



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, December 9, 2025

Day 23

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Al-Guneid, Nagwan, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)  
Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)  
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)  
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)  
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP)  
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC),  
Deputy Premier  
Elmeligi, Sarah, Banff-Kananaskis (NDP)  
Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (AP)  
Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hoyle, Rhiannon, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC),  
Government Whip  
Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Assistant Whip  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
Kasawski, Kyle, Sherwood Park (NDP)  
Kayande, Samir, Calgary-Elbow (NDP)

LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Hon. Martin M., ECA, West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC)  
McDougall, Hon. Myles, ECA, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Metz, Luanne, Calgary-Varsity (NDP)  
Miyashiro, Rob, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Nenshi, Naheed K., Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawyer, Tara, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. R.J., ECA, Highwood (UC)  
Sinclair, Scott, Lesser Slave Lake (Ind)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Tejada, Lizette, Calgary-Klein (NDP)  
Turton, Hon. Searle, ECA, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
Wiebe, Ron, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Williams, Hon. Dan D.A., ECA, Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)  
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Alberta Party: 1

Independent: 1

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk

Trafton Koenig, Law Clerk

Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and

Executive Director of Parliamentary

Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and  
Committees

Aaron Roth, Committee Clerk

Amanda LeBlanc, Managing Editor of

*Alberta Hansard*

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Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Lang Bawn, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Danielle Smith       | Premier, President of Executive Council,<br>Minister of Intergovernmental and International Relations |
| Mike Ellis           | Deputy Premier, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services                                      |
| Mickey Amery         | Minister of Justice   |
| Andrew Boitchenko    | Minister of Tourism and Sport   |
| Devin Dreesen        | Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors   |
| Tanya Fir            | Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women   |
| Nate Glubish         | Minister of Technology and Innovation   |
| Nate Horner          | President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance   |
| Grant Hunter         | Associate Minister of Water   |
| Brian Jean           | Minister of Energy and Minerals   |
| Matt Jones           | Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services   |
| Adriana LaGrange     | Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services  |
| Todd Loewen          | Minister of Forestry and Parks  |
| Martin Long          | Minister of Infrastructure  |
| Myles McDougall      | Minister of Advanced Education  |
| Dale Nally           | Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction  |
| Nathan Neudorf       | Minister of Affordability and Utilities   |
| Demetrios Nicolaides | Minister of Education and Childcare   |
| Jason Nixon          | Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services   |
| Rajan Sawhney        | Minister of Indigenous Relations  |
| Joseph Schow         | Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration  |
| Rebecca Schulz       | Minister of Environment and Protected Areas   |
| R.J. Sigurdson       | Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation  |
| Searle Turton        | Minister of Children and Family Services  |
| Dan Williams         | Minister of Municipal Affairs   |
| Rick Wilson          | Minister of Mental Health and Addiction   |
| Muhammad Yaseen      | Associate Minister of Multiculturalism  |

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk | Parliamentary Secretary for Settlement Services and Ukrainian Evacuees |
| Chantelle de Jonge        | Parliamentary Secretary for Affordability and Utilities                |
| Nolan Dyck                | Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous and Rural Policing              |
| Shane Getson              | Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridor Development              |
| Chelsae Petrovic          | Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement                |
| Jason Stephan             | Parliamentary Secretary for Constitutional Affairs                     |
| Ron Wiebe                 | Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (North)                       |
| Justin Wright             | Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (South)                       |
| Tany Yao                  | Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development    |

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Yao  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Johnson  
Ellingson  
Kasawski  
Kayande  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Wiebe  
Wright, J.

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Wiebe  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach  
Boparai  
Bouchard  
de Jonge  
Elmeligi  
Hoyle  
Stephan  
van Dijken  
Wright, J.

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Gohring  
Batten  
Getson  
Haji  
Johnson  
Lunty  
Sawyer  
Singh  
Tejada

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Lunty  
Deputy Chair: Ms de Jonge  
Chapman  
Cyr  
Dyck  
Lovely  
Miyashiro  
Petrovic  
Shepherd  
Wright, P.

