting for the boomers above me to retire, and I didn't want to do that to the people who came after. I said: it's time for new and fresh ideas; it's time for someone else to come in.

I enjoyed those two and a half glorious years of retirement. I didn't want to get back into politics. I was proud of what we'd accomplished: 11 straight balanced budgets, strong public services, a city that welcomed and welcomes everyone, a city that was named the third-best city in the entire world in which to live. I'm so proud of that. I'm so proud of that record, and I'm so proud of the Calgarians who worked hard to make that happen.

But like so many Albertans – like so many Albertans – I watched politics in this province with increasing horror. I watched what was happening in government. I watched politics become more divisive, more cynical, more disconnected from the people that we are meant to serve. I saw leaders using their platforms to stoke fear instead of build hope. I saw decisions being made that ignored the voices of everyday Albertans. I saw rising costs. I saw increasing poverty. I saw sustainable jobs leaving this province. I saw every single sector being held back by a government instead of being supported by it. I saw a growing gap between the promise of this province and the reality too many of our neighbours were facing. And I saw so, so, so much corruption.

That's why I came back. That's why I jumped back into this world. I didn't miss politics, but what I really knew is that I believe in Alberta. I believe in an Alberta that is first and never last. I believe in the promise of this place. I believe in public service. I believe that government can be competent and compassionate. I believe that government can be ethical and good and effective. I believe that we can build an economy that works for people and public services that lift everyone up. I believe that we have a responsibility to ourselves, to our communities, to our kids, and to the future. I believe that we can govern with integrity and we can still be a great government.

I've been in this role as leader of the party for about a year and a half. It took me a while. It took the government a while to bring me in here. No hard feelings. For about a year and a half now, since I've stepped into the role of leader of the party, I've seen first-hand the challenges facing our province. I've seen families struggling with the cost of living: rising rents, high grocery bills, unaffordable utilities. The price of utilities as much as quadrupled under this government, and certainly we heard the minister today talk about how it's come down. So it's only about 60 per cent higher than it was when this government took power.

Recent reports showed that in Calgary, the richest city in the richest jurisdiction in Canada, one-third of households face food insecurity. One-third of households don't have enough to eat. I'm just going to pause for a minute there. In the richest city in the richest jurisdiction in one of the richest countries in the world one-third of people don't have enough to eat every day. That is the Alberta that this government has built.

Unemployment, as I said, has gone up three points since this Premier took power. Youth unemployment is such that 1 in 5 young men in Alberta cannot find work. Youth unemployment has never been higher. The government proposed a jobs plan earlier this summer that didn't actually include any jobs. It just said: if we only told people about jobs, they would take the jobs. Not a week later the government came back and said: oh, maybe we should give businesses money to create jobs. It was clearly written on the back

of a napkin, and it clearly wasn't addressing the very real issues that Albertans are facing. Workers are being asked to do more with less. Many workers don't feel safe at work. They don't feel respected in their jobs. And – did I mention? – so, so, so, so much corruption.

In this year, though, we've seen something else remarkable: Albertans standing up, whether educational assistants standing through a cold Fort McMurray winter, fighting for basic human rights and above poverty level wages – they won, and we're very proud of them for what they've done – to health care workers, teachers, public servants. We're hearing them raise their voices. We're hearing business raise its voice. We're hearing private-sector workers raise their voices. They're raising their voices, yes, with a bit of anger but mostly in hope, hope that their work will be valued, hope that communities will get the support they deserve.

In education classes are overcrowded, teachers are overwhelmed, funding is falling behind. We've seen strikes. We've seen lockouts, not because people want conflict. Those teachers chose to go on strike even though they knew they wouldn't get paid. They did it because they were fighting for better: better conditions, better outcomes, and a better future.

In health care emergency rooms are closing. Wait times are growing. More and more Albertans are going without a family doctor. Prescription costs are rising.

When we think about people living with disabilities in this province, we see unspeakable cruelty, taking away \$200 a month from people who earn \$1,900 a month, forcing them to jump through hoops, massively increasing their rent if they're lucky enough to have a subsidized home. What are the cost savings of this? Are these cost savings going to make any difference? Will these cost savings even pay for another Turkish Tylenol deal or botched lab privatization? There's no need to do this. This is done simply out of cruelty.

I asked myself when I first started this job: why is this government so cruel? Is this a byproduct of their work? Do they not understand the impact that this is having on everyday people? Over time I've grown to learn – I have yet to see evidence to disprove this – that cruelty is not an accidental byproduct of these decisions; cruelty is the point. Why else – why else – would we go after the most vulnerable Albertans first?

But you know what? Despite all these challenges I've seen incredible strength in Albertans. I've seen incredible resilience. I've seen Albertans stepping up for one another. I've seen communities coming together. I've seen people who believe passionately with every cell of their body in the promise of this place. And every single day I see hope. I see hope for a better future. I know it's easy to break and the government certainly knows how to break things, but I know we can fix what's broken. I know we can build systems that work for everyone. I know we can govern with compassion, competence, and ethics, and I know we can create an economy that lifts people up rather than leaves them behind.

4:20

Friends, Madam Speaker, through you I will say to Albertans that we're living in a moment of real uncertainty. Albertans are facing rising costs, strained public services, growing anxiety about the future, and beyond our borders we see a terrifying world, a world of global instability, of economic volatility, of threats to democratic institutions. These are times that require leadership. This is not a time for division. It's not a time to stoke anger. It's not a time for hatred. It is the time to bring people together because when the challenges are this big, we need to be even bigger. We need to be united not just as Albertans but as Canadians.

But instead of bringing people together, we've seen a government that chooses distraction and division, that fans the

flames of separatism, that fights hard to keep Albertans from actually finding solutions to the very real things that they're facing. Albertans deserve so much better. Albertans deserve a government that sees the threats ahead and meets them with courage, not with cynicism. Albertans deserve leadership that builds bridges, not walls, and Albertans deserve, yes, a Premier who understands that our strength comes from standing together, not tearing each other apart.

As I said, we've been listening to Albertans. We've been listening to teachers, parents, and students, who want every child to have the chance to succeed. We've been listening to doctors and nurses and health care administrators, who pour their hearts and their minds and their strong backs and their bodies into keeping people healthy and communities strong; to seniors who built this province and to the family members doing their best to make sure people can age with dignity; to new graduates trying to build a life here; to skilled trades workers, who keep our province running; to farmers and ranchers, who look after our land and who feed the world; to people in oil and gas, who just want to be able to provide the world with safe, clean, reliable energy, which is the greatest antipoverty tool we've got; to small-business owners working hard to create jobs and opportunities for others; to leaders, to industry leaders in every field from agriculture to clean-tech energy and manufacturing, who see enormous potential in Alberta's talent, innovation, and drive; to community leaders, advocates, volunteers, people in the nonprofit sector, even Albertans living on income support, people who remind me every day that this province runs on compassion. We do it because we look after one another with perseverance and with generosity because that's who Albertans are.

