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The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, November 17, 2025

Day 10

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 31st Legislature
Second Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m. Monday, November 17, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 4
Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate November 5: Mr. Williams]

An Hon. Member: Question.

Member Irwin: Well, I'm standing because we'll need to get to . . . [interjections]

An Hon. Member: Call the bill.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think there might be a desire for Bill 6, but what we got is Bill 4. So the House leaders might want to have a chat, but right now we're talking about Bill 4.

Member Irwin: All right. Well, it's an honour to rise and speak to Bill 4. I haven't had a chance yet to speak to Bill 4, so I'm very excited to do so at this moment, as you can all see. I can tell you . . . [interjections] Yeah, exactly. Excited and very prepared.

I can tell you that public safety remains, like, a serious issue for so many folks in this Chamber, including myself. You know, I spend a lot of time knocking on doors, including during the constituency break, like a lot of my colleagues have, and I ask folks: what issues are top of mind? What comes up? Health care, education, affordability. Those would probably be the top issues that I hear in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

I would say that the next issue would be public safety and, in particular, public safety when it relates to housing and lack of supports for some of our most vulnerable neighbours. You know, I applaud the government for being willing to speak about public safety, but I would ask this government to really take the time to listen to their constituents as well. I don't know if the members opposite heard, but on Saturday the Alberta NDP had a day of action, and we knocked on thousands of doors across the province. I'll tell you that even in my own constituency there are some people, believe it or not, who don't vote for me, might offer some criticism, and I like to hear that, and I hope the members opposite do as well.

I am going to take a minute just to speak to Bill 4 before I . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, there are quite a few side conversations going on, and there are either lower voices available for you or places to have those conversations. In the meantime the only one we should actually hear from is the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Let's try that.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I'm not going to speak long on this, but one of the pieces that I did actually want to get on the record anyway when it comes to Bill 4 is around some of the changes to Clare's law because I can actually remember in 2019, not long after I was elected – maybe it was 2020. Again, I'm going off memory here in the hopes of helping the government a little bit at this moment, for anybody tuning in. I can't remember the exact time that it happened, but one of the interesting pieces that the UCP brought forward were some changes to Clare's law.

I can basically tell you it was a lot of, like, administrative changes. At the time I was the critic for status of women, and we spoke with a whole lot of stakeholders across the province and really asked them – folks working in violence prevention, working with women and survivors fleeing domestic violence. Essentially almost all of them were united in the sense that, "Absolutely, we need to be protecting survivors; we need to be taking action," but the actions proposed in that bill, as well as in this bill, don't actually do anything to support survivors. What folks are asking for are housing supports, so investments in affordable housing, investments in shelters – various forms of shelters – and actual tangible protections for survivors.

You know, I would say to this UCP government that if you're going to claim to be supporting survivors and those fleeing domestic violence, you need to back it up with tangible investments. That's something that remains a call from a lot of those providers. They might not say that to you. A lot of them have to be very careful, because they're worried about losing their funding. But that is an absolute fact. You can talk to anybody who works in violence prevention, and they will say the same thing. There remains a huge, huge lack of investment from this UCP government.

When we talk about public safety – I wanted to get that on the record – we need to see tangible investments from this UCP government. In particular, when it comes to folks who are fleeing violence, there need to be those investments in prevention and in affordable and supportive housing and in shelters as well.

With that, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 6
Education (Prioritizing Literacy and Numeracy) Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2)

[Debate adjourned November 6: Ms Sigurdson speaking]

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

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased today to have a chance to talk to this very important issue, which is education, and particularly Bill 6, where there is a bill that's really going to be what they call prioritizing literacy and numeracy. I'm going to be speaking on a few of the areas, but first, I want to talk about some of the key things that this bill does. Our public education system used to be one of the best in the world, but with UCP mismanagement and underfunding the system is really now falling apart. Alberta is the richest province in the country, yet Alberta students have the lowest funding in the country. This is unacceptable.

The big thing in this bill is that they are bringing in a large number of standardized tests from kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, grade 3. Students and teachers do not need these legally binding standardized tests. They need small class sizes and meaningful supports. The UCP knows this, yet they're continuing to ignore teachers' recommendations. These tests are also very challenging and stigmatizing and totally demoralizing for children, especially those with disabilities or those that might be a little bit nervous or that just aren't even being used to answering direct questions. There are better ways of supporting children's learning needs in the classroom to empower children to learn rather than making them feel incompetent.

I'd like to tell you a story about a situation where a teacher came to meet with me in my riding a few weeks ago. She teaches grade 2. She's had over 31 years of work as a teacher in this province,

teaching kindergarten, grade 1, teaching as a music teacher, and all kinds of special education, both training and teaching. She's currently teaching in a school where there are 115 students in grade 2. There are four teachers in a classroom that has some semiremovable walls. They're not even enclosed, so the noise level is tremendous in these classrooms. They tend to group the children together that know each other a little bit so that they have a friend in the class.

This year she has 25 students, including one student that suffers from autism. This student in both kindergarten and grade 1 had one-on-one support. Now, in a grade 2 class with 25 children, she gets about 15 minutes per day of educational assistant support and is meant to be assessing these students with these standardized tests.

7:40

One of the things that she is doing with the students to help them learn the numeracy testing is a little project with tablets. They write on the tablets any digit from zero to nine. The test that the students later get is to get three digits and to identify whether they're getting higher or going lower. They get it right if they get the right answer, basically. They get a minute to do this test, and there are about 100 rows on this page. No student in grade 2 is going to go through 100 rows. It doesn't matter how brilliant they are; they're going to feel they failed because they didn't finish the test. If a student gets fewer than three correct, then they're identified as needing some extra supports. Not that there are any offered, but they're identified in this case as potentially needing supports.

Every student has to go through this horrible test for identifying something that's very obvious to the teachers. She has the students take turns – right? – flipping over their tablets so that the other students can see the numbers and then they can all call out whether they're going higher or lower.

The student in her class with autism: she's calmed him down before. He's sitting on a little carpet area quietly, but then he starts waiting and is anxious for his turn with a tablet. He gets up and has his turn with a tablet, and it happens that the answer of those three digits is no; they don't get higher or lower. He has a breakdown. He throws his tablet, injures one of the other students. Everyone is traumatized. Then they go on and they have their tests done and every student does worse on this test than they did the previous time. They've been in an unsafe environment and this is traumatic for them. One of the things we know is that these are the kind of things that make students dislike math. They don't like math. This is hard. This is terrible. They don't want to do it.

Why are we forcing these kinds of tests onto little children that just need to learn basics, and their teacher knows what they need and knows who can do it and who cannot? We don't need scores to be used and having different schools competing with others. Part of this act is that they're going to make the scores available publicly. You're going to have situations where you have a classroom that is challenged by the complexity of the students, and then you have classrooms where maybe there are 12 children and they're all doing pretty well and it's not complex. It's going to look like that teacher is better whereas the teacher is struggling tremendously with the classroom that they have as well as the fact that those students are going to struggle because they're in a very poor learning environment.

Why are we looking at testing that is known as not needed at this stage instead of putting valuable resources, valuable energy, money, et cetera into supports in our classrooms? Why are we having the complexity in the classrooms that this teacher illustrated to me such that nobody can learn well? She can't really help this child, but she can't help the other 24 children to the capacity that they are entitled in this school. And this is an affluent area of the city. You know, this is an area where you might not expect that there are going to be a lot of children that have come from backgrounds where they haven't had a lot of support. I mean, my grandchildren could go to that school.

I still remember when my daughter and I went for her little teacher interview when she was starting kindergarten – she's 32 now – and we sat down and we both completed tests. This was one on one with the teacher. I fill out a form. I listen to the questions that my daughter is being asked, and she's doing really well with all these questions until the teacher asks her, "We're speaking English right now. Do you speak any other languages?" and she very confidently says that, yes, she speaks French and Tagalog.

We had to have a little discussion about this afterward. Clearly, the teacher asked a few more questions. It was pretty clear that this was just a confident child, and when I questioned her, "You don't really speak all of them?" she said: well, I don't speak all of English either. A teacher can pick all of these things up. We don't need to put all these kids through the rigour of testing, and we don't need to waste our time teaching them to attest. There's far too much of that that goes on.

I also would like to talk about the new issue that the minister and the Premier are putting together, this committee that is going to look at class size and complexity tracking. Certainly, the composition of that committee is one that all of us should be questioning. The information that they'll be getting will be from a very small scope of people, and I would like to bring to attention a program that has been running for over 25 years in Calgary called COPE, which is Community Outreach of Pediatrics and Psychiatry in Education. This is a program that will have no representation on this committee.

None of the experts that work in this area, including pediatric psychiatrists who work with these very complex children, are even mentioned or thought of nor any indication that they will be involved in this. This is a program that works directly with schools, families, and students and provides pediatric and psychiatric consultations regarding developmental, behavioural, and/or mental health concerns which are identified by the schools about their students. If they provide an assessment to identify the issues that impact the student and the physicians from the program generate a management plan and recommendations for the teachers in the schools, for the parents, for the family physicians, that all is to help the students that are referred through the school system to this program. It's connected with resources to assist those in need.

This program, which has been running for over 25 years, has a much longer waiting list than before. They used to be able to see students within five weeks – that was in 2017, so not that long ago – and now it's several months before a student can be seen when assessed. These are the complex students. These are students that need a lot of support, and the value of this program is that it's to assess, come up with a plan, implement the plan, and move the student along into what it is they need, which often is to remain right there in the same classroom, in the same school but with the supports that they individually need. There's case management and family liaisons and linkages to care and support within the communities.

7:50

Family therapy is also a part of this program, so it's really critical that we think of all the 25 years of experience but also of formal evaluation of the program that has occurred over time so that that knowledge can be brought to the group that is looking at measuring complexity. I think it's really important that all of these students get timely access to assessment for their own individual needs and that the students not be further traumatized by having to go through

these tests which they will fail, and then will feel more and more like a failure. That will make it much harder for them to be integrated back into a regular classroom. When you hit someone's sense of how well they're doing, and I think the members opposite may feel that these days . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, on Bill 6 Lethbridge-West.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what's interesting about a government that wants to introduce a bill to add more and more work to an underresourced system as our public school system? It's intriguing, in fact, that they force teachers back to work, they force them to have the same contract, and now they're going to pile on more work for something that's been proven to be less than productive. The methods that we do assessments with are not great for every kid, they're not productive for every kid, and some of the data is a bit skewed. I had to get that out there out front.

Mr. Speaker, is this just another way to privatize our school system? Let's think about that for a second. We know that most private schools have lower ratios of teachers to students, and if we are going to publish achievement test scores in the public system, some are bound to be lower on average than the private school system. That gives this government ammunition to say: oh, look, our private school system is way better than the public school system.

Let's talk about that for a second. Let's talk about the kids that are going to school that need more help, that aren't getting help now. What's going to happen to them when they're doing assessments and they're not resourced afterwards? When they don't have the literacy level and they don't have the numeracy skills, what's going to happen? Then they're going to flounder around till the next time they do it and not do any better, and it validates, I think, what this government wants to do and say to kids.

Mr. Speaker, years and years ago – and I mean years ago – I was only the second child and youth care worker in the public school system in Lethbridge, and my job was to help teachers and the staff in schools to develop the right kind of supports for kids that were experiencing difficulties, not just educational difficulty because that wasn't my area of expertise, but it was to help teachers and schools with kids that were experiencing behaviour and social issues and kids that were experiencing difficulties at home.

You know what the biggest difference was? When I worked with teachers to develop a behaviour plan for those students, they had resources in the school and in the class to help oversee and implement those plans, which made for a higher success rate for kids. Just about every other jurisdiction that does these kinds of standardized tests: when they find learning deficits in kids, they actually have the resources to help them remediate and they have the resources to help the kids try to get up to grade level. That's not something that we have in this school system now. We know that. We just saw it. We just went through it. We need more resources; we need more teachers; we need more classrooms; we need lower class sizes. This does nothing to help that.

This is some pipe dream that this government has again about: "Oh, let's just test everybody. Let's do a new committee to say what we could have done years ago with this government to understand what the depth of the issues was in the schools." But no. Let's not do that. Let's beat up the teachers. Let's beat up the public school system and the students once again just because – I don't know – it sounds like a good thing to do, doesn't it, Mr. Speaker?