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. McIver  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Yao  
Eggen  
Getson  
Gray  
Metz  
Petrovic  
Sabir  
Singh  
Wright, J.

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mrs. Johnson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Cyr  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Bouchard  
Ceci  
Deol  
Dyck  
Hayter  
Sawyer  
Sigurdson, L.  
Vacant

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Wiebe  
Arcand-Paul  
Bouchard  
Brar, Gurinder  
Brar, Gurtej  
Getson  
Gray  
Sinclair  
Singh  
Stephan

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Sabir  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Lunty  
de Jonge  
Eremenko  
Lovely  
Renaud  
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Sawyer  
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Dyck  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sweet  
Al-Guneid  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Calahoo Stonehouse  
Cyr  
Ip  
Petrovic  
Rowswell  
Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, hon. members. You may be seated.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening sitting, including the first bells in Committee of the Whole.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Motions

#### Time Allocation on Bill 9

20. Mr. Williams moved on behalf of Mr. Schow:  
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Chapman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My low expectations for democratic deliberation have been exceeded by the government's autocratic abuse of the sledge hammer of debate known as time allocation and closure.

I'm quoting a pretty well-known Conservative here, who went on to say:

The purpose of this place is to deliberate... legislation brought forward by the government. It is not to rubber stamp legislation... It is to deliberate, to debate, to amend, to consider, to ensure that those who pay the bills for the legislation we pass have their concerns fully and exhaustively expressed with respect to every single piece of legislation.

Now, that was how 1998 Jason Kenney felt about time allocation, Madam Speaker. Of course, Mr. Kenney fell prey to his own hypocrisy, as so many conservatives do, and by 2011 Mr. Kenney was more than willing to do a complete flip-flop on his values and turn his back on democratic deliberation when it served the purposes of his federal Conservative government.

What is it that this government wants to avoid deliberating, debating, amending, and thoughtfully considering? The removal of the rights of Albertans by overriding the protected human rights in the Charter, the Alberta Bill of Rights, and the Alberta Human Rights Act.

I recall a time when conservatives believed themselves champions for freedom, but for this Conservative party that claims to love freedom so much, the use of the notwithstanding clause is becoming just about as commonplace as their use of time allocation. Where is the party that spoke about the rights of parents? Have the members opposite done one of their classic about-faces on their values, or do parents only have rights if the UCP... [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Chapman:** ... agrees with them? It's all very confusing. Not the least because what parents actually have are responsibilities to

their children to support them, to love them, and, yes, to make decisions for them.

Now the nanny state wants to insert itself into the doctor's office. The nanny state knows what's best for children, not their parents, not their doctors. From the Hippocratic oath, Madam Speaker: "I will not be ashamed to say 'I know not,' nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed for a patient's recovery." Doctors weren't asking government to interfere with the medical decision that should be kept between the doctor, patient, and child. They don't need the nanny state, because doctors also swear an oath to "respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow."

If I were to pick, Madam Speaker, who I would rather be in charge of following the science and developments when it comes to gender-affirming care, it wouldn't be this government or, frankly, any government. We should never play politics with a child's health and well-being, and members who have the privilege to sit in this Chamber should certainly know that.

I suppose when you're trampling on the rights of Albertans writ large the way Bill 9 does, it must seem a paltry thing to trample democracy with debate closure. Sure. Limit debate. Be the most debate-limiting government in Alberta's history. Use time allocation to limit debate and speed up the government's deeply un-Canadian and un-Albertan agenda. On this side of the House we will stand firmly in opposition to the use of time allocation on this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, on Government Motion 20 as proposed by the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 20 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:36 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

|                |            |          |
|----------------|------------|----------|
| Al-Guneid      | Eggen      | Kasawski |
| Arcand-Paul    | Ellingson  | Metz     |
| Batten         | Elmigi     | Pancholi |
| Boparai        | Eremenko   | Renaud   |
| Brar, Gurinder | Ganley     | Sabir    |
| Brar, Gurtej   | Goehring   | Schmidt  |
| Calahoo        | Stonehouse | Gray     |
|                |            | Shepherd |

|         |          |              |
|---------|----------|--------------|
| Ceci    | Haji     | Sweet        |
| Chapman | Hoffman  | Tejada       |
| Dach    | Hoyle    | Wright, P.   |
| Deol    | Irwin    |              |
| Totals: | For – 40 | Against – 32 |