We've heard frustrations. We've heard challenges. We've heard courage. We've heard determination. We've heard, above all, hope, hope from Albertans who believe this place can be somewhere where everyone gets a fair shot, hope from people who know that when we look out for one another, there's no limit to what you can achieve. These conversations this summer reaffirm what I've always believed. Albertans care deeply about one another, about the land, about their communities, about their families, about their future, about Alberta, and about Canada.

So here's what you can expect from me in my new role. I'll fight every day. I'll fight every day to make life more affordable for Albertans. I'll fight every day to invest in public health care and education because they're the foundation of a strong and fair society. I will protect your pensions, your rights, and your future. I will work with businesses large and small, workers, and innovators to build an economy that works for everyone. I will honour the voices of teachers, nurses, seniors, and students, not just in words but in action. I will lead with integrity. I hope I will lead with humility, and I hope that you'll keep me honest if I don't, and I'll lead with a deep respect for the people of this province. I will govern with pragmatism and effectiveness because our goal on this side, my goal, is not power. I don't need that. My goal and all of our goals is *sevā*, and I will always, always, always listen to Albertans. My goal will be to unite rather than divide because I know, as Albertans told us over and over this summer, that we are better together.

There are some simple things here. Albertans have never been afraid of audacious goals, but this government and so many like it around the world want to tell people things will never be better than they are today. They want to say to folks: you've got to defend with everything you've got, every crumb you have, because those people, whoever those people are, want to take it away. But that's not Albertan. That's fundamentally un-Albertan. You can't dream small under a sky that big.

So what are the dreams? I see an Alberta where every worker comes home safe every single day, where dignity and safety are

nonnegotiable, where people who are able to go to work every day live without financial fear, where every trip to the grocery store doesn't come with just a little bit of terror or the need to put stuff back on the shelves, where Albertans are not forced to make impossible choices between prescription drugs and rent. I see an Alberta where every single person who needs a hip replacement gets a hip replacement without delay, without fear, and without financial burden. I see an Alberta where every child gets the attention and care they need in classrooms that are vibrant and inclusive and fully resourced. I see an Alberta where health care is accessible, where no one is left behind because of where they live or how much money they make. I see an Alberta where teachers are respected, where classrooms are places of endless possibility, not overcrowding and burnout. I see an Alberta where young people can dream big, knowing they'll find opportunity, support, and good-paying jobs right here in Alberta, right here at home. I see an Alberta where every single Albertan, regardless of ability, can live a life of dignity, and it's a life where they are treated with respect. I see an Alberta where seniors are honoured, where they're not worried about their Canada pension plan. I see an Alberta where innovators and small businesses can thrive, where innovation is celebrated, where we build prosperity together. And, most important, I see an Alberta where we reject division and instead we choose unity.

So today I'd like to give the government an opportunity. I'd like to give the government an opportunity to stand with us, to stand with the opposition and show how we can all stand together for Albertans. Madam Speaker, at the end of my speech I will move an amendment to the Speech from the Throne delivered last Thursday. I hope that the Premier and her caucus will thoughtfully consider it.

We should, in fact, we must as elected Canadians denounce any talk of separation. This talk of separation freezes investment. You know, there are head arguments and there are heart arguments. I can make head arguments all day. Every economic study has shown that talk of separatism freezes investment, dries up jobs. We know in this country that Montreal has gone through a half century of economic decline, 338 head offices leaving Montreal, going to Toronto and Calgary, because of the threat of separatism. We've seen it happening already here. We've seen CEOs of major Alberta companies say that they're not investing a penny in Alberta until this separatist talk is gone. Those are the head arguments. The heart arguments are even more important. Albertans are proud Canadians. Ten per cent of Alberta's population signed a petition saying that they were proud Canadians.

I have given a lot of sort of negative things today. I've talked a lot about the challenges that are in front of us. I've also talked a lot about hope, but hope means nothing unless we're willing to work towards that better future. So before I move this amendment, before I close, I'd like to share a quotation from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I will warn you that I'm going to paraphrase a bit. Dr. King says:

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter, but beautiful, struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the [children] of God, and our brothers [and sisters] wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that . . . we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message? [Another message] of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this [critical] moment of human history.

4:30

It may seem a bit odd to have a Muslim standing up in this House quoting a Baptist preacher. This is the note I want to end on. I've talked a lot about *sevā*. I've talked a lot about my family and my

community that built me. I want to talk for a moment about faith, whether you believe in an organized religion or not. I am a man of deep faith, and I know that we as citizens of this world who share this land, as people of faith, as people with little faith: we have so much more that unites us than divides us. Our job is to ensure that we leave this place just a little better than we found it. When we think about those things that unite us – the dignity of every human being, the right of every single person to live an authentic and real life, the absolute necessity of *sevā*, of service, and simply of leaving it better than we found it – I think we find a lot more unity than today's public discourse would give us.

Madam Speaker, I sure hope that in this role, standing in this place, I will be able to do well and do right by my father, by my family, by my community, by every single one of those people who invested in me in order to be here. I hope that every single one of us can listen to the words of that prayer that we start every single day with and talk about how we rededicate ourselves to building a better place for all Albertans. I'm deeply humbled to be here. I'm deeply humbled to be in this role. I like to live my life in gratitude, and today I'm deeply grateful for every single person in this province who devotes their lives to making Alberta better.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to put an amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a simple amendment. It's an amendment to reaffirm this Chamber's commitment to the promise of Canada, and the amendment reads as follows. To add the following words to the end of the motion that the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills put, and the words are:

, and to inform Your Honour that the Legislative Assembly affirms that Alberta and the rest of Canada are stronger together, and denounces provincial separatism as extreme, divisive, and economically destructive.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the time. [some applause]

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

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for what was a very moving speech and a compelling speech for his first reply to the Speech from the Throne. I know that there will be many back and forths in the Chamber of substance, that the province is going to benefit from the meaningful debate. We will continue with speeches and replies to the Speech from the Throne soon, but for now the government would like to adjourn debate on replies to the speech from His Majesty.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 1

#### International Agreements Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice on behalf of the Premier.

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 1, the International Agreements Act, on behalf of the Premier.

Our government has been clear time and again that Alberta's constitutional jurisdiction must be respected. That is the principle at the heart of this bill. The Constitution lays out a clear division of powers that make it clear what responsibility is of the federal and what the responsibilities are of the provincial governments. It should be well understood that matters including health, education, natural resources, and municipal affairs fall within the jurisdiction of our provinces. Despite this clear division of powers set out in the Constitution, we have seen Ottawa making commitments and entering into international agreements that touch on the areas of sole jurisdiction of the provinces, often, Madam Speaker, without the consultation nor the consent of the provinces that must live with the consequences of agreements negotiated by the feds.

On this side of the House we don't think that's right. That's why this legislation makes it clear that Alberta will not accept that kind of overreach. The International Agreements Act, if passed, would clarify that international agreements signed by the federal government with subject matter that falls within provincial jurisdiction is only binding and enforceable in Alberta if implemented under provincial legislation. This legislation is needed, and it's essential for Alberta to maintain its constitutional jurisdiction.