You know, a few years after I did that job, I was running an adolescent treatment centre on the Blood reserve. We had a small school at our centre, and the teacher did whatever she could. The only reason the kids could pass tests sometimes was because the child and youth care staff were in the classroom with the kids, right? These are trained professionals, and they were able to sit in the class with the teacher and the kids to help them get through their day. Our kids don't have that right now, Mr. Speaker. Our kids don't have the ability right now to – if they don't do well on the test, there's no one there to help them. There are not enough people in the support system. There are not enough people in school. There are not enough professionals for assessments.

Then what do we do? What do we do with kids that are vision impaired, Mr. Speaker? You know, in Lethbridge I was talking to some – they call them special-needs consultants now because they don't even have the ability to carry a caseload anymore because there are so few of the specialists and so many kids that need help that all they can do is develop a plan of support for kids that are hearing impaired and visually impaired. The kids that are going to do these kind of exams that are visually impaired: how are they going to do that? Are they going to have enough people around to help the young kids to understand when they're visually impaired? No, but you know what? Doesn't matter to this government. They're just someone else that doesn't get a service.

It doesn't matter also to this government, it seems, that the kids that don't achieve as much, the kids that have the challenges, the kids that don't have the supports at home, the kids that are in poverty, the kids that don't have any resources in their life don't succeed, because this kind of system they're creating is actually to ensure they don't succeed.

You know, it's interesting. The part in this bill about wanting to publish the results is something out of a bad movie from – what? – the '80s or '90s about teachers in New York or Chicago or some place and they would get their kids to learn how to do the math test. Then pretty soon they did the best in the whole system. Guess what? That's not going to happen here. There's no chance of that ever happening again, right? If we don't have enough resources, Mr. Speaker – and I think I'll just hammer that for a while – this isn't going to happen.

My daughter-in-law teaches in B.C. She was appalled when she found out we didn't have classroom size caps. They've had that in B.C. for a while, and because they have classroom size caps and because they have resources to support kids that need support, their kids are actually doing a lot better, right? I think we need to look at those kinds of things. Manitoba also has assessments, but they have classroom size caps as well. They also have higher per-student funding than we do, and they also, again, as I mentioned earlier, screen kids out by using these assessments to actually identify where some kids need help as well. It's not just an assessment for achievement; it's also an assessment to understand the learning deficits that some of the kids have.

My colleague just talked about how kids react to test taking, and as everyone here knows, people don't take tests the same way. When some of these kids that have these learning deficits or learning disabilities or any other kind of disability are taking these tests and they're getting frustrated, there's no one to redirect them and they get angry and they get frustrated. Then they just don't finish the test. The minister is laughing because – I don't know – he doesn't think this is true. Never seen a classroom before, Minister? I don't know.

This is what happens. This is what happens when we tell the school boards, "You're going to do these assessments," and then don't talk about how you're going to resource that and don't talk about what kind of assistance the teachers are going to get to mark the copious numbers of tests that they're going to have to go over every time they do these, which takes away from their lives

because, obviously, they can't do it during class time. They don't get any prep time as well to do this, so they have to do it at home.

8:00

But, Mr. Speaker, that's okay because teachers in Alberta have been working at home for years. My mom was a teacher for a long time. She did work at home. It's normalized for teachers to work at home. This government is taking advantage of that work ethic by teachers and saying: "We don't care. We're going to give you more work. We know you're going to do it because you actually care about the kids, so we'll just keep piling it on you."

You know, when the ATA actually had done a study about numeracy tests that aren't age appropriate, they found that it just causes undue stress again. Again. What we find also is that you don't increase literacy and numeracy skills by standardized testing. How can a test actually improve your skills, Mr. Speaker? You achieve excellence in education by properly supporting teachers, having the right-sized classrooms, having the right supports for the classes that they're in. I know the minister talks about: well, not every classroom is the same, and we can't just hire a bunch of educational assistants because, you know, we don't know where they belong in the classroom. Well, this goes to that same question. They're going to give this test to everybody. They're going to find out where the learning deficits are. But I don't believe that they actually will find out much more than what teachers already know other than that they didn't have to report it, right?

The other thing we have to look at, and I think it relates to what my colleague just talked about, is when a child reacts so violently to being frustrated in doing examination or a test, standardized testing, that they become physically violent and they act out. A lot of the time when that happens – it happened when I was helping out in the school system years ago – then the kids could get assessed, and they could use the school psychologist or get some kind of psychoeducational assessment to understand the root of what the problem was, how the school can deal with it. But right now those kinds of assessments are very costly, and there are not enough psychologists and psychological staffing in school districts right now to actually do that kind of assessment that they used to do routinely years ago.

Then, Mr. Speaker, once those children get diagnosed with any kind of learning disability or anything that needs a code, a special-needs code, it's almost impossible to get any kind of support for them. We're just doing this circular thing, right? We put the kids under stress. They react. We think they need help. We get them help of some kind or get them assessed. The assessor comes up with a plan. And then it stops because there are not enough occupational therapists in the school system. There are not enough speech-language therapists in the school system. There aren't enough people that help with hearing and visual impairments. And there aren't enough educational assistants to address complexity. So it just can go round and round, round and round, round and round.

That's all we're going to do. We're going to assess the kids, going to find out these things, not do anything about it, a couple of years later assess them again, find out there's nothing we can do about it. It just keeps going round and round. Those are the kids that get moved through the system, have difficulty learning, possible early dropouts, possibly the ones that are going to have trouble because it's too hard to be in school. They're going to be doing something else. I worked with kids like those as well. When the kids don't have that kind of motivation to learn and they're not engaged, that's when we have trouble with them, right? No confidence. No motivation. They're going to look for other things to occupy themselves with, and school won't be it, right? Unless we want to try to force kids out of school for no fault of their own other than we're not supporting them properly, this is what's going to happen.

But, then, maybe this is just a war of attrition with this government. Maybe this government really just wants to see how many kids they can force out of the system because then it costs less, right? More kids leave the system, you need fewer teachers, you need fewer assistants, and that goes around and around, too, Mr. Speaker.

And then everything exacerbates, right? More health care costs, more costs to the young offender system, more costs to the criminal justice system. We could talk forever about the social return on investment of things like good education and engagement of kids and positive activities, but I don't think that really matters in this House, especially on the other side. It doesn't matter.

How did we fall so far so fast when in 2015 – hmm, does that year ring a bell? – the programme for international student assessment ranked Alberta students number one in Canada, second in the world for science, reading, and math. In 2022 Alberta students have fallen to seventh place. We still have a not bad school system. You know what's interesting, Mr. Speaker? We still have a not bad school system compared to a lot of other jurisdictions, but it could be so much better if we only supported the system the way it needs to be, if only we supported students and teachers the way that they need to be supported so we can be productive. We can't do that by just implementing a whole bunch of assessments, right?

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that they need to rethink this whole thing. Thank you.

The Speaker: On Bill 6, would the mover like to close?

Dr. Elmeligi: I'm ready to rock.

The Speaker: Sorry; you weren't standing. The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just didn't want to stand at the same time as you. I had a little brain fart there. I'm back on track. I'm back.

The Speaker: It's okay. We just about voted there.

Dr. Elmeligi: Phew. I don't want to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 6, the Education (Prioritizing Literacy and Numeracy) Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2). I'm with my colleagues in opposition to this bill, and there are a few different reasons for that. I mean, as an Albertan I used to be very proud that Alberta had the best public education system in the world. As somebody who has gone through the public education system and I like to think has become somewhat successful in life as an adult, I was quite proud of the public education system, and now I'm not. I think some things have happened under this UCP mismanagement in the education system that have really weakened our public education system.

Public education is the great equalizer of society, Mr. Speaker. It is the foundation of what forms a good working society that contributes to community, that wants to be engaged, and that wants to work productively. I think that we should be working very intentionally to strengthen our public education system.

What's happened over the last few years is that, you know, slowly education has been underfunded, and now we have the lowest funding per student in the country, but we also have a lot more people moving to Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and that exacerbates that problem. In preparing and researching for this bill debate tonight, I kept going back to, like, if only we could have known, if

only there were ways to know that the path we were on was not leading us to success. The good news is that there were ways we could have known. Actually, on this side of the House we pointed that out several times, and I'll get into that in a minute.

This bill is about creating standardized testing for kindergarten to grade 3. My colleagues have mentioned that, you know, it's not really about what parents and teachers are asking for; it's not about smaller class sizes and addressing classroom complexity, which teachers and parents have repeatedly requested supports to address. It's about testing kids from K to 3. This bill gives the minister power to establish these tests and gives boards the responsibility to share those results with parents. It legislates the implementation of testing for K to 3, but the tests themselves actually started a year ago. We've had a year of these tests happening in schools, so what do Albertans think about this idea of standardized tests for K to 3? Well, Mr. Speaker, they don't actually like it. So it's kind of funny that we're here debating it because, again, we're debating a piece of legislation that people are not asking for, but it's okay. We can still talk about it.

8:10

Last year, when this announcement came out that there were going to be standardized tests for K to 3, people raised concerns. The Alberta Teachers' Association said that you can't test your way out of underfunding and that more supports are needed for classroom sizes and complexity, not tests to identify which students are falling behind. The minister had said at the time that these tests were to identify which students are falling behind. Well, that's great. Obviously, we should identify which students are falling behind, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is that teachers are already trained to do that. Teachers undergo several years of education. They are prepared to go into their classroom, and providing they have a reasonable class size, they have the ability to spend time with their students and assess what reading level or literacy level they are at. We don't need standardized tests for these youngest age groups because teachers are already trained to do that work.

Another thing that was raised in 2024, when this came out, was this idea of: like, what happens to the results when we know? When we have these standardized tests, will there be more action, funding supporting the children who do score lower and who need more supports? This bill doesn't actually tie these standardized tests to any kind of increased funding or supports for that, so I'm kind of asking myself why, why we are doing this if teachers don't want it and it doesn't feed into increased supports for the kids who need it the most. What are we doing here?

Last year, in 2024, the teachers asked for smaller class sizes and resources to address complex needs. They needed help to provide students with more individual attention. Mr. Speaker, what happens when we have smaller class sizes is that teachers actually have more time to get to know their students and give them the attention that they need. Teachers have been asking for that for years, yet this year with Bill 2 in the Legislature but even before that, we see this government's complete – oh, what's the word I'm looking for? – reticence, stubbornness, inaction, like, all of those things, just a complete unwillingness to recognize that what teachers are asking for is smaller class sizes and supports for classroom complexity.

They're not asking for standardized tests, and they've been having those requests before this government for years, yet somehow in question period this fall I feel like several ministers have said how surprised they were that they gave the teachers everything they wanted and they still chose to strike. It's not a surprise, Mr. Speaker. It took me three seconds on Google to find newspaper articles where teachers are asking for smaller class sizes and supports to address classroom complexity.

In 2019 teachers were upset about the UCP government bringing back standardized tests for grade 3. In 2019. So this government has had six years, Mr. Speaker, to figure out a solution that wasn't Bill 6, and in six years they just kept going: no, we're going to do standardized tests for K to 3. Who could have known? Oh, wait, everybody because the teachers have been saying it repeatedly for six years. So why in 2019 did teachers not want standardized tests? Well, because standardized tests for K to 3 stress the system. They stress teachers, students, and parents.

The student learning assessments that were in place in 2014 were working for this age group, so it's not about saying that we don't want to assess K to 3 students. We absolutely do, but the student learning assessments that were put in place in 2014 were voluntary. They were optional, and they focused on individual students. It was a teacher's way of digging deeper into how an individual student might be learning or struggling or coping with school. The results from those student learning assessments were not reported widely. It was basically data for parents and teachers only, so it was really about serving the children. It was about finding out which children were having the hardest time with literacy or other aspects of being in school at that age and working with the parents to find solutions to serve those children.