[Government Motion 20 carried]

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

#### 7:40 Time Allocation on Bill 11

21. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 11, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2), is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any of the members to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I was just reflecting on this session and Bill 11 together, and what I see with this particular government is that they have a very similar approach to both public health care, Bill 11, and organizing this session. It's clear that what the strategy was for the UCP in this session was to flood the zone. So many bills on so many different topics, very controversial, most of which the Alberta people didn't want. They didn't want private health care. They didn't want to attack trans rights. They didn't want these bills. They knew it as well, but they chose to maybe put them all together in one fall session, overload the zone, and simply run out of time.

I would venture to say, Madam Speaker, that part of this government's business plan for this session was to use time allocations right from the beginning. There was no question that they could get through all of these bills, unless they have a wildly distorted idea of mathematics or time and space, which could be true as well, I think. I've seen that evidenced in some of their behaviours. But, no, it's probably just the business plan. The business plan: flood the zone, outrageous legislation, and time allocations will come in and save the day.

Well, I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, but that's not the way democracy is supposed to work, and the same strategy is not the way the stewards of public health care are meant to work either. We have had public health care in Canada and in this province of Alberta here basically since after the Second World War and later amended in through the 1960s. It's not just a way to manage health care; it's a way to manage the safety and the security of our population and our society as well.

If you flood the zone, as this government has done, with all sorts of ineptitudes and half-baked ideas about health care – right? – allowing pharmacy and vaccinations to go off the rails, driving public health care in the ditch for the last six years, then of course, the outcome is self-evident. You will break the public health system. It's under strain all across Canada and all throughout the places in the world where we have public health care, but most governments at least try to put in a valiant effort to change, and some of that change takes time. It's easy to destroy public health care, and it's very difficult to put those pieces back together.

We will do so. As the government in waiting on this side of the House, we will fix public health care. We know it's not easy, and it will take time, and it's expensive, but where better to invest public

dollars but into the population of Albertans themselves? To make sure that they have public health care when they need it for themselves and their family, to make sure that their lives are not interrupted by catastrophic injury, or if it is, we all pool those resources together to make sure that we look after each other.

It's not just some kind of woke, namby-pamby, oh, we've got to care Care Bear kind of thing. It's a hard-nosed economic fact that if you look after your population, your economy will do better, too. People will be able to know that they're going to be looked after if there is a small injury or a small illness or a catastrophic illness, too. That doesn't just happen to the individual that experiences that but all of the loved ones and people around them, around the business, the people who work together to know that they will be looked after.

Now, with private health care this is stepping over a precipice from which it's very difficult to bring back. We will do so, but it won't be easy. We know that Albertans, by a vast majority, want to make sure that their public health care is there for themselves and for their families when they need it. Anything less than that is an abrogation of the responsibility that we have to ensure the safety and the security of the population of Alberta.

Time allocations. As I said before – right? – the management of this fall session has been a gong show. Crazy bills, not enough time: let's bring in time allocation and stumble through into Christmas. The management of our public health system has been very much the same over these last six years, and we are here to make sure that we fix it when we form the next government here in the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 21 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:46 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

7:50

Against the motion:

|                    |           |                 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Al-Guneid          | Eggen     | Kasawski        |
| Arcand-Paul        | Ellingson | Metz            |
| Batten             | Elmeligi  | Pancholi        |
| Boparai            | Eremenko  | Renaud          |
| Brar, Gurinder     | Ganley    | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej       | Goehring  | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Gray      | Shepherd        |
| Ceci               | Haji      | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman            | Hoffman   | Sweet           |

|                                |          |              |
|--------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Dach                           | Hoyle    | Tejada       |
| Deol                           | Irwin    | Wright, P.   |
| Totals:                        | For – 42 | Against – 33 |
| [Government Motion 21 carried] |          |              |

#### Time Allocation on Bill 14

25. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 14, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, this motion is a shining example of this government's utter arrogance and entitlement but also their fear and desperation. I mean, it's an act of legislative cowardice. To be clear, this UCP government is putting forward a motion to restrict debate on yet another sampler pack of legislative amendments awarding themselves both more power and control and less accountability for how they use it mixed in with a handful of political favours for their friends, though with friends like Alberta separatists I don't know that they need any enemies.