Now, currently, Madam Speaker, there is no formal agreement in place between the provinces, territories, and Canada which mandate that the federal government should consult or must consult with the province on international agreements and treaties that directly impact Albertans. This will ensure that when an international decision is made that affects Albertan families, industries, or communities, they won't apply automatically unless those decisions are supported here at home and implemented through provincial legislation.

More specifically, the proposed legislation would cover agreements entered into by the government of Canada or any federal minister, agency, or official with one or more countries or states, any agency or official of those foreign countries or states, or nongovernmental or government international organizations with international membership. This will ensure, Madam Speaker, that Alberta's government is not obligated to accept unfavourable terms or fulfill international obligations agreed to at the federal level that do not align with Alberta's interests.

Currently Alberta has the International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act, which has been in effect since 1995 and was revised in the year 2000. While this legislation provides a mechanism to declare approval of international agreements, that legislation is limited and it's not fully enough to defend our jurisdiction. The International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act applies only to trade and investment agreements, leaving a gap when it comes to other types of international commitments that may have provincial implications.

Madam Speaker, if passed, the International Agreements Act will replace this legislation and address gaps to include all international agreements, not just the ones related to trade and investment. Whether it's a climate accord, a declaration on social policy, or a multilateral agreement that affects our industries or our communities, Alberta will now have a clear and transparent mechanism to determine how and if such agreements apply within our borders. This is not an unprecedented move. Other provinces have similar laws in place. Quebec has had a similar framework in its province for nearly 25 years.

**4:40**

This legislation ensures that no international agreements become binding without provincial consent. Alberta is now taking the same

responsible approach through practical and efficient processes, respectful of our legislative procedures. The proposed legislation ensures that international agreements signed by the federal government with subject matter, again, that falls within provincial jurisdiction will not be binding unless it's implemented within provincial legislation. This is a balanced approach. It's one that protects our autonomy without creating unnecessary bureaucracy or red tape.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Some may ask, Mr. Speaker, whether this legislation steps into federal jurisdiction. The answer to that is no. This bill does not attempt to interfere in the federal government's right to enter into agreements or negotiate foreign affairs on behalf of Canadians within its jurisdiction. What this legislation does is that it simply reaffirms that Ottawa cannot impose obligations on Alberta in areas that fall within provincial jurisdiction. It's not only a reasonable approach; it's fundamental to Canadian federalism. In short, Bill 1 ensures that Alberta, not Ottawa, decides how international agreements apply to matters under provincial control. It ensures that any commitments made internationally that affect Albertans must be debated and decided here in Alberta.

This government believes in a strong Alberta within a united Canada, an Alberta that stands up for its constitutional rights and people. People, Mr. Speaker. This bill is about constitutional rights, but it is legislation for Albertans, Albertans who rely on us and rely on our government to deliver quality health care, education, and getting natural resources to market. We must be able to do that, and we can't rely on the kinds of international agreements that inhibit our ability to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to support Bill 1, the International Agreements Act. Alberta will continue to defend its jurisdiction, protect its interests, and make its own decisions right here at home.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Could I just ask for clarification, Minister of Justice? I'm not sure if you actually moved second reading, but if you could do so.

**Mr. Amery:** Yes, sir. I did begin by moving second reading of Bill 1. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Do we have other speakers? The Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has risen to speak.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 1, which is essentially just four provisions. The charging provision is that any international agreement, if it relates to the exclusive jurisdiction of provincial government, will only be enforceable through the domestic law passed in the Alberta Legislature. That's the law as it stands now. The minister and before that the Premier – none of them gave an example where the federal government has entered into an agreement and entered into a treaty that violated the provincial jurisdiction and somehow the federal government was able to impose those terms on any province.

The minister claims that this bill is about the constitutional rights. Well, Mr. Speaker, this bill is about stoking the separatist rhetoric of the UCP. They want to be seen focused on picking fights with Ottawa, playing to their base instead of focusing on the rights of Albertans.

I will explain how international agreements and treaties are entered into. As I said, the bill just restates the law as it stands now.

It also repeals the International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act, which gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the cabinet, the ability to accept any international treaty or international agreement through an order in council. This time this is stating that it requires a domestic law if it relates to the provincial jurisdiction.

So I did some research on how Canada, our federal government approaches international agreements, international treaties, and I was able to find some good research publications that come from the Library of Parliament and explain in detail how those international agreements and treaties are entered into. They are complex and multistage processes involving negotiations, signatures, then ratification, then implementation, and then coming into force of these agreements. Since Canada follows British traditions, international relations are the prerogative of the Crown, and in Canada they are exercised by the executive on behalf of the Crown. As such, the ministry of foreign affairs is technically responsible for negotiating and entering into those international treaties and agreements.

An interesting thing is that the federal executive, cabinet, cannot ratify an international agreement until and unless there are measures in place to ensure that the terms of agreements are implemented into Canadian law. That research further elaborates that Canada has a dualist model, which means and says that treaties signed and ratified by the executive still need to be incorporated into domestic law to be enforceable at the national level. Wherever an international agreement, an international treaty has implications for provincial jurisdiction or that treaty or agreement encroaches on provincial jurisdictions or relates to the exclusive provincial jurisdiction as outlined in the Constitution, it requires that those provisions be incorporated into the law by the provincial Legislature.

That issue came up in a case back in 1937, a long time ago, when the federal government signed onto and ratified three agreements relating to labour relations and they legislated federally to implement those treaties. That case, the Labour Conventions case as it's known, ended up in the court. At that time the supreme appellate court was the British Privy Council. The British Privy Council heard the arguments and pronounced its decision, which says in no uncertain terms that if a treaty, if an international agreement has provisions that relate to the exclusive jurisdiction of the province, the federal government cannot justify encroaching on provincial exclusive jurisdiction in the name of ratifying and implementing international treaties, meaning that the federal government cannot encroach on provincial jurisdiction to implement international treaties. If they want to implement that treaty, they will have to collaborate. They will have to consult. They will have to work with provinces to enshrine those treaties into domestic law.

**4:50**

Since labour relations was a head of power that falls exclusively in provincial jurisdiction, that federal implementation through federal laws was voided by the British Privy Council. That law still stands, that for any international agreement, for any international treaty that has any bearing on provincial jurisdiction, the federal government cannot pass a law in the name of implementing international obligations that encroaches on provincial rights, provincial jurisdiction.

In short, Mr. Speaker, this bill is just a restatement of the law as it exists now. The law as it exists now is that international agreements, international treaties are in the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. Secondly, whenever the federal government is negotiating ratifying any agreement that has provisions within the

exclusive provincial jurisdiction, the federal government cannot ratify that agreement. They cannot. They have no means to implement that agreement unless provinces step up and pass bills in their Legislature to honour that agreement. In some cases more recently the federal government has even added provisions in those international agreements insofar that these agreements relate to matters in exclusive provincial jurisdiction. They are acknowledging there that they will not have any control. They will not have any means to implement those provisions of the treaty.