I kept thinking about my school experience and my daughters while I was thinking about this bill. I have two daughters, and they're very, very different from each other. I would say that they are both very incredibly smart and not just because I'm going to show them this clip later. My girls are amazing, Mr. Speaker, but they are very different, and one of them does very well with tests. She thrives in this, like, environment where she's forced to put her knowledge down on paper and respond in a test situation. My other daughter hates tests and has a really, really hard time with tests. As a parent I feel like it was heartbreaking sometimes to watch her come home with tests that – her grades were not great, but it wasn't a reflection of her knowledge. She's smart and amazing and capable. It's the situation of forcing her to sit in a desk and write a test that she struggled with.

When I think about standardized testing for K to 3 children, these are little kids, Mr. Speaker. We want their school experience to be fun. We want learning to be fun. We want to foster this curiosity in these youngest age groups so that when they are older and they're faced with tests, they have some confidence and they know that they're capable of learning and they're capable of sharing that knowledge with others, which is really what a test is. So it kind of breaks my heart a little bit to think that we might be subjecting this youngest age cohort in school to these really high-stress situations, where they may come out of it feeling not smart or feeling less adequate or feeling less than. What will that do to their curiosity and their passion for learning over the long term? It would be heartbreaking if any child between the ages of kindergarten to grade 3 somehow came away from a standardized test feeling that they were inadequate and were not capable of learning and keeping up to their peers.

That's what the data shows, Mr. Speaker, that these tests are problematic for students because it can reduce their self-esteem by introducing too much pressure to children who are too young to handle it. We don't want that for our children. We don't want kids to get stressed and anxious when they're six years old because they don't know how to answer a question. These standardized tests have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable kids or kids with disabilities, as my colleague from Lethbridge-West was saying.

We need better screening tools that actually serve the children, Mr. Speaker, and standardized tests for K to 3 are not that. It's interesting because here on this side of the House we've actually had two private members' bills that do get to the heart of this, and they have both been voted down by this UCP government. One was psychoeducational assessments, brought forward last year by my colleague from Calgary-Edgemont, and that was really about helping teachers and parents have supports to do some educational assessments of children to figure out if they did have special needs or required additional supports. The UCP voted that down. We also had a private member's bill that was really about bringing back the need to measure class sizes and class complexity and report on that publicly. Again, the UCP voted that down.

But who could have foreseen that those bills would be needed? We did. We did over here. We had these great ideas, and this government said no. And now what are they doing? They've got a special cabinet committee to measure class sizes and classroom complexity and report it. You know what, Mr. Speaker? We could have already started that data collection over a year ago if the UCP would have just voted in support of the private members' bills that we put forward.

For teachers these bills, this standardized testing, creates increased administrative time for people who are already feeling very overworked and overwhelmed by their workload. A standardized test can introduce up to five hours of time per test, or three to five instructional days annually. This isn't solving teachers' problems, Mr. Speaker. It's exacerbating them. Teachers want smaller class sizes and supports for classroom complexity, and this bill does not do that. And when this government has had the opportunity to vote in support of bills that would help address these issues brought forward by this side of the House, they have said no every single time.

8:20

Albertans, Mr. Speaker, want a forward-thinking government, and there's one on this side of the House. That side of the House is full of ministers who are reacting and who are surprised. Who could have known that classroom size and classroom complexity was going to be such a big deal? Everybody, Mr. Speaker. Everybody knew. The teachers have been talking about it for literally six years.

So what now? Well, this bill comes weeks after the largest labour strike in Alberta history and then 51,000 teachers being ordered back to work to the same classrooms with the same inadequate supports that caused them to strike in the first place. What are we doing, Mr. Speaker? We're definitely not solving the problems that people are coming forward with. This bill will identify students that are struggling. Great. I mean, teachers could already do that. But then what? This government doesn't have a history of closing the loop on any of this information. We have all kinds of examples in my shadow ministry portfolio of environment even, where we're monitoring and collecting data all over the place. Is that data and monitoring changing how things are done on the ground? No.

So what's going to happen to these tests? What are we going to do with these results? Are we actually going to find supports to help these students achieve and be the best Albertans that they can be? Is there money to support increasing that? Three thousand teachers and 1,500 educational assistants over three years won't be enough to address this gap, Mr. Speaker. The UCP could apparently allocate $11 million to address the needs identified that come from this test. If that's true, if there is indeed $11 million floating around to address these needs, why don't we just do it right now?

The teachers know the students that need support. We know we need more educational assistants. We need more teachers. Why don't we just do it now? These tests are unnecessary. Let's serve the people, Mr. Speaker. The teachers already know the needs, and they've communicated that. Let's just do what they need.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in this House to speak to Bill 6, the Education (Prioritizing Literacy and Numeracy) Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2). I want to begin by acknowledging the importance of literacy and numeracy in the lives of our students. These skills form the foundation of lifelong learning, of economic participation, and the ability to engage fully in this society. On this side of the House we believe that strong literacy and numeracy outcomes are very essential. Agreeing on the importance of literacy and numeracy is not the same as agreeing on the direction this government is choosing to take with Bill 6. That is where our concerns begin.

At its core this bill amends the Education Act to give the minister even greater authority to establish literacy and numeracy assessments in schools. Under Bill 6 school boards will be responsible for ensuring that the results of those assessments are shared with parents and guardians, and the minister will publish the data publicly. Transparency is very important, Mr. Speaker. Reporting is important. Parents absolutely deserve to know how their children are performing and where help is needed.

But here is the problem. These assessments already exist. This system of screening already exists in this province. The reporting already exists. Mr. Speaker, here's the problem. Again, I don't know why we are spending the precious time of this Assembly to reinforce something that is already existing or already happening, actually being practised in this province. Instead of working to solve the real urgent and structural problems in education, the government has brought forward a bill that expands ministerial powers without addressing a single root cause of the actual crisis in our classrooms today.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, the Alberta teachers were fighting to solve these exact classroom problems, and the UCP government forced them back to the same classroom conditions using unprecedented powers, using the notwithstanding clause.

Let us look at what teachers, the front-line workers who actually support students on a daily basis, are saying. According to studies conducted by the Alberta Teachers' Association 71 per cent of respondents expressed concerns that the content of these screenings is developmentally inappropriate. Teachers reported that literacy screeners tested phonic patterns and vocabulary that had not yet been introduced in the classrooms. Numeracy screeners likewise presented students with mathematical concepts that were beyond their levels. Many expectations did not align with either the Alberta curriculum or with well-established developmental best practices in the province.

Madam Speaker, when assessments themselves are misaligned with how children learn, they do not help students; they pressure them. They do not support teachers; they undermine them. They do not strengthen the system; they distort it. Instead of fixing those issues, Bill 6 simply grants the minister more control over assessments that teachers, experts, and even parents have already said are flawed.

Madam Speaker, I represent a riding where education is not just a policy topic. In day-to-day life it is a daily concern, an urgent conversation, and the lived reality for thousands of families. Every single week I hear from parents, teachers, administrators, and

students, and I say today with complete honesty and sincerity that they are worried. They're very worried. They're frustrated, and many of them feel unheard by this government. Families in my constituency tell me repeatedly that the education system is crumbling under the weight of severe underfunding and years of neglect. In my constituency and in many neighbourhoods like mine school admission is not based on need or catchment or proximity. It is based on a lottery system. A lottery.

That is one of the examples that my constituency and my constituents are facing right now. Imagine a family living directly across the street from a school. They walk past it every morning, and they shovel their sidewalks knowing the classroom windows look out onto their home even. Their tax dollars help fund that school, yet even living literally steps away, they are not guaranteed a place for their child because enrolment has exceeded the capacity and there's no room. That is the real issue we need to address, and it is happening due to this UCP government.

Madam Speaker, my constituents are asking: why has it exceeded capacity? Because class sizes have grown dramatically under this government, because student populations have outpaced infrastructure, because this government has failed year after year to build the schools our growing communities desperately need. The class sizes have already doubled in many schools. This is the reality families are facing.

8:30

These issues do not exist in isolation, Madam Speaker. They stem from continuous failure on the part of this government. Alberta currently provides one of the lowest per-student funding in this country. The government has failed to hire the number of teachers, educational assistants, and support staff necessary to meet growing needs. New schools have not been built at a pace that matches population growth, population growth the government has repeatedly bragged about and celebrated but has not planned for. As a result, students are learning in severely overcrowded classrooms where many are seated so close together that they are hit by the desk behind them if they attempt to move either way. And those are the real stories I have been listening to from students directly in their classroom during read in weeks. I have spoken with teachers, students who tell me that classes are now being held in libraries, in gymnasiums, and in spaces never designed for that purpose. When a library becomes a classroom, it's no longer a library.

Edmonton-Meadows is one of the beautiful ridings because it is a multiculturally diverse riding. It is home to families who speak dozens of languages, who come from every corner of this world, who value education deeply and view it as the path to success, security, and opportunity. Many of these families immigrated to Alberta because they believed in the strength of our public education system. Of course, Alberta Is Calling was really attractive to many of them, too. Madam Speaker, they are now watching that system erode. They are watching supports vanish. They're watching their children struggle in classrooms that are too full, with teachers who are stretched too thin, and with resources that are too limited for their complex needs. They ask me: "Where is the government? Why is that not listening? When will things change?" This government must answer those questions.

Madam Speaker, I want to be clear. The assessments alone do not improve learning outcomes. You improve outcomes by improving conditions, and Bill 6 increases measurements only but does not increase supports at all. It does not reduce class sizes. It does not build new schools. It does not hire teachers, educational assistant staff, and it certainly does not address the serious concerns experts have raised about the validity of the assessments themselves.

What this bill does is place more power in the hands of the minister rather than in the hands of educators, researchers, and the local authorities who truly understand their communities. If the government was serious about improving literacy and numeracy outcomes, Madam Speaker, its priority would not be expanding ministerial power. It would be investing in early intervention supports, hiring more educational assistants, hiring more teachers, capping class sizes across all grade levels, and ensuring that every student has access to specialized supports when they need it; in building, operating, and funding school infrastructure at a pace that reflects the population growth of this province; listening to teachers, listening to students, listening to parents, listening to experts. Thousands of those people marched and came to the doors of this Assembly to raise their concerns not once; many times this season. Listening to them and taking these actions would actually help children learn. These are the actions that could improve literacy and numeracy, not just the illusion of accountability created by more frequent testing.

Madam Speaker, Albertans deserve a government that is focused on real solutions, not political optics. They deserve evidence-based policy. We, Alberta's New Democrats, have always supported strong literacy and numeracy outcomes, and we always will. We also support research-based policy, developmentally appropriate assessments, manageable class sizes, and adequate funding so teachers can do their jobs. Bill 6 does not move us toward those goals at all. It merely shapes powers without solving problems. It will make a bad situation worse.

Today, Madam Speaker, I ask the members opposite to reflect – truly reflect – on what Alberta students are facing: children learning in overcrowded classrooms, families relying on lotteries to access their neighbourhood schools, teachers stretched beyond their limits.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 6. Alberta's public education system was once the envy of the world. Ten years ago Alberta students were ranked number one in Canada and number two globally in science, in reading, and in math. This success was not accidental. It was built on investments. It was built on respect for Alberta's teachers. These outcomes were as a result of commitment to students. But today the legacy is crumbling. Why? Because of this government's mismanagement and chronic underfunding.

Alberta is the richest province in Canada, yet our students are the lowest funded in the country. That's not just unacceptable; it is shameful. It is shameful because we have an ongoing corruption investigation in the millions while teachers and education support workers are on strike for weeks. This cannot be accidental. This is by design. This is a crisis that affects every family, it's a crisis that affects every teacher, and, most importantly, Madam Speaker, this is a crisis that affects every single child in this province. You would expect that there will be a moment of a wake-up call, that there will be a moment that the government says that we need to address the problem. The problem is overcrowded classrooms, it's growing complexities, and it's lack of support. It's simple as that.

8:40

Madam Speaker, this is not something that we have not seen coming. The fact and the reality is that there were two bills that were brought to the floor of this House to address these problems: problems of complexity, so that we can do an early assessment and detect; problems of size, so that we can report on the size and address and manage it; problems of complexity and composition of

classrooms, so that we can identify, report on it, the public knows, and then we address it. There were bills that were brought to the House that were to address these problems, but the government chose to vote it down.