But let's not forget that this bill also includes the ultimate self-deal. This bill says that they're the only party that gets to call themselves conservative. I mean, no wonder they hid this bill and waited to introduce it till just before the end of session and then bring in this motion to limit the debate. I mean, it's embarrassing.

This government is so afraid of Albertans, of the Law Society, of their own party members that they have to pass a law to grab more power to try to protect themselves, so incredibly partisan that they amend legislation just to help their friends. But they're so bad at legislating, they had to come back six months later and amend it again to get the results they want. I mean, it's pretty telling that with all the power they hold, all the new power they continue to award themselves, they still constantly sit here and play the victim. It's like a toddler hoarding all their toys for themselves and then crying when they get their hand slapped or when others reject them.

They want all the power but none of the responsibility, all of the benefits of being in charge with none of the accountability. That includes the accountability of this Legislature, which they're limiting yet again with this motion for closure. By the end of this session it looks like they'll have moved time allocation motions 84 times in their six years in power. That's 54 per cent of all the time allocation motions moved in the 120 years since this Legislature first started sitting on November 9, 1905. But, again, that's just part and parcel of the arrogance and entitlement that's the hallmark of everything this government does: their fear and their desperation, their blatant self-interest, and their utter indifference and condescension towards anyone who disagrees with them.

Now, of course, the government is going to say, "Well, hey, this is a legitimate tool; it's part of our democracy, the legislative process," just as they do with the notwithstanding clause, which they've now invoked four times in as many weeks to strip the rights of Albertans to prevent them from being able to challenge this government's decisions even as they strip us as opposition of the opportunity to do our jobs and represent those same Albertans this government is shutting out in giving their legislation the scrutiny it so badly needs and deserves.

Now, you can ask three questions when it comes to time allocation. You can say: "Well, you know, when they have this kind of opportunity, it's there. Can they do it? Must they do it? Should they do it?" So can they do it? Sure. That's a question of legal authority. Yeah, the rules of the House do allow them to invoke closure. Must they? Well, that's a question about necessity. Is it absolutely necessary for them to do this, Madam Speaker? Absolutely not. It is a lazy move. It is a cowardly move. It is the move of a government that refuses to do the actual work of governing. [interjections]

Now, should they? That's a normative question about the judgment in democratic culture. As we're hearing from members across the aisle, they don't care about democracy. They're saying there: hey, we can, so we should, and we will. They're laughing in the face of Albertans. This is what they're saying to the folks of Alberta. If you disagree with them, they will laugh at them. [interjections] The minister of assisted living and community and social services is telling Albertans that their opinion doesn't matter, that the opposition has no place here, that he and his colleagues should simply be able to do whatever they want, whenever they want, however they want.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you that Albertans are sitting up, and they are hearing this government, and they are saying no, which is why we see all of these recall petitions, which is why we see this government sitting here looking more miserable by the day even as they invoke their closure motions. Even as they laugh and try to act tough and arrogant, we know they are hearing it and they are feeling it.