As I said, this thing was settled back in 1937, when the British Privy Council said that it's ultra vires for the federal Parliament to legislate in the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces to implement or ratify these treaties. So the reason that the UCP is now bringing forward this legislation, which is literally one provision, is just to please their base and stoke separatist rhetoric – look, somehow we are standing up against Ottawa encroaching on our jurisdiction – while the law is pretty clear that Ottawa cannot enter into any agreement, any treaty which has provisions encroaching on provincial jurisdiction, and if they enter, they will not be able to ratify or implement that without provincial jurisdictions including those provisions, those things, in their domestic law.

These are the kinds of bills that this government comes up with just to distract, just to distract from their failures. Distract from their failure to address the concerns and issues facing Albertans: affordability crisis, crisis in health care, crisis in education, crisis in public safety, and so many more things. When you start a new session, generally speaking, Bill 1 kind of highlights your top priority. Any responsible government, any government that has some touch with reality, any government that is listening to Albertans, listening to their electorate will put something forward that reflects the top priority of their electorate.

We heard earlier the Leader of the Official Opposition talk about our consultation during the summer, from Lethbridge to Fort Mac to Grande Prairie and everywhere in between. People were asked to choose the topics from a list of 10, 15 topics. What are the three, four topics that they would want to talk about? Every single time affordability would be something Albertans would choose to talk about. Health care is something Albertans would choose to talk about. Education is something that Albertans would choose to talk about. They would rank public safety, their retirement security. Those issues were top of mind for them.

We do know that in the last few years unemployment has gone through the roof. It has increased 3 per cent just under this government's watch. Youth unemployment is at a record high. One of my constituents, a mother of a young student, a grade 12 student, I believe, called me a number of times asking about resources, sharing her concerns about her son's unemployment, sharing concerns about her son's friend's unemployment and how it's impacting their self-esteem, their mental health, and how it's a cause for concern for parents that their kids can't even find some basic starter jobs.

The government may say that that's because of market conditions, but there are things that the government did which have resulted in that kind of crisis. For instance, there used to be a program called the STEP program, summer temporary employment program. That was a cost-shared program between employers and the government of Alberta, where the government of Alberta and the employer would share the cost, 50 per cent each. That would give some incentive to employers to consider hiring students, consider hiring employees, and that opportunity would give them the necessary skills to learn on the job and prepare themselves to be able to fit into the future job market. This government when they came in had millions to give and waste on Turkish Tylenol, but that \$10 million program: they thought that was too much. What they

did is that they slashed that program, and that policy choice is adding to the record high youth unemployment in this province.

5:00

As I said, people talked about the crisis in health care. The average wait time in cities is anywhere between 10 and 15 hours, and in rural ridings the wait time is no different. The only additional thing is whether or not those emergency centres are open or not. At any given time Alberta Health's own website will list 20, 25, 30 emergency rooms and centres across rural Alberta that are shut down because of staff shortages. That didn't happen all of a sudden.

As soon as the UCP became government, they started bullying doctors, started tearing up their contracts, started disrespecting them even in their doorways. The crisis we are seeing in health care today is the direct result of this government's policies. What they are doing is just playing shell games by dividing Alberta Health into four new silos, which they were once very much against, and putting them together to make a centralized system. They just want to be seen as doing something about health care.

Instead of making their Bill 1 about health care, about an issue that Albertans care deeply about, they just came up with this political stunt. Even in their throne speech, where Albertans expected that they would see some changes in health care, all they saw is that the government still wants to try further privatization of lab services even after a failed privatization experience with DynaLife, which cost Albertans hundreds of millions of dollars. They are saying in black and white that gone are those days when government used to build big hospitals. Now they will just privatize further for surgical facilities. Alberta deserves far better.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Any others wishing to speak to Bill 1? The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Member Calahoo Stonehouse:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today as a treaty First Nations woman from the Michel First Nation and as a Member of the Legislative Assembly to speak firmly and clearly in opposition to Bill 1. This bill is not a harmless administrative measure. It is not simply about jurisdiction clarification. Bill 1 in its current form is a gross infringement on treaty rights, a violation on Indigenous jurisdiction, and an egregious transgression on the constitutional foundations of this province and of this country.

This bill was not created with First Nations leadership. It was not created in consultation with treaties 6, 7, and 8 chiefs. The ignorance of this government to not recognize that our treaties were made with the Crown and that they are international agreements is an absolute failure of this government. This bill cannot pass without an amendment that clearly and explicitly outlines the intention of upholding and protecting Aboriginal and treaty rights.

Let me remind this UCP government that treaties are the supreme law of this land. Furthermore, section 52 of the Constitution states, "the Constitution of Canada is the supreme law of Canada." Therefore, treaty is the supreme law of this land. Now, whether the UCP government wants to admit it or abide by it, the rule of law is simply the rule of law within this country. Section 35 recognizes and affirms existing and Aboriginal treaty rights.

This government apparently needs a history lesson and needs to be reminded that our treaties predate Confederation. They are not policy agreements. They are not program expectations. They are the foundational covenants that made the settlement of these lands possible, the covenants that we hold as sacred, the covenants that we visit year after year, smoking the pipe, singing the songs, reminding ourselves of our responsibility and obligations that we

made in this agreement. These settlements were made without war, without violence, and in the spirit of coexisting in peace and friendship as to live as relatives on this land.

[The Speaker in the chair]

This legally binding contract has absolutely no exit clause. It is to last as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow. Canada's legal traditions recognize this in our multijudicial state of common law, civil law, and Indigenous law. All three are obligated to uphold this international agreement. Furthermore, our neighbour to the south: the United States Constitution affirms that treaties made under the authority of the state shall be the supreme law of the land. The United States, well known for its colonial history, affirms Indigenous treaties as binding and supreme. How is it that in Alberta in 2025 we are debating whether this government is respecting our treaty rights?

The United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples recognizes that treaties are matters of international concern. The United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples, article 19, states clearly that "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith," and I would argue that this government did not operate in good faith in the creation of this bill. They did not seek consultation; they did not have prior and informed consent from the treaty rights holders of this land.

The quote is article 19: "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith . . . in order to obtain . . . free, prior and informed consent before adopting . . . measures that may affect [Indigenous peoples]." Of course, international agreements impact Indigenous peoples. Our very foundation to these lands are international agreements. The UCP did not operate or co-operate in good faith. They did not obtain free and prior and informed consent with treaty rights holders in the construction of Bill 1.

Let it be also known that Indigenous peoples in the province have the right to recognition, observance, and enforcement of our treaties, which means Alberta and Canada have to honour and respect our treaties. Article 37 states this clearly. For a government that uses a lot of beads and feathers and proclamations of First Nations partnerships – guaranteed loans just like a Money Mart, but I digress – let me be clear. A government that proclaims to do the work of reconciliation cannot at the same time pass laws that knowingly circumvent the rights of Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation is not only about apologies or ceremonies; reconciliation lives or dies right here on the floor of this Legislature.