They could choose to amend. They could choose to work with the private members that brought the bill forward and negotiate in terms of what needs to be addressed and what needs to be fixed, but at least it was supposed to address the fundamental problems that we are dealing with today. Bill 6 is a perfect example of strategies of tabling bills that don't address the root causes or enacting action teams or task forces or committees during this period when we have seen multiple task forces or committees that were established to report on things that we already know, Madam Speaker. What are these? Growing complexity and overcrowded classrooms. You don't need to enact one task force after another to identify the same problem that you already know. It doesn't solve the problem.

The standardized diagnostic tests on children as young as kindergarten: these tests don't improve literacy and numeracy as long as you don't have the resources needed in the classroom. They don't make the classrooms better, Madam Speaker. What they do is that they stress out kids, they burden teachers, and they stigmatize students with disabilities. These are the solutions that they will come with.

Teachers who are in the classrooms are the ones who know how to manage those classrooms. They are the ones who see day to day the problems that they are facing in the classrooms, and they have told us these tests take three to five instructional days and over five hours of paperwork per child. These are teachers who have been on strike because they are underresourced, and instead of increasing and supporting them, we're taking more teaching time away from them. For what purpose? There's no real investment behind these tests. We are not seeing that this is how much the government will invest in this. The UCP says that they will allocate $11 million to address these needs, but Alberta is $1.5 billion behind the national average in education funding.

What students, what teachers, what parents, what Albertans are asking for are smaller class sizes so that every child gets the attention they deserve and the attention they need. The classrooms need support for complexity, educational assistants, school psychologists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists. These are the resources that are needed in our education system.

You know what else we need, Madam Speaker? A healthy relationship between the government and the teachers, a relationship that's built on respect, not one that has forced through legislation that strips constitutional rights away. If the government truly cared about literacy and numeracy, they would have listened to the teachers. They wouldn't have sent the teachers back dejected, their rights taken away, to the same classrooms that are overflowing with complexity alongside.

If the government listened, they would fund psychoeducational assessments, which cost families up to $3,000. We tabled a bill to deal with that, but the government members voted it down. I have met constituents in Edmonton-Decore, my riding. I have met a single mother that makes less than $40,000 that has a child on the wait-list for psychoeducational assessments. She said: when he turns six for grade 1, I'm worried that I won't make, and I cannot pay out of pocket, $3,000 for assessment. These are the students that we are not supporting, Madam Speaker. They don't need assessment and diagnostic and screening on numeracy and literacy when they cannot get the support that they need when they make it to the classrooms.

You would wonder where we are in terms of how much we're spending. Alberta spends $11,847 per student per year compared to the national average of $13,692. Our schools are overflowing in terms of numbers. In my constituency, Madam Speaker, I have 27 schools. I have three of the high schools in northeast Edmonton. There is no additional support that is coming to these schools. The government has announced building new schools, an $8 billion announcement. These supports do not go to these classrooms. They don't, and these students are left without support.

When you ask, the government gives you the excuse that we have received quite an oversized immigration, that a lot of people moved to Alberta; that is why. It's the same government that had launched Alberta Is Calling, as if people who are moving to Alberta are coming with classrooms, with teachers, with educational support workers. I have heard arguments that the program that was launched was calling people with skills. Of course, people with skills are parents. They come with children, Madam Speaker. There was no disclaimer for only those who don't have children. None of those existed.

This is about students with learning challenges who can't access support because the system is stretched beyond its limits, Madam Speaker. It's about families who are told to pay thousands of dollars of assessments. A good example is the single mother in Edmonton-Decore that I have referenced in my commentary earlier.

8:50

We have had heartbreaking stories similar to that, people who are worried about: "If my child is five years old now, next year my daughter will be six years old, and they have not been assessed. They are on a wait-list because there is not enough support, and I can't pay out of pocket. If I have to pay out of pocket, it's this amount of money, which I can't afford." These are the heartbreaking stories that we're hearing, Madam Speaker. The tests that this bill is bringing don't empower kids; they make them feel incompetent. They don't support teachers; they bury them in paperwork. And they don't solve the real problem, which is the support needed in the classrooms. This is another tactic of distracting from the real problems.

Colleagues, we cannot let the education system continue in this current state. As a parent who has sent three kids through the public schools, our kids deserve better. Our teachers, who every single day go to these classrooms and have to face these kids, deserve better. For God's sake, they deserve respect, and the families deserve respect, Madam Speaker. We don't need to waste time on task forces, on legislation that doesn't address the root causes, legislation that won't make a difference in the classrooms. The government has to invest in what matters, the smaller classes. The government has to spend on what matters.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and to speak to this bill. I do have a couple thoughts that I've been hearing quite a bit from teachers over the last few weeks, especially since they've gone back to school. They sort of feel like they've been hit with a double whammy. First, they were sent back to school with very little notice after being ordered back by the government, and then, right on top of that, they were told: "Now you're going to have to do all of these assessments, and we want these assessments done in a matter of weeks, and we're not going to give you any additional supports to get these assessments done. And then, also, the website that we would like you to log into to give us a survey response needs to be finished in the next 12 days, and also the website keeps crashing and we're not quite sure why, but teachers, figure it out and make it happen."

To say that it's been a little bit of a mess and teachers are feeling quite frustrated, I think, would be an understatement, and I'm not actually seeing this government stepping up with any additional supports. We're not hearing about any supply staff being provided to schools right now. Clearly, the government heard from teachers when they were on strike that they needed additional supports, they needed some more EAs in their classrooms, they needed more teachers.

You know, the government could have easily said, "You know what? We're going to give some supply dollars to the school boards, and we're going to help boost some of that staffing shortage that the teachers have been discussing," especially at a time where now we're asking them to do a whole bunch of assessments on a whole bunch of little people and to give us a whole bunch of data that the teachers have been saying they could have provided over a long period of time. Now, because the government wants it, it must be done today, it must be done immediately, but it must be done with zero resourcing.

So I think the minister should really reflect on what is going on. You can't keep asking teachers to do more and keep providing less and less and less, and that's what consistently keeps happening here. I think that speaks to the crux of this bill, which is Bill 6, Education (Prioritizing Literacy and Numeracy) Act, because the government keeps saying: well, we need to do this testing because we need to know where kids are at. Well, what I can say is that teachers are really frustrated with having to do testing when they know perfectly well that it doesn't actually matter if the government gets the information in the data because the government actually doesn't do anything with it and then doesn't respond to the information when it's being provided.

Let's just say we have a young child that is assessed by a teacher and that child is deemed to have a speech delay, which we know then impacts almost every other level of development and growth, and they are in need of an SLP, speech-language pathologist. Where does that SLP come from? Like, if the education system is saying, "We have identified that this child needs some intervention services and needs a speech-language pathologist to come in to help address their developmental levels," where do they exist? Who pays for that, and where does this person come from? Or is it just another test that the minister has requested without providing any of the additional supports?

When I worked before I was elected, I worked with kids. Before I worked with high-risk youth as a social worker, I actually worked at FSCD, and my whole job was to work with families and to do assessments and to determine whether or not children needed in-home support if they had complex needs. Then later on in my career I actually did specialized services, so my job was to look at children with severe autism and determine what other supports we could be doing through FSCD. What I also did, though, is that I would go to schools, and I would meet with the regional collaborative service staff that were provided by Edmonton public. We would sit down, we would look at the IPP, and we would determine what supports were going to be provided in the classroom and by the school, and then as the FSCD worker I would determine what kind of supports I could ensure would be happening at home. Wraparound services: it's a wonderful thing when it works.

What we would do is we would know that if a child needed a PECS board, which is a picture communication system, because they had a language delay in the classroom, the SLP would work with them at school about how to use that tool. Then as the FSCD worker I would make sure that parents had access to that same sort of support at home so that we had consistency across the board.

Well, we know what's happening now. We know that FSCD is not funding anything because the government has cut most of FSCD, so kids aren't getting wraparound services at home because they're on wait-lists for a year and a half to even get a worker to be able to come out and have a conversation with them to find out whether or not their child needs any support. We know that occupational therapists and SLPs, speech-language pathologists, and physiotherapists and behavioural therapists that used to exist in schools that would go around and support teachers have all been cut, so those intervention services aren't being provided in school. Then the government says: why are these classrooms so complex? Well, I don't know. Maybe because every single service that helps children develop has been cut by this province.

Like, these aren't niceties. These are about wraparound services to ensure that children have the best tools to be able to grow. Access to services in a classroom to meet developmental needs that can then transfer to the home to provide parents with supports to do the same thing means successful kids. None of those things exist anymore. Parents are literally begging this government to get them basic respite services through FSCD, basic respite like five hours so that they can go grocery shopping. Meanwhile these kids need supports to learn how to communicate or self-regulate, and those services used to exist. I know because I used to provide them. We had agencies that would come into people's homes and teach parents how to address those developmental milestones, and then those same supports would be transferred to teachers and help teachers be able to do it. Now what we're seeing is the government saying: you now have to test these kids; tell us what's going on. But we have no services to provide them, so what's the point?

9:00

What is the outcome of this? This is what every single teacher has asked me over the last few weeks. "What is the point of these assessments when I can't even get the basic support in my classroom? I'll tell you that I've got complex needs in my classroom, that I've got kids that need speech development or need physiotherapy or need occupational therapy or just, like, a basic behavioural modification program. I can't get anybody to come into the classroom to do it because nobody is funded to do that work anymore." What's the point? So the government can say that they asked the question? So they've got data? Forty kids in the classroom, not enough schools, not enough supports, and continuing cuts by this government in every single wraparound service that kids need.

The government talks about the Stollery and how great it's going to be. They're going to build more. Okay. When? FSCD is great, but you have to wait two years to get basic programming. Now there's no staffing in classrooms. There should be more staff in classrooms today than there were two weeks ago because that's what the teachers asked for and that's what the government promised. Nothing has changed except more expectation and more demands and more paperwork and programs and websites that crash because too many teachers are going to do a survey that's now mandatory. We've heard nothing from this government on an offer, of how things would be better, and what the point of this is. How does this serve the kids? Like, that's my question. What does this do to serve kids?

Here's a thought. If this government wants to do better, then you start when they're little. You make sure that they have the health care that they need. You then make sure that if they need FSCD supports, they don't have to wait a year and a half to even get a worker to come out and do a basic assessment. And then you offer them services, not five hours of respite; actual intervention supports and services that parents can use to help their children develop. You bring PUF funding back and make sure that kids have access to early intervention services. Then when they hit school and you ask

for an assessment, you find those wraparound services. But we know that won't happen under this government because all we've seen is a reversal. None of that exists right now.

The government will pass this bill. Maybe one day we'll hear some kind of answer to all of the questions that we've been asking. Or the government can just continue to fail kids. Let's be clear. It's not the teachers' fault. It is the situation this government has continuously put our teachers and our educational assistants and all of our support staff in classrooms and in schools in. It's not their failure; it's this government's failure.

With that, I will adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 7
Water Amendment Act, 2025

[Debate adjourned November 5: Mr. Schmidt speaking]

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

Member Arcand-Paul: Madam Speaker, [Remarks in Cree]. Water is life. I rise with concern to this bill. Members, I do not need to remind you that water is life. It is the essential component for our existence on this earth. It is much more than a resource to be managed. It is our lifeblood. As Chief Vernon Watchmaker of the Kehewin Cree Nation called it in response to this bill in a news release by the Chiefs Steering Committee on Technical Services, the chiefs steering committee views this legislation as "an abhorrent failure of legally required consultation and a direct threat to the Inherent and constitutionally protected Treaty Rights of First Nations to water and jurisdiction over our lands and territories."

Madam Speaker, all life on this earth requires water to exist. From our own bodies to our four-legged, winged, swimming relatives or the medicines, we all need water. From our mothers' wombs we are sustained by water and we become part of the cycle where water is our whole existence. In Nehiyaw, Cree, culture and in many other nations' belief systems our women are our water keepers. They are the ones that share a deep connection to water. The Native Women's Association of Canada has highlighted an alarming concern around the exclusion of Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, and gender-diverse-plus women in water governance in their March 2025 report on water insecurity.

> Historically, Indigenous women have been the matriarchal leaders in water decision-making, given their deep, inherent connection to water. The ongoing exclusion of Indigenous women from these spaces represents not just a cultural disruption but a colonial legacy that continues to marginalize their essential contributions.