When we stand here, Madam Speaker, and we speak against this closure motion and as we debate here tonight, we know we are standing up for Albertans in a way this government does not and refuses to. The Albertans that they refuse to hear, to listen to, to represent are speaking up. They are standing up, and they are going to be heard one way or another. We are proud to represent them.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 25 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:57 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

8:00

Against the motion:

|             |           |          |
|-------------|-----------|----------|
| Al-Guneid   | Eggen     | Kasawski |
| Arcand-Paul | Ellingson | Metz     |
| Batten      | Elmelligi | Pancholi |
| Boparai     | Eremenko  | Renaud   |

|                    |          |                 |
|--------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Brar, Gurinder     | Ganley   | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej       | Goehring | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Gray     | Shepherd        |
| Ceci               | Haji     | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman            | Hoffman  | Sweet           |
| Dach               | Hoyle    | Tejada          |
| Deol               | Irwin    | Wright, P.      |
| Totals:            | For – 42 | Against – 33    |

[Government Motion 25 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 12 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2)

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move third reading of Bill 12, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2). This is a money bill.

Madam Speaker, we've heard a lot of discussion on this bill from both sides of the House, and I want to thank all members who participated. Bill 12 takes practical, necessary steps to meet Alberta's needs today while preparing for the opportunities and challenges ahead. It makes important updates, finds better ways to deliver services, and creates the right conditions that will help Albertans succeed.

Madam Speaker, Bill 12 is before this House for a simple reason: Alberta is growing, our economy is diversifying, and our legislation must keep up or get left behind. Albertans expect their government to protect their interests, strengthen the systems they rely on, and position this province for long-term stability and opportunity.

Let me briefly walk you through the changes outlined in this bill. In addition to making some necessary housekeeping amendments, Bill 12 proposes changes to the Securities Act, including protecting companies from unfair lawsuits related to climate disclosures, creating penalties for spreading misinformation that can distort markets and harm everyday investors, and giving the Alberta Securities Commission the authority to halt trading when false information is circulating that is impacting stocks. These reforms help safeguard the integrity of our markets, protect investors' savings, and ensure Alberta remains a competitive place to invest.

Bill 12 also provides stronger tools to combat contraband tobacco. The legislation protects honest, law-abiding business owners from competing with black market criminals, and it reduces the availability of contraband tobacco products for young people. This is about strengthening public safety, supporting small businesses, and upholding the rule of law.

Bill 12 also lays the groundwork for a data centre levy because if international corporations want to use Alberta's power, land, infrastructure, and services, then Alberta taxpayers deserve their fair share. Data centres have the potential to bring big investment, good jobs, and long-term economic growth, but they also have the potential to place real demands on our provincial services. This framework ensures that when companies come here, benefits fall back to Albertans because with our competitive taxes, reliable energy, and cold climate Alberta remains the best place in North America to invest.

Madam Speaker, Bill 12 also proposes amendments to the AIMCo act. These amendments remove any potential liabilities tied to the volatility trading strategy that operated from 2018 to 2020.

This is about protecting taxpayers. It shields Albertans from significant financial risk, prevents future legal costs over past investment losses, and ensures AIMCo is fully focused on the future. With this change, no pensioner's benefits have been impacted as these pensions are fully funded.

Madam Speaker, Bill 12 also supports disabled Albertans who need the secure income but also want the opportunity to work. This bill would make the necessary legislative changes to enable the Alberta disability assistance program, or ADAP. This program will allow for the highest employment income in the country, meaning people on ADAP can earn more from working while continuing to receive benefits. These changes reflect a simple principle: Albertans deserve the dignity of work, and they should never be held back from opportunity due to their disability.

Bill 12 also modernizes the Public Trustee Act and the Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act. These systems support some of the most vulnerable Albertans. When a person turns to the public guardian or Public Trustee, they deserve access to timely, reliable service. The amendments reduce unnecessary delays, improve oversight, and ensure decisions are transparent. These changes serve the best interests of the individuals these offices serve.

We're also making amendments to the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. These changes don't alter policy, and they don't reflect a new position or approach to the AIOC. Instead, we're providing certainty that Alberta's government continues to financially back the AIOC now and into the future.

These amendments also formalize a reasonable monthly stipend for parliamentary secretaries and move all payments to the Legislative Assembly Office for full transparency and consistency. Parliamentary secretaries take on substantial extra responsibilities from added meetings to major policy work, and it's only fair that their increased workload is properly and modestly compensated.