As it stands, this bill does not explicitly include a nonabrogation clause on treaty. It infringes on treaty rights because treaties are international agreements. There was a time when members of Treaty 6 travelled back to the United Kingdom to discuss in the British Parliament this very issue of affirming these international treaties. The honour of the Crown back in 1982, Lord Denning, speaking on treaty promises said in the House: "No Parliament shall do anything to lessen the worth of these guarantees. They should be honoured . . . [as] long as the sun rises and the rivers flow." That promise must never be broken."

5:10

Yet today we are being asked to consider legislation that does exactly that. It weakens those guarantees by omission. To pretend that treaty rights are unaffected in this bill is either a complete misunderstanding or a deliberate evasion. Let me remind this UCP government that the Library of Parliament states clearly that both provincial and federal governments share responsibility for upholding treaties, and this obligation arises from section 35 and the honour of the Crown. This government does not get to unilaterally decide when treaty rights apply. They do not get to

claim jurisdiction without assuming responsibility, and you cannot benefit from treaty lands while denying treaty obligations.

I want to emphasize that Bill 1 is not about prosperity; it is about separatism. Albertans are strong Canadians. They are proud of the province's role in federation. They do not want to be isolated, they do not want to be pushed toward separatism, and First Nations will uphold their treaty rights. Treaties 1 through 11 are all part of Turtle Island, part of Canada. This bill contributes to a divisive narrative, a narrative that this government has fuelled repeatedly, suggesting Alberta can or should opt out of federal or international agreements. This simply is not possible.

As a treaty First Nations person I'm here to remind you that this cannot happen and you are wasting time and taxpayers' money to even imagine doing so. This legislation is not built on prosperity. It does not create jobs. It does not lower cost. It does not support families. It is political theatre designed to distract, to inflame and manufacture conflict with Ottawa, and sadly it creates racist rhetoric for First Nations against separatists, fuelling an idea that will legally never be possible. All of Alberta is on treaty land. This nonsense bill is being brought forward while families struggle with a health care crisis, struggle with food in the fridge. Communities are desperately in search for safety, and the UCP government chooses a symbolic fight instead of doing the real work?

Let me remind this House. You are not treaty makers; you are the treaty beneficiaries. These lands, the ones beneath our homes, the roads, our schools, and this very Legislature are treaty lands. Bill 1 asks Albertans to believe that this province can exercise sovereignty without acknowledging the very agreements that allow Alberta to exist at all, so I ask you openly and directly: how are this government and its citizens and settlers and visitors going to survive on a landless province?

You know, Mr. Speaker, when Quebec attempted to separate, they didn't succeed. "A province cannot be recognized as a nation by the United Nations," is what they said. The international community said: no, you are not a nation, and this foolish debate about separatism is wasting our time. Alberta will meet the same wall that Quebec did and will have an even weaker argument than Quebec because treaty is not only our right to uphold; treaty is all of our protection.

Hay-hay.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wow. I want to thank my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford for that powerful and passionate speech sharing concerns about Bill 1 and my colleague from Calgary-Bhullar-McCall as well. I am frequently reminded of how amazing our team is on this side of the House, and I'm very grateful for my colleagues and their wisdom to share.

I, too, am rising to oppose Bill 1. I'll start, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I am a proud Albertan and a proud Canadian, and I know that the constituents of Banff-Kananaskis are proud Albertans and proud Canadians. I believe that two things can be true. You can be both of those things. I know that my constituents feel this way because they stop me in the street. I live in a small rural town. I live in a rural riding. The members opposite who also represent rural ridings will know and appreciate how special it is when people stop you in the street or stop you at Save-On when you're buying eggs and milk just to tell you how passionate they feel about X, Y, Z. This last summer the number one thing that people stopped me in the street to tell me was that they were proud Albertans and proud Canadians, and they wanted us in this House to stand and fight for Alberta and Canada together.

This bill contributes to that separatist rhetoric that is damaging not only economic investment in this province and confidence in investing in this province but also damaging the cultural fabric of who we are. I know that the relationship between Alberta and Ottawa is strained. I've lived in this province my whole life. I know all about it. I hear all about it all the time. But what I don't hear about are solutions coming from this government to Ottawa that are any kind of meaningful solutions that will actually improve our relationship with the federal government and make sure that Alberta is treated fairly. News flash, Mr. Speaker: every province wants to be treated fairly by the federal government. Every single province wants their fair share. All of us want that. How we work together and how we negotiate to get that for our constituents is what Albertans want.

Albertans aren't looking to separate. They're not looking to pick another fight with Ottawa. They're not looking to play this blame game anymore, Mr. Speaker. They're looking for solutions, and that's not something that this government is bringing forward, and quite frankly I'm tired of it and so are my constituents. Instead of focusing on doing what is right for Albertans and what is right for this province, this government is focused on passing another piece of useless legislation that picks a fight with Ottawa needlessly.

So what is right for Albertans, Mr. Speaker? What are Albertans telling us? Well, what's right for Albertans is public education, public health care, evidence based decision-making, and ethical, competent government. We don't have that right now.

Last week 38,000 parents, teachers, and students stood outside this Legislature singing, dancing, chanting, and being generally amazing after the throne speech. Were any of those Albertans asking for a bill that asserts provincial authority to opt out of international agreements? I know you're going to find this hard to believe, but no, I didn't hear anybody asking about that at that rally. They were asking for support for teachers, support for teachers to address classroom size and classroom complexity. How did this government respond? Yesterday we passed legislation forcing teachers back to work without actually fixing any of the problems that caused them to strike in the first place. How are we expecting that to end, Mr. Speaker?

Were those protesters asking for the Alberta government to debate and pass into law federal government agreements before they take effect? No, that didn't come up, oddly, when I was out there talking to all of them. They were asking for smaller class sizes and an increase to per-student funding, which, as many of my colleagues have repeatedly iterated, is the lowest in the country. The government response to those requests, Mr. Speaker, was to invoke the notwithstanding clause and remove rights and freedoms. Shame. Shame.

5:20

I am a proud Albertan. I cannot underscore that enough. I love this province with every cell and fibre of my being, and last night I sat in this Chamber shamed, appalled, and embarrassed of what we have become.

**Mr. Williams:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Relevance**

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not question the member opposite's commitment to our province, nor would I any member of this Chamber. I do, however, question the relevance of

the last two minutes of her speech. We are not at all on the subject of Bill 1. We are now on the subject of something already decided by the House. I'm happy to have more conversations offline about that subject. However, this debate time is reserved for the important matter at hand. I'd ask you to call the member opposite to order and stay to the relevant topic of Bill 1.

**The Speaker:** I see two members up on their feet.

**Mr. Sabir:** I was leaving.

**The Speaker:** Okay, and I'm standing, so you can't leave. Okay. Good explanation.

The deputy House leader. Yes.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we can be brief here. I don't think this is a point of order. Certainly, I think we enjoy a fairly broad latitude as members when we're discussing these issues. I think what the member was discussing from last night is of a tone and piece with much of the government's direction and certainly rhetoric that we're hearing both in Bill 1 and the actions that were taken in Bill 2. The member was reflecting on how those two were connected and, I'm sure, was going to be coming around to discuss more of the substance in Bill 1 in a moment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Any other submissions?