While we have mountains to go to restore Indigenous women in places of decision-making, I remind this House that our nations have not forgotten this responsibility. In ceremony we hear our lodge holders highlight the important role our women have when it comes to water, so tied to water that they are affected by the moon cycles and are all powerful at that time that they cannot participate in ceremony.

Madam Speaker, I must speak plainly as to why this is important. Our connection to water is paramount, just as much as our connection is to the land which we have been stewarding since time immemorial. When I look at this bill, I see the glaring omissions and the intentional exclusion of our treaty responsibilities as the Crown in right of Alberta.

In October of last year Chief Sheldon Sunshine of the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation gave evidence at the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs regarding Canada's Bill C-61, an Act respecting water, source water, drinking water, waste water and related infrastructure on First Nation lands. I want to quote his remarks because they are so applicable to this current bill. This government should have paid some attention when drafting Bill 7.

> First nations in the Alberta region have been left out of significant water planning initiatives in the province of Alberta . . . This is our current reality in Alberta, which, as you have been told by our colleague leaders from Treaty 7, continues to assert that it owns all water in what is called the province of Alberta. We are here today to remind parliamentarians that Alberta is an incorporated entity that has no sovereignty. In fact, it was created well after our treaties were made in 1876, 1877 and 1899. At no point in time did we cede or surrender our inherent rights and territories, and this includes over water.

While Chief Sunshine was speaking against Bill C-61, the principle remains in this bill debate.

I started my remarks addressing the news release that was issued by the chiefs steering committee, and they highlight the exact issue that remains ever present, the lack of consultation on this bill and the sweeping changes that are being proposed in Bill 7. When I speak with chiefs throughout this province, I am met with their concerns that they are kept in the dark time and time again by this government. Why is that? Why are the rights holders, the original and continued stewards of this land and these waters, kept away from decisions by this government? Well, I can certainly guess, and I know many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle have many perspectives as to why. Plainly, it is because the UCP are entirely inept at respecting the treaty relationship. It does not matter how many ceremonies those on the other side attend or how many empty promises made. Until your actions respect treaty, there will always be opposition to the bills put forward by the UCP.

Madam Speaker, this government cannot stand up in this House and say that they did in fact consult. The truth of the matter is that when I have chiefs and technicians calling me and telling me that they were never consulted on the changes to the Water Act, you best believe I am trusting them over this government. Let's look at the record, shall we? Data that was obtained by an environmental NGO, the Alberta Wilderness Association, in particular pulled out the water availability engagement phase 1 feedback review on the interbasin transfers produced by Environment and Protected Areas water use and conservation, February 2025. On page 8 it states:

> it is concerning that the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, allows the executive to authorize interbasin transfers without a special act of the Legislature given that emergency related to water is not clearly defined and decisions to allow interbasin transfers in an emergency cannot be appealed and there's a loss of opportunity for public participation and Indigenous consultation; a rule of law requirement has been removed.

9:10

While these comments come directly from concerns of a previous piece of legislation, the same ethos belongs here in this debate, presumably because this government should have heard this concern; namely, the interbasin transfers that this bill inserts into the Water Act under section 47. Madam Speaker, there is the main concern with this bill and the expansion of the minister's ability, by order, to authorize lower risk transfers but also the amalgamation of the Peace, Slave, and Athabasca River basins. This, coupled with the right under the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, gives great latitude to the minister to do whatever they want without consultation with those that are affected by such transfers.

There are parts of this province that are in multiyear drought. This bill does nothing to address the need for these parts of the province.

I've heard from chiefs who have raised several concerns with accessing groundwater for their nations' own use, and I've heard about the trickles that once mighty rivers in this province have become in northern Alberta. This bill is going to permit up to one cubic metre in one of the river basins where that nation was unable to access groundwater, and where that once mighty river, which is now at a trickle, is a tributary for the Peace River, this bill will allow up to four cubic metres to be transferred if the minister so desires.

This required consultation, Madam Speaker. This government had the opportunity to address these concerns in a fulsome way, and had they consulted, as the minister had alluded to, then we would not be in the position that we find ourselves today. I know that this government is not unaware of its responsibilities. It certainly acknowledges them when it is advantageous to further their erosion of our public health care system, whether through private surgical facilities or mental health facilities, or even to build pipelines. The Indians only matter to get our resources out of our Mother Earth: no better example of the UCP understanding its responsibilities to consult with First Nations than this past summer and their conversations surrounding resource revenue sharing.

Madam Speaker, this goes to the heart of this bill and any other bill that omits its responsibilities to consult and its honour of the Crown. To acknowledge resource revenue sharing is in itself an omission that the province and therefore the UCP government has the responsibility to negotiate in good faith with First Nations about its responsibilities under treaty and the tense relationship that exists with First Nations and the Natural Resources Transfer Act. This bill should have been inspired by these conversations, and I say that very clearly and succinctly. They were conversations. They were not consultation, and they were very certainly not a renegotiation of anything, especially not treaty, because that cannot and will not ever be on the table despite this government's intentions.

Madam Speaker, I say this because, plainly, it is clear that this government knows of its responsibilities, so any omission in this and future pieces of legislation is intentional. We heard the debate around Bill 1, International Agreements Act, that any references to First Nations, Métis, or Indigenous rights included in there is unnecessary from the minister that has the direct responsibility to respect the treaty and Métis relationship in this province. That is certainly reflected in this bill.

I look at the minister who had put this legislation forward to understand the reasons for the overreach in subsection 47(3) under Bill 7. I understand that the Premier has put the task to this minister to "increase water availability, and ensure responsible long-term management of Alberta's water resources, while respecting traditional uses and upholding environmental stewardship." What is troubling is the next cross-cabinet directive from the Premier, that is at odds with the treaty relationship here in Alberta. I'm speaking about where the sponsoring minister for this bill and the Minister of Indigenous Relations are to jointly, with the Minister of Energy and Minerals, "develop an expedited 120-day provincial approval process for priority projects designated to be in the provincial interest." Well, Madam Speaker, therein lies the proof of what this government is intending to do. In the same breath the Premier speaks about respecting treaties, this government then focuses on how we can get First Nations to build pipelines faster, somehow linking treaty with pipelines. The treaty relationship is only expedient when it furthers the business interests of this government or, rather, the big corporate pals of this government.

This is not a slight against business interests in Alberta. It is not. In fact, it should be concerning to proponents that First Nations are being bypassed in these processes because for centuries government after successive government has overlooked this treaty relationship and the rights that First Nations have in this province. And what do we see from this relationship being bypassed? Litigation. First Nations in this province have raised their disgust with the Aboriginal consultation office, and expediting priority projects will not be met with open arms. I can guarantee that, Madam Speaker.

Bill 7 opens up the Water Act, which has not been done in 25 years. Madam Speaker, with the recent developments with water both from this government and the federal government but also vying eyes from south of the border, who have made their intentions very clear about our water, I also think about AI data centres, agriculture in northern Alberta, and our oil industry, but we are moving into an era where even drinking water will be a premium product. Our elders have prophesized this, and Alberta is sitting on another large reserve of water. I worry for the next generations, and I rise today to make sure our history books mark that there was at least one Nehiyaw raising this concern in this Chamber at this pivotal time in our shared history.

This bill is very clearly in line with the Premier's directives to cabinet, and in so doing this government is bypassing treaty rights in this province. No resource revenue sharing nor impact benefit agreement shall cover the behind of this government's shortsightedness when projects are stalled because a low-risk interbasin transfer has been approved by the minister without consulting the affected communities and nations. Why are we so worried about talking with Albertans and First Nations, Madam Speaker? Why? From the conversations I've had with chiefs that are experts in this area and leaders in this area, they wish they would have had meaningful consultation, but instead they have not had an ounce of respect their way to receive any consultation, and with the current draft of this bill it sadly misses the mark.

This government has ignored the legal requirements it has under treaty, and it will certainly pay for that mistake. I don't want to see protracted litigation extend over something that could have been dealt with at the outset. If this government was truly intent on adequately consulting with First Nations, it would have been reflected in this bill. We are on the same page. We want to work together, and this has been the clearest statement coming from our leadership, from First Nations leadership in this province. They aren't saying it to stop movement and progress. They are saying it because treaty obliges us in this House to have these conversations, to be good treaty partners. Treaty is not a one-way game. It is one that needs to be honoured.

In our old way we had treaty medallions that needed to be polished, and that polishing wasn't just an act of service. It was to come together and talk about the years prior and to have a future where we can build together. When we build together, we can build a province that will be for all.

Madam Speaker, it is for these reasons I cannot support this bill in its current form. Again, I remind us [Remarks in Cree]. Water is life. That's all I have to say.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Member Kayande: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Petroleum shale resources are an absolute miracle. Shale is a miracle, and shale needs water, so let's talk about shale resources a bit. I want to talk a little bit about shale resources, their economics, and I beg this House's indulgence as I offer a little bit of history. The throughline here is the role of water in development of shale resources in Canada and the U.S.

Let's start with some basics here because what shale development has resulted in is in the last 20 years an uncoupling of

oil production growth from our reliance on supplies in the Middle East. This has been unremittingly good for the people of the world. It has reduced our energy prices. It has made us more competitive economically, and it started out kind of as an accident.

9:20

Madam Speaker, typically a conventional petroleum system is given by a source rock, a migration path of that hydrocarbon from the source into a reservoir, a trap where that hydrocarbon is trapped in the reservoir, and then a seal that it can't get out of. Now, that source rock is the shale. In the popular imagination we think about these buried dinosaurs – and those, like the former federal Leader of the Opposition, Stock Day, who think the world is 10,000 years old may want to cover your ears a little bit because this part will be hard to get through – but over time in geological history what shale is is micro-organisms, generally algae, over, you know, hundreds of millions of years ago that compacted and created a high organic content rock that is the source of petroleum. As it gets buried deeper, the temperature rises. The organic content in that shale – it's called kerogen – gets cooked into actual petroleum. So we think about that geologically as a source rock that's in the kitchen for long enough to create hydrocarbon.

Why this matters is that a modern shale resource now goes after that hydrocarbon right at the source rock. So you don't need a migration pathway. You don't need a trap. You don't need a reservoir. All you need is the source rock and the seal over top.

George Mitchell in the late '90s in Texas was sitting atop such a source rock, and he felt sure that he could get at it and get the hydrocarbon out in a commercial way. Typically the fracks at that time that would go into that resource were gels. Gels were useful as fracks because they would carry a lot of sand and carry a lot of energy per unit volume, but the problem is that he could never figure out how to hit the rock hard enough to actually create a fracture network that would liberate the hydrocarbon that everyone knew was in there. So over time Mitchell Energy Corp developed what's now known in – I love oil and gas terms for their evocation, their beautiful language. These became known as slick water fracks, and basically what it meant is you were pumping huge amounts of water into . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt. Just there's a lot of chatter from this far right corner over here. Perhaps if the conversation would like to continue, there's this lounge behind here so that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow can speak in peace.

The hon. member may continue.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Slick water meant that much more energy could be put into the reservoir in order to liberate the hydrocarbon.

This was a game changer. I believe it was in the year 2000 or somewhere around the year 2000, 2001 when Devon Energy successfully acquired Mitchell. We need to remember, cast ourselves back to the year 2000 to realize what kind of world we were in when it came to natural gas. The Gulf of Mexico was getting to be a harder place to find it. Alberta was becoming a harder place to find natural gas out of the shallow gas fields that were the bread and butter of this province for so, so many years. And gas prices were going up. Gas prices were going up to the point where it actually made economic sense to build LNG import terminals to import more gas from the Middle East into North America. The price differential was allowing that to happen. I'll give you some idea of what the prices were at that time. We're talking about $7 U.S. per MMBtu, which roughly translates to about $10 per gigajoule, when currently, I think, the gas price in Alberta is closer to $2 right now.

What the Barnett shale development allowed through the use of water to break up source rock was the ability to come up with low-cost, predictable natural gas development. This would be just a historical footnote. It would be kind of a neat technical thing. It would be, you know, just a simple technical kind of thing, except suddenly it turned out that these gas-at-the-source plays were everywhere. They were everywhere, Madam Speaker, when we started looking for them. After the Barnett there was the Fayetteville. After the Fayetteville there was the absolutely mighty Marcellus. There was the Marcellus's kid sister the Utica, and then there's a whole bunch that are lost to history because they never worked. There was the Antrim, the New Albany, the Black Warrior basin, the Chattanooga, the Conasauga. My favourite failed shale was the Frederick Brook, for a variety of reasons, in New Brunswick. There was the Rogersville. There were some that kind of worked but didn't, which was the Haynesville in its early days, and some that actually generated natural gas condensate in the Eagle Ford.

We figured out over time, and not a lot of time, a few short years, what the difference was between a shale play that worked and one that didn't. What you needed was the right depth, the right depth to hit the kitchen where you could cook the kerogen into the right amount of hydrocarbon, preferably oil. You needed overpressure because as the kerogen cooks, it increases the pressure in the source rock. As that pressure gets higher, you know that the oil didn't leak off. That's super important. You do need a certain amount of total organic carbon.

What didn't matter, which we thought would, was the age of the hydrocarbon. Didn't matter. The Utica is Ordovician age. It's so old that there weren't even organisms living on land and the earth at that time. The Marcellus is Devonian age. The Eagle Ford is Cretaceous. There were shales in Canada, too: one that failed, the Horn River basin, and another that wildly, wildly succeeded, and that was the Montney. That's the one I want to talk about right now.

See, for a shale play to be economic, you need a few things. We talked about the bare minimums, which are that it has to have depth, it has to have total organic carbon, it has to have the overpressuring. But, also, the other thing you want is a wide aerial extent. This is where Marcellus and Montney are king. They cover massive, massive areas, which means that you have lots of places where you can drill wells and have relatively consistent performance across the entire play boundary.

Really, what that meant in the Marcellus, for example, is that the Marcellus and Utica counties, if they were their own country, would be the third-largest natural gas producer in the world behind, I believe, the rest of the United States and Russia and then with the Marcellus. The Montney as well covers an enormous, enormous aerial extent from northern B.C. from well north of Fort St. John, from town and Blueberry all the way down into Ante Creek and into just the tremendous, tremendous Kakwa asset that ARC Resources acquired from Seven Generations, the original developer.

The other thing you want is stacked play. You want horizons that are developable across various different depths, so what you want is a very deep, highly stacked play area over a large aerial extent so that now you have three dimensions of extremely high-quality resource. That's what we have in the Montney. It's truly one of a kind. It's a type of resource accumulation that doesn't exist in a lot of places in the world, and we in Alberta and in B.C. are lucky to have it.

9:30

But water is critical. The original fracks in the Barnett shale: these were vertical wells. You know, when the original horizontal

development in the Barnett play was done by Devon Energy, maybe we're talking about 200 gallons per linear foot of water that's required. Now, with a modern play completion of the type that you get in the Permian basin, we have upwards of 2,000 gallons per foot of lateral length. In the early days of shale lateral lengths were short. They were as little as 500 feet. Then they grew to 1,000. Then they grew to 3,000. Then they grew to 10,000. Now they're at 15,000 feet. And you can see that some operators are actually very easily and consistently landing three- and four-kilometre – 3,000-, 4,000-metre-long – laterals. When you do the math on what that is, around, you know, 2,000 gallons of fluid over a 15,000-foot-long lateral – I can't do it in my head, but it's a lot of water. And you don't get the resource without putting the water down the hole.

Now, the Premier was asked about this, I believe – I wasn't there, but the conversation was reported to me – at Alberta Municipalities, where she was asked about water usage in shale. She said something very curious, which is that "Maybe they could use solvents, or maybe they could use some other fluid," which kind of goes in the ivermectin hall of fame. I think she was actually a little bit confused about how shale plays work because it turns out that while, yes, you can frack with diesel, the idea of launching eight million gallons of diesel down the hole in order to drill a well is prohibitively expensive and will not work economically. It might work technically; it will not work economically.

So now we need water. And when we need water, we need social licence for that water. We need water from all of the stakeholders who agree that this is the best and highest use for it. The thing is that potable surface water is not required for fracking. It is, when it is available, the cheapest option. Where potable water sources are not available or are astoundingly expensive – one example is in the Permian basin of Texas – operators have managed to make use of brackish water and saline water and produced water.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Produced water actually offers a double advantage because not only can water from production be used so you're not using potable water, but you're actually getting rid of your produced water problem, which otherwise would cost money to dispose of. Now, produced water sources in Alberta are not necessarily nearby the areas where you need to do the fracking.

One area where Alberta can justifiably take a lot of credit for is in the oil sands with its water recycling that was really demanded and mandated by governments, by every government that has been responsible for oil sands development. This government could do the same. I'm not talking about necessarily increasing costs but bringing in best practices. One of the motivators for this bill is that, look, operators are asking for interbasin transfers to keep their costs down and to reduce their environmental footprint. All of that may be true, but what I know is that if First Nations are not onboard with interbasin transfer, then suddenly doing business becomes very difficult and becomes a little bit volatile as to whether you can do business or not. It becomes very uncertain.

I think what this government doesn't realize is that simply by hammering and ramming stuff through, that doesn't necessarily make it any easier for business to actually get done, instead of spending a little bit of time at the front end and getting the proper collaboration that we need with our First Nation friends and relatives.

The Acting Speaker: Any others wishing to speak? I will recognize the Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

Member Boparai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak on Bill 7, the Water Amendment Act, 2025. At first glance this bill appears to be a modernization of Alberta's water management system, what should be a technical update to improve efficiency and access, but let us be clear. Appearances can be deceiving. Why? Because this bill is not about modernization. It is not about conservation. It is not about safeguarding Alberta's rivers, wetlands, and lakes. It is about centralizing power in the minister's office, stripping away democratic oversight, and opening the door to political interference in decisions that should be guided by science, transparency, and meaningful consultation.

Today I rise not only to speak on Bill 7 but to make it absolutely clear where Alberta's New Democrats stand. We stand firmly opposed to Bill 7. We stand for transparency. We stand for accountability. We stand for protecting Alberta's water for future generations. The Alberta NDP believes that water is not a bargaining chip for industry. It is not a tool for political convenience. Water is life. It sustains our communities, our ecosystems, and our economy, and decisions about water must be made in the open, with public debate grounded in science and respect for Indigenous rights, not behind closed doors in the minister's office.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve a government that listens, that consults, and that protects this resource for future generations. Bill 7 does the opposite. It silences the debate. It concentrates power. It prioritizes industrial convenience over environmental sustainability and community well-being, and Alberta's New Democrats will not stand by while this government gambles with their water security.

Mr. Speaker, for more than 50 years Alberta's Water Act has provided a framework for managing water responsibly. Under the current law any transfer of water between major river basins requires approval by a special act of the Legislature, which is a process that ensures public debate, transparency, and accountability. Bill 7 changes that. It introduces a new category of so-called lower risk interbasin water transfers that can be approved by the minister through a simple ministerial order. No legislative debate. No public notification. No democratic oversight. The bill also merges the Peace-Slave River basin with the Athabasca River basin to create a new Peace-Athabasca-Slave River basin. This merger, combined with the new authority for low-risk transfers, fundamentally alters Alberta's water governance.

Bill 7 claims to streamline licensing and improve access to water for agriculture, industry, and municipalities. It introduces mandatory water measurement and reporting requirements and expands the definition of alternative water resources to include treated industrial water and waste for water reuse. But behind these technical changes lies a troubling reality. Bill 7 concentrates decision-making in the hands of the minister, bypassing the Legislature and the public. The Alberta NDP stands firmly opposed to Bill 7 because it undermines transparency, threatens ecological integrity, and violates treaty rights.

Let's highlight some of the most serious concerns. First, Mr. Speaker, reduction of democratic oversight. Before Bill 7 any interbasin water transfer required a special act of the Legislature. This process guaranteed public debate and accountability. Bill 7 removes that safeguard. Under this bill, the minister can approve low-risk transfers without any legislative approval or public input. Decisions will be made behind closed doors based on vague criteria like an opinion of the director. This is not good governance. This is critical interference, as is the track record of this UCP government. Water is not a commodity to be traded for convenience. It is a public resource that sustains life, ecosystems, and economies. Decisions

about water must be transparent, science based, and subject to democratic settlement.

9:40

Second, Mr. Speaker, a pattern of centralizing power. This is not an isolated case. Bill 7 is part of a disturbing pattern under this UCP government, a pattern of stripping away democratic oversight and concentrating power in the hands of ministers. We saw it earlier with Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022, which gave the minister sweeping authority over local police commissions. We saw it with bills that laid the groundwork for a provincial police force without meaningful consultation. We saw it with emergency powers legislation that allowed cabinet to bypass environmental assessments during a crisis. And now we see it again with Bill 7, where decisions about interbasin water transfers, decisions that affect ecosystems, communities, and treaty rights, will be made behind closed doors.

Let us not forget Bill 2, which forced teachers back to work while denying their rights to fair bargaining and due process. That legislation was a direct attack on our democratic principles and workers' rights. It silenced educators, undermined collective bargaining, and concentrated power in the hands of government, setting a dangerous precedent for how this UCP approaches governance. This government has repeatedly shown that it prefers control over collaboration, secrecy over transparency, and political convenience over science. Bill 7 is just the latest example.

Third, Mr. Speaker, is the risk to Indigenous rights and treaty obligations. First Nations leaders have condemned Bill 7 as a direct violation of treaty rights and Indigenous jurisdiction over water. They warn that interbasin transfers and basin mergers will deplete northern water resources, permanently alter ecosystems, and benefit industry at the expense of Indigenous communities. Chief Vernon Watchmaker of the Kehewin Cree Nation said it best: water is not a commodity for industrial convenience; it is the lifeblood of every person on this land. The government's failure to conduct meaningful consultation or obtain free, prior, and informed consent is unacceptable. This will lead to legal challenges and further erode trust between the province and Indigenous communities.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, is the environmental and cumulative impact. Bill 7 defines low-risk transfers based on arbitrary thresholds without a clear and forcible definition of cumulative impacts. These decisions should be guided by science, not politics. Transferring water between basins can spread invasive species, disrupt ecosystems, and reduce water availability for downstream users. Alberta's wetlands, which store water and filter pollutants, are already disappearing at a rate of .63 per cent per year. Bill 7 does nothing to strengthen wetland protection or address cumulative effect. Instead of prioritizing conservation, the UCP is prioritizing convenience for industry. This is reckless, this is short sighted, and this is dangerous.

Fifth, Mr. Speaker, is a lack of transparency and public reporting. Bill 7 introduces mandatory water measurement and reporting for licence holders, but it does not require public disclosure of this data. Albertans deserve to know how much water is being used, where it is going, and what impacts these transfers will have on their communities. The last comprehensive analysis of water consumption in Alberta was conducted in 2007. In 2007. That is unacceptable. We need regular public reporting, not secrecy as, again, the track record of this UCP government.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, is the political motivation and industrial convenience. Let's be clear. Bill 7 is not about helping farmers or ranchers. It is about removing barriers for oil and gas companies operating on both sides of basin boundaries. Industrial groups like CAPP have openly supported these changes because they reduce costs and eliminate the need for redundant water infrastructure.

Meanwhile the Premier has publicly committed to doubling oil sands production, which is a move that would double water consumption. Bill 7 paves the way for that expansion at the expense of Alberta's rivers, wetlands, and communities. We must protect our industries but in a way that is responsible and ethical, not at the expense of current and future generations.

Mr. Speaker, what impacts will this have on Albertans? Bill 7 will have far-reaching consequences for Albertans. There will be a loss of local water security by centralizing power in the minister's office. Bill 7 removes local voices from decisions that affect their power supply. Rural municipalities, Indigenous communities, and watershed councils have all expressed concern about losing control over water management.

Mr. Speaker, this is an increased risk during emergencies. Bill 7, combined with expanded emergency powers under previous legislation, allows approval of transfers of untreated service during emergencies without environmental assessments or rights of appeal. This could introduce invasive species or pollutants into fragile ecosystems.

There is the legal and economic uncertainty. By ignoring treaty rights and cumulative impacts, Bill 7 invites legal challenges that could delay projects and create uncertainty for industry and communities alike.