Well, let me say this. It is one of the standing orders here that one should be talking about the items before the House and not discussing items that have already been decided. Those are real things. On the other hand, the opposition deputy House leader is not wrong that we often give lots of latitude here. I think the hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has had quite a bit of latitude, and as per her own deputy House leader's advice I would suggest she wander back as much as possible into the lane of the bill that's before the House. I don't think it's a point of order, but I think it's a worthwhile reminder to try to stay on topic.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your decision.

As I was about to say, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a federal piece of legislation. It's a constitutional document that guides governance and the land, and Bill 1 speaks directly to how we implement federal and international agreements. So I do think that these two ideas are connected. I will say that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is one of the most sacred laws of the land, as is the Alberta Human Rights Act and other things that protect our human rights. That is related to Bill 1, Mr. Speaker.

For a government so focused on constitutional law, as Bill 1 tries to reinforce, when they're picking fights with Ottawa, obeying constitutional law and making sure that things are constitutional is of top priority, which is essentially what Bill 1 is trying to do. But when it's about protecting the bargaining rights of Albertans and allowing the freedoms and rights that are enshrined in federal law to exist here, there is a hypocrisy that is deep and running through this conversation that I cannot abide, Mr. Speaker.

Alberta strong and free but not for everybody and not all the time, mostly just for people who agree with this government. As long as they don't ruffle feathers or dissent, it's Alberta strong and free. Is Alberta strong and free a thing, Mr. Speaker, or is it just a slogan on a licence plate?

When I went door-knocking this summer, the people of Banff-Kananaskis weren't asking for the government to repeal the International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act, which is a part of Bill 1. To be fair, I'm not sure most Albertans

know that that act exists. People were asking me about public health care: more access to it, more doctors, this government's questionable decisions regarding private surgical facilities. The government's response to those needs of Albertans, Mr. Speaker: those aren't reflected in the first bill either. The throne speech talks about no more hospitals and privatizing aspects of health care instead.

This Bill 1 is the government telling Albertans that their number one priority is getting in the way of federal and international agreements, something which nobody is asking for, Mr. Speaker. I truly believe it is possible to stand up for Alberta and to get a fair deal, whatever that means, without passing needless pieces of legislation that literally get in the way of doing good work. These pieces of legislation: it's like shooting ourselves in the foot every day. We talk all the time about how we want to work better with the federal government, and then we pass pieces of legislation that are literally thumbing our nose at the federal government. Why? Why do we keep doing this? Why are we wasting our time debating this bill that's actually kind of useless? Last night we time allocated all of Bill 2. We had limits on debate. We passed and rammed that bill through in a whole entire evening. And here we are debating this when we should have had more time to debate Bill 2 yesterday.

What I will say is that this Bill 1 is not Albertans' number one priority. It isn't about going back to the bargaining table to find a fair deal with teachers. It isn't about finding a way to not violate bargaining rights. It isn't about ensuring Albertans know the truth about private surgical facilities. It's not honouring the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is a federal document. It's not supporting public health care by bringing more doctors or more hospitals to the province. And it's not addressing affordability through groceries, insurance, and housing. This bill is not serving the people, Mr. Speaker, and neither is this government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. Go ahead, please, Mr. Haji. Oops. Sorry; my bad. I'm calling myself to order, folks.

**Mr. Haji:** That's good. That's good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 1, the International Agreements Act. I also want to remind, as some of the speakers have alluded to, that this is not one of the priorities that we have heard from Albertans throughout the town halls that we have had during the summertime. This is not a priority that is pressing Albertans today. It's not addressing affordability and the cost of living. It is not addressing class complexity and class sizes. It's not addressing the many issues that Albertans are facing today on the front of health care.

For some reason this government, after the throne speech, tabled Bill 1 as their priority. It's always something related to Alberta and Canada's relationships. Bill 1 after the throne speech in 2023 was the sovereignty act. Now we have Bill 1, International Agreements Act. The government is trying to say something that they don't want to say but they're saying in a way that is explicit in the bills that they prioritize. It's performatively presented as a defence of Alberta's sovereignty, but it risks isolating our province from the very international partnerships that safeguard our health, that safeguard our economy, and that safeguard our future. Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 asserts that Alberta should have the authority to opt out of international agreements signed by the federal government. It proposes that any such agreement must be debated and passed into law by this Legislature before it can take effect in the province.

Mr. Speaker, there are bills that we wanted to debate in this House. There are bills that were tabled, and we were ready and prepared to bring the perspectives Albertans have shared through the infrastructures that we were given as members of the Assembly.

The Assembly resources its members with offices, with communications, with e-mails, and we are obligated to respond to our constituents through that. They have communicated on issues that we wanted to bring to the forefront of the discussion. When it comes to debating, this government closes that, but they are okay to debate on bills that are performative.

**5:30**

This bill proposes that in section 3 of this bill it further requires the provincial legislation to bind Alberta to an international agreement that touches on provincial jurisdiction. But, Mr. Speaker, this bill raises more questions than it answers. We've heard from constitutional experts, including Dr. Eric Adams from the University of Alberta, who noted that it's unclear what the province is trying to achieve with this bill.

The Constitution already grants the province control over the implementation of international agreements specifically in the areas of provincial jurisdiction. This bill does not expand our powers to provide leverages. It simply creates confusion. It creates uncertainty around agreements that involve shared provincial and federal jurisdiction.

What happens if Alberta withdraws a treaty that requires both federal and provincial co-operation? As usual, go to the court, spend more Alberta taxpayers' money. Do we risk undermining Canadian and national commitments on the international stage which are beneficial to Albertans?

As my colleagues, I believe Alberta has the right to shape its own destiny. The Constitution already provides that to us. I believe in strong provincial leadership – nobody is questioning that – but that leadership is not about creating confusion. That leadership requires consensus building in a confederation system. That leadership is about providing clarity in a confederation system. That leadership is about building trust in a confederation system, and it's about acting responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about some practical implications. I happen to have studied global health at the University of Alberta. Let's consider some of the international health frameworks that Canada has signed. The World Health Organization framework convention on tobacco control, also known as FCTC, is an internationally signed agreement where 196 countries have signed. It is a framework that Canada signed 25 years ago. The intent is a global effort to reduce tobacco use and exposure globally for children.

We have seen the implementation and the effectiveness of that when it comes to tobacco use reduction, the many lives that have been saved, the cost implications of that on our health care system. In such a situation how will this bill address it? Is it demanding that we shouldn't be doing something like that? It's not only the use. It's about the production. It's about trade. It's about how it travels from country to country when it comes to trade agreements. It's about: how do you advertise it? It's about: how do you market it? It's about: how do you ensure that business happens but it doesn't implicate the cost of public health? That's how Albertans benefited and are protected in this globalized world where public health measures are important and reliant on the country's co-operation. There are mechanisms for that, and those mechanisms are the frameworks that Canada participates in in consultation with this provincial government and with its provincial health counterparts.