Mr. Speaker, as this government has done before, they have missed the opportunity for real solutions. Alberta is facing drought conditions and growing water demand. This could have been an opportunity to strengthen conservation, invest in wetlands, and improve watershed planning. Instead, the UCP chose to weaken safeguards and concentrate power. Stakeholders like watershed councils and environmental organizations have called for more wetlands to store water naturally, increased water monitoring stations and public data, a water budget for each basin to measure supply and demand, strong conservation objectives, and science based decision-making. None of these recommendations are in Bill 7.

Mr. Speaker, to summarize, Bill 7 is not about modernization. It is about political control over water, a resource that belongs to all Albertans. It reduces transparency, undermines Indigenous rights.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words around Bill 7, the Water Amendment Act, 2025. You know, each of my colleagues this evening and before, I think, have outlined very clearly just the gravity of the situation with this Bill 7, Water Amendment Act. It has a sweeping reach right across the province in each of the water basins that we have.

9:50

You know, it's no coincidence that, I think, we're talking about water when we are under one of the most severe droughts that we've seen in different regions of our province here for 50, 60, or even 100 years, and we need to have a serious look at the water in each of our basins. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, are watching it closely as a farmer, too, right? We watch the clouds every day, and we make sure that we hope that we have sufficient moisture for agriculture and for industry and for our cities.

What we do need to do is have a serious conversation about allocating that water and making sure that we are conserving the water for life. I mean, that was the name of the previous program

that the provincial government had for water conservation and water use here in the province. And I really don't see Bill 7 fitting into any of those responsibilities at all, quite frankly. I see an opportunity in Bill 7 for certain people to move water between basins, you know, which is very, very concerning. I know that over the years debating water issues here in this Legislature – any time you had an interbasin water allocation submission, we had to debate it here in the Legislature. It wasn't just done with a piece of paper on a desk somewhere in a department. It was something that we all had to look at very, very carefully.

I will give a case in point, Mr. Speaker, where the development – I'm sure many of us drive back and forth from Edmonton and Calgary. You see the mall there – right? – the CrossIron Mills. CrossIron Mills was originally designed as a shopping mall but also as a race track, and in order to build that part of it, they had put in a request for an interbasin water transfer to meet the needs, you know, for the animals and so forth for a race track. Well, the kerfuffle that went around that was immense because it was looking at water which was allocated specifically for irrigation in the southern Alberta water basins – the Oldman and the Red Deer River and the Bow and the Elbow and so forth – and moving water across the basin to where CrossIron Mills is located. You don't see a race track there. If you fly over in the approach, you'll see the faint outline of where maybe the race track was going to be, but people rose up against having an interbasin transfer for the sake of that project sufficiently so that the project was abandoned.

You know, we have to look at each water project, and of course there are more people than there ever have been in this province, and there's less water. To look at, for example, an interbasin water transfer amalgamation between the Peace River basin and the Athabasca River basin, that represents more than all of the water flowing through all of the other water systems here in the province of Alberta just with those two systems. In fact, probably the Peace alone has more water flowing through it than all of our other rivers combined.

You know, maybe with just a stroke of a pen here or a vote – right? – we are somehow making accommodation to move that water out of that basin and into other parts of our province. I mean, that is a very, very serious proposition, and there are many people along the way that would oppose that, including other jurisdictions into which that water does flow. We are signatories of the Mackenzie agreement that should determine that a certain amount of flow of water is going through the Mackenzie basin, and of course the Peace River feeds that basin, too. The Peace River estuary in the northeast part of this province is the largest river flowing inland into an estuary in the world.

So it's not just talking about, you know, our interests and business interests and industrial interests here. We're talking about one of the largest water systems flowing into a continental area. It is the very largest one on the entire planet. The only other one I could think of, which is probably the second-biggest one, is the Okavango in Botswana, which is flowing south and flowing into the Kalahari Desert and then absorbing into the desert. Well, the Peace River does a very similar thing, flushing through Wood Buffalo national park, Lake Athabasca, and then flowing north again to the Arctic through the Mackenzie. So we can't just make decisions based on a business proposal to move water here and there and everywhere. We have a responsibility in one of the very largest river systems and freshwater systems in the world.

I see a lot of problems with Bill 7, and I see a lot of people trying to scramble in here to say: oh, well, it's only for minor considerations and, you know, short-term or insignificant somehow interbasin transfers. Well, I mean, none of those things are insignificant, Mr. Speaker, because there's not just a question of a finite resource, which is fresh water, but it's also the ecosystem that each of those river basins does sustain. We have a terrible problem with milfoil and those mussels that you see. We have to pull our recreational vehicles into those areas to try to . . .

An Hon. Member: Zebra mussels.

Mr. Eggen: Zebra mussels. Thank you.

. . . wash those things off. I mean, that is a mitigation that would only be exacerbated a million times by having interbasin water transfers.

We see lots of different species being introduced that are invasive, you know, clogging up with weeds and seaweed and sort of freshwater weeds and so forth and nonnative fish and making quite significant disruptions to our ecosystems even without interbasin water transfers. These are considerations that we need to have as well, and Bill 7 simply just seems to have a sort of flippant approach to those things and simply doesn't meet the requirements of the gravity of the situation when we're talking about managing our water for life here in the province of Alberta.

Another issue that I see straight away is that, you know, it says that it would simplify the water licensing process. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have never seen any water licence process considered to be simple. I mean, people fought battles over water licences in the past. It's something that defines between southern Alberta, which is one of the most productive agriculture areas, probably the most productive agriculture area in Canada – it is because it's irrigated. If you see a piece of dryland quarter in southern Alberta that's irrigated or nonirrigated, it's like night and day, obviously, both in the value of that land, the productivity of that land, and just the value of that water that's invested in each of those quarters to create, as I say, the most valuable industrial agricultural area in Canada, quite frankly.

Just to say, "Oh, we can simplify the water process," well, you know, there are people lining up for that water. I told you the story of the CrossIron Mills and the horse racing thing there. I mean, that got stopped by the irrigation people – for sure – because they said: that's our water, that's our water licence, and you're not moving it between basins, because it's the way we run our business. That same model applies completely to all the rest of our rivers and lakes and estuaries and wetlands across this province.

Already, you know, historically you can see – I mean, blame the first homesteading farmers and so forth who were just trying to make a living and whatnot. But I know that east of Edmonton, towards Tofield, where my family homesteaded, and further along, Bawlf, Alberta . . .

Member Irwin: Yeah. Shout-out to Bawlf.

Mr. Eggen: You might know that place, right?

I mean, back in the early part of the century there was a pretty robust fishery there between, you know, the different lakes like Hay Lakes and Cooking Lake and Miquelon and so forth. That was a sort of an uninterrupted wetland that was changed very significantly for agricultural purposes. Now, it is what it is, and I mean, the Eggens were part of that, I'm sure, when draining the land to have a field.

But, you know, here in the 21st century you have to have a much more holistic and careful look at how we're managing our water systems. It's not just based on an economic model. You can't do that because water is a finite resource. It's the single most important resource. I'm going to have some right now, just talking about water. It's so good. North Saskatchewan River water. It's the best water ever anywhere.

I mean, how easily we can just assume that fresh, good-quality drinking water is available to us in all seasons. We saw last year, for example, last spring in the Crowsnest, that the rivers dried up, right? The Oldman River pretty near entirely dried up. The Crowsnest River did dry up. They had to dig in with backhoes to create some pools to have enough water for people to drink, and there wasn't enough to drink. They had to truck it in, too.

10:00

So, I mean, we know we're in a drought. We know there's a shortage. This bill does not accommodate for, you know, just how you can somehow look at it not just as an economic piece for growth and for industry but for all of us to survive here in the province of Alberta. Yes, there's enough water, but we have to be pretty darn careful on how we use it. Yes, we have a number of world-class water basins that are here for agriculture. They're here for our forestry. They're here for industry as well. I mean, fracking is part of what we do here in the province of Alberta, but we just have to be careful to make sure that the water comes through, goes through a water cycle, and it's not lost to us forever.

Another big concern I have, Mr. Speaker, you know, living next to the United States of America, is that they talked a lot in the last election about Canada being a giant faucet of fresh water that they can turn on and off for their own purposes. Well, excuse me, but the last time I saw, we don't sell water to the United States of America. We need the water here in the province of Alberta and Canada, and we shouldn't be selling water to the United States of America. That's another form of interbasin water transfer, isn't it? Right? That's another water basin.

Maybe we share one water basin with them, with the Milk River. I believe the Milk River flows into the United States and into the Mississippi, right? I've always thought about canoeing. That would be a great canoe trip. You know, you go from Alberta into the Mississippi. I think someone has done that although the Milk River: you have to really pick when you're going to canoe that one because it dries up pretty fast, too, in the summer. Anyway, my point is that selling water or moving water between basins: there's an extension of that, which is a very strong international interest by the United States of America for Canadian water, which would be, I think, a very detrimental interbasin water transfer. Wouldn't you agree? Absolutely.

At the very best this bill is fraught with peril. I need, actually, more talk. I'd like to ask the minister about it. You're talking about the movement of untreated surface water between basins or even just between other places for different uses. The biggest single place in this province where we have contaminated water, where not one drop has been processed or somehow brought back or recycled back into other use, is the tailings ponds in Fort McMurray – right? – literally something that you can see from space. I mean, you can see everything from space now because they have pretty good cameras, but these are very large reservoirs of water that have not been recycled or restored at all. They like to talk about it. They'll put some dirt on top and they'll put some buffaloes around them and say: oh, yeah; we restored that part. No, they didn't.

The tailings ponds are sitting there just as they were the day they dumped it in. The water is getting higher and higher, and now they talk about interbasin or moving contaminated water for other uses. I don't know, Mr. Speaker. Really, I need the minister to explain it to me because they're talking about, like, moving polluted water from what looks like a pulp mill, maybe, and then moving it over to do fracking or something. I mean, it sounds very science-fictiony. I need more information to even consider that, but here it is in this bill as well, and I'm just thinking about the biggest, the mother of all contaminated bodies of water in the province of Alberta, which are the tailing ponds, which need to be dealt with, of course.

Yeah. I mean, I could go on about just the immediate problems. A lot of my colleagues talked about lack of consultation with First Nations people and the lack of consultation between regions, lack of consultation with irrigation systems, and I think we could do better.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Member Tejada: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 7, the Water Amendment Act, 2025. I can see already some of the problems around this bill being around the centralization of power, the lack of oversight, the fact that sweeping changes are being made in a hurry. You know, this creates the opportunity for a shirking of accountability. As some of my colleagues have noted, definitely a lack of real consultation not only across jurisdictions that we've made treaties with, notably other provinces and across the border as well, but also a serious lack of consultation with First Nations, as we are obligated to do.

In talking about water, I mean, wow. What an impactful topic the world over. We live in times of scarcity on many levels, from global conflicts to local shortages, to droughts impacting crops, to flooding, to the lack of potable water in Indigenous communities, to the concerns around water management and just the impact that has on our communities, our environment, and our economy. It's critical. Water is critical to every industry, to things like ranching, which has long formed a critical part of our heritage and identity in Alberta. It's an issue of survival and health for Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Now, listening to the discussion around this bill with great interest and with an open mind, I'm so thankful for the contributions of many of my colleagues here and their insights, I would say, especially from folks like my colleague from Banff-Kananaskis, who, I noticed in her commentary on this bill, was incredibly gracious and generous around the work that was done by the minister of environment. I also note her well-articulated and well-informed cautions on where this bill falls short. I note especially her comments around the Mackenzie River master agreement held with Northwest Territories, with B.C., Saskatchewan, Yukon, and Canada as it relates to the proposed merging of the Peace, Slave, and Athabasca River basins. She referenced in her comments our responsibility to respect interjurisdictional agreements. Really, it's refreshing to see members of this House, especially my colleague, take this approach to agreements that we've entered into. It's a contrast from what we've already seen from this government when it comes to agreements, constitutions, charters. Increasingly what I see is a trend favouring isolation over collaboration.

Just looking at some of the points that have been noted by many of my colleagues here around what Bill 7 does in giving the minister's office the power to approve the so-called low-risk transfers between river basins, where previously any such transfers would have to be passed through the Legislature, I think one of the comments that I saw from my colleague in Banff-Kananaskis is that since 1999, I think, only seven have been done – is that correct? – and each through a special act in the Legislature. That is important because I think it speaks to the importance of making such decisions carefully, to do consultation with municipalities, with First Nations, with all of the territories that we hold agreements with but really also just speaks to the impact and just how huge that impact would be, that we would have to take each one on a case-by-case basis,

have careful consultation done and to have it actually be on the floor of the Legislature and open to debate and also by way of debate giving access to each of our constituents, to all Albertans to participate in that process.

10:10

That concentrated power, an ability to make sweeping decisions, is a real concern here. It reduces democratic oversight. It reduces, like I said, that opportunity for public awareness that these transfers are happening, not just for the communities that are locally impacted or that are in close proximity to where those transfers are happening. We saw this already with coal, when governments take performative measures around consultation or, you know, they poll one community that's close to where the action is happening but fail to consult with the community that's downstream that will actually see the impacts of such decisions.

Merging of river basins should be done based on data, and from everything that I'm seeing here and all of the arguments that I've heard thus far, Bill 7 is not doing that. So there's a risk of water overusage.

We know that we're hearing from First Nations, several, as noted by my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday, that have voiced their concerns as well with Bill 7 specifically around treaty. I was heartened to hear that perspective from my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday. He's well informed by consistent and constant consultation with Indigenous leaders across the province and a deep knowledge and understanding on the cultural and legal matters and our duties as a province to bridge all of these.

You know, of course, in listening to my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday and for many others here and even members from the other side, we come to this phrase: water is life. This phrase is one that I first heard through Indigenous friends advocating for their lifeline, for their water source, for their right to clean, drinkable water, which is still out of reach for so many First Nations and is one of our responsibilities as treaty people, as treaty nations, to ensure that they have access. The phrase "water is life" is, you know, one that really makes sense to a lot of folks as water sustains life. It gives life. It's essential to not only our existence as humans but to everything that is living on our planet. We can consider it the lifeblood of our planet.

There is, however, something else that's underlying this phrase. It's not just a statement of fact. It's certainly not just a catchphrase. It's not a trend. It's not a fad. It's a statement that gained traction as it was repeated and emphasized most notably by the Lakota people in recent memory in their struggle and in their advocacy to the right to their own water source and to have it safe and clean for generations. It's one of those universal truths that I've heard repeated not only by the Lakota, of course, but by Indigenous peoples the world over, including Indigenous nations right here in Alberta.

Now, I've also heard that phrase, "water is life," uttered by members on the opposite side, notably by the former minister of indigenous affairs. I was pleasantly surprised and hopeful that this actually heralded a change in approach from this government when it comes to our responsibility as treaty people. Sadly, what I'm seeing with this bill and with so many others, you know, also brings me back to, again, the Member for Edmonton-West Henday and his bill on reconciliation and how that really needs to be the backbone of everything we do in government. I sure do wish that this government took that approach.

This bill is just another example of not respecting treaty. The phrase isn't just about catchphrases borrowed from stakeholders; it's an acknowledgement of responsibility, and further it's a commitment to stewardship that Indigenous peoples here in Alberta have already been leading on and that we really should emulate. We're treaty people, and it is our responsibility to honour those treaties. Every single person residing in Alberta is a signatory, and as representatives in government we're obligated to work within that framework. As my colleague put it so eloquently, this obligation goes beyond simple conversations.

Consultation is actually a legal framework. It's a commitment that we've made and that this government has so often chosen to ignore. While we see that the UCP claims that Bill 7 is about making more water available to farmers, ranchers, businesses, and growing communities, there are just so many problems with this bill in terms of democratic oversight and accountability, the centralization of decisions, and, again, shirking our responsibilities under treaty. You know, you don't have to take my word for it.

I know that my colleague referenced the Alberta Chiefs Steering Committee on Technical Services. They've condemned Bill 7 already as a direct violation of treaty rights and Indigenous jurisdiction over water and actually called for the government to halt Bill 7. And as one of my other colleagues, the Member for Calgary-Elbow, has stated, when we're talking about the business decisions that rest on our management of water, we pose a serious threat to how they can operate when First Nations are not consulted. The Alberta chiefs steering committee spoke on the lack of legally required consultation, as we've mentioned previously, and the failure to obtain free, prior, and informed consent.

They've talked also about the interbasin water transfers and the merging of the Peace, Slave, and Athabasca River basins. They've talked about the risk in depleting northern water resources. They've talked about permanently altering ecosystems and their concerns around how this might benefit industry at the expense of Indigenous communities. I think, at this juncture, that this is something that is far from acceptable. It's a risk that we cannot take. Being from Treaty 7, I'm also impacted by the words of Troy Knowlton, who is Piikani Nation chief, explaining that this

> government's attempt to fast-track [those] inter-basin transfers,

again saying that they

> will permanently alter our ecosystems,

and in his words,

> they are effectively robbing Peter to pay Paul, while they strip away accountability and minimize Indigenous oversight on [these] decisions that impact our peoples' health, wellbeing, and futures.

From Treaty 6, Chief Vernon Watchmaker has also demanded a halting of Bill 7 and called for this government again to come back to the table and to fulfill their legal obligations in terms of consultation as they establish a modern water management strategy that doesn't just, as he put it, "pray for rain."

In addition to the statements made by several of the treaty leaders, we know that Albertans living in rural and northern communities are also concerned about the risk of loss to local water security if so-called lower risk interbasin transfers are . . .

10:20

The Acting Speaker: Are there others? The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 7, the Water Amendment Act, 2025. You know, talking about water sent me thinking back to some of the experiences I've had that remind me of sort of how important it is and how much we can sometimes take it for granted. I remember in 1995 I had the chance – my parents bought us all plane tickets to go and visit my father's homeland of Trinidad. I was staying at my grandparents' place in the small village of Marabella. It was interesting when we arrived there to find that we only had

running water about four days of the week, so three days of the week there was no running water. We had to depend on the water that had been gathered off rainwater in the cistern out back of the house. You had a bucket of water in the shower and that was how you took a shower, though if you really wanted to have an actual shower, it was the rainy season, so if you went outside at about 3 p.m., you could get a pretty good drenching, a torrential downpour. It was a reminder of how fortunate we are that we have daily, regular access. Any time I turn on that tap, I have access to fresh, clean, pure water.

When I think about water, the other thing I think about is the many summers I spent in the Crowsnest Pass in Alberta. Starting when I was about 13 years old, I started getting a chance to go every summer to this place, Crowsnest Lake Bible Camp on the shores of Crowsnest Lake. One of the things about Crow is that they would give us the opportunity – every camper would get to go on what they called an out-trip, one to three nights, depending on the age of the campers. That involved actually going out and, you know, hiking out into the backcountry in the Crowsnest Pass in the various valleys and passes, literally sleeping on a plastic groundsheet on the ground, tarp stretched over a rope between the trees, cooking over an open fire, and doing some long day hikes up to the top of the mountain valleys, up between some of the peaks. It put a love in me of backpacking and that sort of thing, but the thing I remember most, Mr. Speaker, was the water, the taste of that mountain water when you've been hiking all day and you get to that stream crossing. The beautiful thing is that when you got up there into that backcountry, you could just drink directly out of that creek. I remember going up and actually being up at the bowl at the base of one of the mountains and actually drinking fresh water straight off the snowpack. There is nothing that tastes better than that: incredibly cool, clean, refreshing, pure water.

That is what we want to preserve. That is what is absolutely essential. When we are looking at these amendments to the Water Act, that is what we are keeping in mind. We are all dependent across this province on ensuring that we are protecting the purity of our water; indeed, as we move into a new age of climate, as we see these changes around the world, ensuring that we have enough water for everyone. We know that we are in a position now where we have competition between our everyday use, between uses for agriculture, uses for industry. We have to be incredibly thoughtful and careful about how we ration and apportion our water supply.

So we have Bill 7 here, which is the first amendments to the Water Act since about 1999. It's been a significant length of time, and certainly, as I said, with all of the changing conditions, the growth of industry and agriculture in the province, it's probably long past due that we actually sat down and looked at some amendments. The question is: are these amendments the correct amendments?

One of the concerns that has been raised by the Rural Municipalities of Alberta association and some others is regarding one change in this bill where it defines a category of what's called lower risk interbasin water transfers. Now, currently, Mr. Speaker, if you want to do an interbasin water transfer, it has to come through this House, this Legislature. It has to be debated and considered and voted on. With Bill 7, should it pass, that would change. It will be allowed to be approved simply by the stroke of a pen; a minister with a ministerial order; no debate in the Legislature. Now, we've seen this government on multiple occasions try to do exactly this.

In fact, this government has on multiple occasions tried to give themselves the power to create entire pieces of legislation without ever setting foot in this House. This isn't quite as egregious. But as others have noted, we have seen this centralization of power in ministers' hands without proper checks and balances. I mean, Mr. Speaker, this is not a government that we want to give fewer checks and balances to. We look at the corrupt care scandal. We'll be seeing the DynaLife report this week from the Auditor General. We know this is a government that ducks and covers whenever anyone actually tries to FOIP information. This is a government that needs those checks and balances, especially when we're talking about something like water.

You know, I was talking about the Crowsnest Pass, Mr. Speaker. One of the things we found out about the Crowsnest Pass is that we have serious contamination in Crowsnest Lake from selenium from coal mines, that very lake where I swam as a kid, where I saw people go fishing. They now are telling people: don't eat that fish because it is contaminated with selenium by coal mines in the Crowsnest Pass, former coal mines. This government has gone out of its way, put undue pressure on our independent energy regulators to force more coal mining in the Crowsnest Pass. They do not have respect for the preservation of our water. This same government now wants to award their minister the ability to sign off on interbasin transfers with the stroke of a pen. No oversight. This is not a government, I think, that has demonstrated the kind of judgment that I would trust them with that. Not only this government; future governments.

Again, the checks and balances that are here, the work we do in this place are meant to protect Albertans. They're not red tape. They're not inconvenient speed bumps. They are there to ensure that the decisions that get made are wise and considered. Of course, we know this government isn't a big fan of being wise and considered. They went so far just recently to pre-emptively use the notwithstanding clause to force teachers back to work. Despite the fact that they had multiple other options on the table, they went straight to the nuclear option. Not only that; they again torqued the rules of this place to do that within a single day.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the reason we have these checks and balances, the requirements for these interbasin transfers to come through this Legislature are to ensure that we have proper scrutiny, democracy. While that may be something this government is allergic to, it is something that many are still asking for. The Rural Municipalities of Alberta association has said that they are very concerned by it, in fact oppose this particular measure. Now, they made that quite clear.

Hey, I will give the government some credit on this. Unlike, say, the provincial police force, they actually did consult with the Rural Municipalities of Alberta association. Apparently, prior to the introduction of Bill 7 the RMA says that the government of Alberta did consult on potential changes on increasing water availability for economic development. At that time the RMA expressed their opposition to reducing the approval requirements for interbasin transfers. So I'll give the government credit. They consulted, but that's about the end of the credit because the government did not listen.

The RMA made it very clear early on. The government chose to ignore it. Now, the RMA didn't just talk about it behind closed doors. They actually brought it up with their members, and it was voted on as a resolution in March 2025, where they said, you know:

> Whereas municipalities are concerned that water transfers could have significant environmental and economic impacts, including depletion of northern water resources and the disruption of natural water cycles.

Very similar to the concerns that had been raised by leaders of First Nations in northern Alberta.

> Therefore, be it resolved that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta . . . opposes amendments to the Water Act that would reduce approval requirements for the transfer of water between basins without thorough consultation with municipalities.

It's fascinating, Mr. Speaker, how this government seems to believe that municipalities need to be more and more under their thumb, more and more wrapped up in red tape and exposed to micromanagement, but this government somehow seems to feel that every check and balance, every democratic piece that is on them needs to be removed. Everyone else needs their direct supervision and interference, but they deserve to be able to act without any check or balance, without any hindrance. I suppose they could have just used the notwithstanding clause against their own bill. Maybe that would have worked for them, too, but instead they are bringing forward this amendment to the Water Act.

10:30

I just want to be clear, Mr. Speaker, that there are real concerns about this bill which we have not heard this government address, and for those reasons I currently stand in opposition to Bill 7.

With that, I would adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I now move that the Assembly be adjourned until tomorrow, November 18, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:31 p.m.]

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