Another example is the recently adopted pandemic agreement. The intent is to improve global co-operation in pandemic prevention and response, whether it is SARS, COVID-19, others, the losses that we have not seen yet. It could be Ebola. It could be many other contagious diseases that have public health implications that travel from countries and have transmissions. How does

Alberta play a role if it's questioning the frameworks that exist that we participate in as a country?

Of course, as my colleagues have already mentioned, the Constitution already obligates the Canadian government to work with its counterparts at the provincial levels, but because this is something that is crossjurisdictional responsibility, where pandemics enter at the international level, travels and movements, but at the same time the provincial government has responsibilities, how is this bill going to improve that? It doesn't say it. It doesn't address it. Those are some of the questions that this bill raises instead of answering.

The other thing is that, Mr. Speaker, by passing this bill, we risk sending a message that we are not a reliable partner in improving existing frameworks. We are demonstrating that we are regressing existing frameworks or questioning existing frameworks without having clarity of what Albertans are going to benefit from. The bill doesn't speak to how the province of Alberta plays a role in ensuring the public health threats in a globalized world where the federal government has jurisdictions but the provincial government will be implicated. This bill doesn't speak – and I would like to hear from the multiple ministers of health to respond to that and explain to us how this bill is going to advance what already exists at a global framework agreement to protect Albertans from global public health threats.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Really happy to rise for the first time in the Second Session of the 31st Legislature. It's a big deal. We had our second Speech from the Throne. We had the Speech from the Throne. It was brought forward. It's a big deal. The government was able to lay out an agenda. No doubt been planning for months; we ended last April. Also, on that same day they brought forward Bill 1. Different documents of substance, the Speech from the Throne and Bill 1.

Some other changes over the summer break away from being in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House our leader decided that a couple of members would change responsibilities, and my responsibility switched to Affordability and Utilities. I was eager to go through the Speech from the Throne after the summer that I had had with the town halls that some of my colleagues have mentioned, where we were talking to people about what the priorities are, the priorities that are there for Albertans.

5:40

After those priorities that we had heard, I assumed the government would probably be hearing the same priorities, and I thought we'd see those in Bill 1, International Agreements Act, but then I got the first document, the Speech from the Throne, and I thought, "I'll dig into this, and I'll look for how we're going to be addressing affordability," which came up in our Better Together town halls. It's one of the top priorities in this province. Mr. Speaker, when I talked to municipal leaders after this most recent election, there was a big-change agenda across this province in a lot of communities, where whole councils were voted out. The incumbents didn't have successful campaigns, and new councillors came in, running on a changed agenda. The number one issue in communities around our province: affordability.

So there I was, expecting to see some focus on affordability in Bill 1, but then I thought I'd go back to the Speech from the Throne. I looked for affordability. Mr. Speaker, "affordability" is a word that's not mentioned once in the Speech from the Throne, but the

word "afford" is in the section on investment in infrastructure. It says:

And although right-sizing Alberta's growth rate is critical, our province cannot afford waiting to make the investments in infrastructure that are needed to catch up with the growth that has already occurred.

The province cannot afford. Not a whole lot on affordability.

Then I got to Bill 1, Mr. Speaker. Happy to dig into this large document, actually the smallest bill that I've received since I became a legislator in May of 2023. It has two pages and one clause, which I'm told has maybe one or two words changed from existing legislation. At first, I got excited. I thought, "Oh, this is how this government is going to really stick it to the climate change accord; Alberta is going to get out of the Paris accord, and it's through this bill," but it turns out that's not what this bill does. It doesn't do that at all.

Of course, Alberta legislators approve legislation that comes from international agreements before we implement them here in the province. We are Canadians. This is what Canadian provinces do. It's a very standard procedure.

Now, we have this really important Bill 1, which I'm at a loss for large things to debate that relate to affordability. Then I want to talk about the Speech from the Throne, and there's nothing in the Speech from the Throne on affordability. It is a huge issue in this province, Mr. Speaker.

As members of this House have debated on this side with regard to Bill 1, we were limited on debate yesterday in Bill 2, and it is hard to get up in this House talking about Bill 1 and not be able to talk about how we have had injustices in this legislative system with time allocation. I don't understand why we have a bill with one page that's not time allocated, yet we have Bill 2 come in with transformative legislation never implemented before in this province and we were left to only have a limited time to talk about that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm not going to cut you off, but one of the standing orders says to not redebate something that's been settled in the House. Just please relate whatever you're saying to the bill before us if you don't mind.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, in Bill 1 I hope that the International Agreements Act is going to address issues within this province with regard to affordability. I hope that when we have this legislation come through and it is before the House, it does something to address affordability in this province because I'm hearing stories that are a little unsettling, and I'm not sure what to do about them without bringing them forward to this Legislature for debate.

I talked to a constituent just this week who manages a grocery store, part of a large chain in southwest Edmonton. He's a constituent of Sherwood Park, where all roads lead, so it's natural that a manager of a Sobeys, a large grocery store, might be someone who lives in Sherwood Park. What was so interesting, Mr. Speaker, was when he talked about private security that they have to bring into their store. They're spending over \$3,000 a month on undercover security, and they estimate that they are losing about \$30,000 a month from shoplifting. I thought: this is incredible.

He gave a great example of how the system that we have in our province is not working for Albertans. Two people came in. They looked like patrons. They filled up their shopping cart with, in the manager's estimation, about \$1,200 worth of groceries. They walked it past the checkout till, out the store, into the parking lot. The security identified this. The store manager identified this. They called emergency services, 911. They got through to the police, and

the police determined that this is not an emergency. People are watching a crime under way, and the police have determined it's not an emergency. They do not have the resources to direct police to the grocery store.

So they had to just record it as well as they could. The people loaded the groceries in the car, and they drove away. That was an interesting thing, people shoplifting that drove away with their loot. It is a different world than what I would imagine, that someone is trying to, when you hear that word "shoplifting," maybe grab a chocolate bar and stick it into their pocket or try to hide it on their way out. No. This is blatant crime happening in our society, but it's probably being driven by how unaffordable life is in this province.

We're hearing statistics that are alarming. We're hearing statistics where utility prices have gone up 60 per cent since the UCP took government in 2019. We are hearing that currently 1 in 5 young men are unemployed in this province, unable to get their footing underneath them with the honour of good work so that they can earn a living, contribute, and then buy their groceries when they need to. We are hearing that one-third of Calgarians are food dependent and the use of food banks is at its highest level, Mr. Speaker.

It's with this environment that we are a part of a larger world, and maybe when we're looking at how we interact with the world as a province, we should be looking at international agreements. Maybe that's affecting affordability here in this province. Maybe we can really dig into that, but we're not seeing that in this bill. We're not seeing that in this debate.

It is remarkable to me, Mr. Speaker, that the first bill – the number one priority is what that usually identifies after a Speech from the Throne. The number one priority of debate is only being debated by the representatives from this side of the Assembly. We would think that after months to prepare for a new session in the Legislature, this government would take the time to plan out the legislation that they want to be bringing forward, and all their members would be eager to discuss it in debate, bring forward the perspective from their riding so that we could have a fulsome discussion on the legislation that we are asked to debate in this House as representatives. That is our main role. We want to be able to represent our constituents. We want to be able to have fulsome debate and get to a place where we've had a good discussion, and when no more discussion is really valuable, Mr. Speaker, we look to you to call the question so that we can have a vote on it.

But where we have been left now is an opportunity maybe to say: could we bring in something here that is going to deal with affordability in our province? Or should we be talking about the high unemployment rate of young men in this province? Or should we be talking about a way to address utility costs in this province so that we can bring affordability in line with where it is needed for the people of Alberta? Or could we talk about classroom complexity? Is that something we can do more discussion on, that could have been brought in further? Will international agreements help us maybe somehow with the use of International Baccalaureate, bringing that curriculum? Would that be something that is going to be helpful for us in our work as legislators?

I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, but I am feeling like the government has not taken the role of this House seriously enough. There are traditions in this House that require for us to have some fulsome debate. I would love to have more debate on Bill 1, but there's not a lot to say about a two-page bill.

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

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, another interesting, to put it politely, piece of legislation from this government to exercise something that is already in this province's purview.

5:50

I'm going to add to what my colleagues already said, with a concern that first arose to me as I looked at Bill 1. Again, I wonder: did this government even consider First Nations when it developed this legislation? Let me tell you, it's a pretty lean one, that could have met with all the First Nations and Métis settlement leadership in this province. But let me guess; the government did not. The minister's speech today would take up much more paper than this bill does, Mr. Speaker. Of course, they wouldn't talk to Albertans. Had they, this first bill, their flagship legislation for this session that the UCP is hoping to pass, would be focused on the real priorities of Albertans and not the base of the UCP, who have now swapped out their novelty flags from one Prime Minister's name to another Prime Minister's name. You know the one.

No, Mr. Speaker. Had this government talked with Albertans outside of their sham Alberta Next Panel, the one that tries to fabricate consent for advancing their ideology, they would have heard from Albertans that they want action on affordability, publicly funded and publicly delivered health care, better support for educators and students alike. But this government is not focused on the interests of all Albertans. We saw that last night with the taking away of fundamental freedoms of Albertans and using the notwithstanding clause because this government knew how unpopular their decision would be.

My colleague from Calgary-Bhullar-McCall shared something earlier today about how this government, when pressed, could not point to any international agreements or treaties that this government is concerned about. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's look at one that my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford spoke briefly on earlier, the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples or treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10 here in the province of Alberta.

Let's look at what happened in Quebec, that the minister did allude to earlier today in his introduction to the bill. In Quebec they passed Bill 99 in 2000, An Act respecting the exercise of the fundamental rights and prerogatives of the Québec people and the Québec state. What is different in the Quebec law compared to the UCP's Bill 1 is the inclusion of Indigenous rights in the bill itself. This bill, just like in the UCP's attempt to flex its jurisdictional rights already enshrined in the Canadian Constitution, included this language. However, in Quebec that was not enough. The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador issued in the strongest terms that they condemn Quebec's act.

Mr. Speaker, I do not see First Nations in this province deviating from this position either. If we look at this bill in its current iteration, it creates legal uncertainty when it comes to treaties here in Alberta. Again, this government is going after treaty rights of First Nations. If this government does not want to engage with leadership, then I will. Chiefs, you'll have these details shortly.

Why am I talking about treaty rights? Well, you see, Mr. Speaker, like my deadly colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford has shared, treaty is an international law. Whether this Assembly wants to acknowledge that or not, it is. The incredible Regina Crowchild from the Tsuut'ina Nation, the brilliant Sharon Venne from the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, the humble Ron Lameman from the Beaver Lake Cree Nation, and the indomitable Dr. Leroy Little Bear from Kainai Nation alongside okimaw Willie Littlechild from Ermineskin Cree Nation and – his words, not mine – my cute and toothless mushum Rene Paul from the Alexander First Nation have taught me about the importance of our treaties as international law. We are proud nations, not municipalities.

I can tell you that the deepest honour of my life is being in this Chamber to defend and stand up for our treaty. Today is no different. You see, Mr. Speaker, if we do not talk about it here, the members

across the aisle will not consider it. This government likes to borrow some of the catchphrases from the brilliant okimaw Willie Littlechild, like reconcili-action, which we've heard in this Chamber time and time again. But we should also recognize the important work that he has done as an international chief for treaties 6, 7, and 8 at the United Nations and many, many other international bodies.

This bill is an affront to his work. It is an affront to several Indigenous nations, from Turtle Island to Aotearoa to Sami territory. When I think about the international agreements that this government might go after, I think about our treaties. We are nations, not a subservient third level of government.

I also think about the international agreements that are not treaties that the federal government has implemented, that this government may be alluding to. They haven't been clear, so we have to intimate a lot here. I think about the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples, that okimaw Littlechild has worked on. Last week at an event that honoured a phenomenal alumni of the University of Alberta, where Patricia Goodwill-Littlechild was honoured with the distinguished alumni award, I learned that many of the principles of UNDRIP were built here in Alberta using the expertise of okimaw Littlechild, but also the nations of Maskwacis.

I bring this up because UNDRIP is an international agreement, and it is one that this government may want to omit from provincial application. Why, you ask? Well, I can only guess, but I think one legal principle: free, prior, and informed consent. It's absolutely rich – rich – that this government says – I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but to paraphrase: Ottawa is making commitments that are within the jurisdiction of the provinces often without consultation or consent of the provinces.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's unpack that. This government does not want First Nations or Métis settlement consent here in Alberta. If they did, why wouldn't they bring forward this piece of legislation with an abrogation or derogation clause of Indigenous rights, like

they have with previous bills that are an attack on the rights of Indigenous peoples in this province but a strengthening flex of Alberta's jurisdiction, that's already within the Constitution?

I look only at the throne speech for the intentions of this government. First Nations and Indigenous peoples are only referenced when it comes to industrial development, not about the relationship that First Nations have with this province, that it has under treaty, that it has under reconciliation, that it has as it's committed to reducing the number of kids in care.

Let us remember, there are more kids in care in Alberta today than there ever have been. Over 80 per cent of those kids are Indigenous. The TRC calls to action require us to reduce the number of kids in care, the number of Indigenous offenders in prisons, but I don't see this work happening.

So we need to look beyond, to how we do this work together with our First Nations and Métis settlement brothers and sisters. That work about mentioning only industry is what is unwritten in Bill 1, the international nature of our treaties that are entered into between the Crown and UNDRIP, which was consented to by Canada and is in the process of implementation domestically.

Let's be serious, Mr. Speaker. If this government was intent on working with First Nations and Métis settlements, let alone furthering reconciliation, it would have followed the blueprint of Quebec a little closer, but it did not. Quebec's Bill 99 at least tried to respect Indigenous rights in that territory. I'm not here to opine on the quality of what they did or did not do there. I'm looking here at Bill 1 before us.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it has come to that time when I must announce that the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]







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