Finally, Bill 12 increases the annual funding limit for the Alberta heroes fund for first responders. This recognizes the ultimate sacrifice made by fallen first responders and ensures their families receive timely and meaningful financial support at the most difficult time.

Madam Speaker, Bill 12 reflects what Albertans expect from their government: discipline, responsibility, and a clear plan for the future. These amendments strengthen economic stability, protect the vulnerable, uphold public safety, and ensure Alberta remains a magnet for job creators and investment. This bill is not about one ministry or one year; it's about building systems that work for all Albertans across the province. It prepares Alberta for the opportunities ahead and ensures the benefits of our growth are felt by families, businesses, and communities across our province. Bill 12 is a thoughtful, comprehensive, and forward-looking piece of legislation.

With that, I move third reading. I encourage all members of this Assembly to support it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 12 in third reading, Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2).

You know, obviously, here we are again under extreme pressure to jam through all kinds of legislation, most of which now are omnibus bills. For a lot of people it doesn't mean much, but this is just one more way that this government just continues to erode democracy and reduce transparency. It puts all kinds of changes into a bill. I think we heard the minister talk about that we've got a data centre levy, climate disclosure, contraband tobacco, and we're



changing the lives of 80,000 severely disabled Albertans, all in one bill that we can jam through here late at night, after 8 o'clock at night, so here we go.

Before I get going, if anybody – and we have heard all kinds of weird information from the other side about what this bill does in terms of creating ADAP and what it does to AISH. What I will encourage anybody watching is to do your own fact-checking. Just go to the Alberta Assembly site, or you can just Google Alberta disability assistance program in Alberta, and the information is all there. It's quite clear and tells you exactly what will happen.

**8:10**

Now, we've talked a bit about why this is a deeply ableist program, and I think it's really important to stop here and to recognize this again. At the core of what's going to happen here with this legislation is a mass reassessment. So basically everybody from AISH is going to move to a new program called ADAP in July 2026, and then there will be a reassessment about who goes where. Do you go back to new AISH or do you go back to AISH employment that they're calling ADAP? That's a reassessment. That's a change and a decision.

That is people, adjudicators – I don't know who these people are going to be, Madam Speaker, because the government has not said. Is it a private company that they're going to hire to do this work? Is it new people that they're going to temporarily hire to do this work? Is it existing employees? Will it go to another ministry? We don't know. They're going to be making these decisions, and the ableist decision that they will be making boils down to two things. Do they decide: are they employable, or are they unemployable? That's really it, and that is deeply, deeply ableist. We're going to have people decide – very complex human beings with severe disabilities, they're going to make that decision. Are you employable, or are you not employable? That is your worth.

Now, AISH is a program that was meant to provide stability for Albertans with severe disabilities. It also provides some stability for people that receive a palliative care label. Now, this government has been clear. There are some people that are automatically, after getting moved to ADAP, going to instantly go back to AISH because somehow this government has determined that they're eligible already. We've not seen the regulations. We've not seen that spelled out. That is the group that is palliative, so they are in that state. They have no insurance. There's nothing left. There's no private savings left to support them. They have nothing left. They go on AISH. This group will automatically go back.

The next group is the group that they decide is profoundly disabled. Do you see how they're freely using these different words: severe, profound? We don't really know what that means. We don't know who's going to decide what that means because it's all secretive, behind closed doors. Once again this is a government that has not consulted and is creating a two-tier system.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, I want to identify why it is that I'm stuck on these words and why I keep going back to why words are so important. The way that this government is spinning the use of these words is actually quite alarming. Let me see if I can explain this clearly. So right now and until July 2026 the UCP government will define eligibility as a person with a disability that has substantial limitation in their ability to earn a livelihood. That's how they're defining that right now. Now, is that subjective? You betcha it is. It is very subjective because I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that every disability is just unique, is very, very different.

You know, there's a saying in the autism community, and there are thousands and thousands of people diagnosed with autism

spectrum disorder, and that saying is that when you meet one person who is autistic, you've met one person who is autistic because there are no things that sort of span all categories.

Now, that's AISH until July of 2026. Once we hit July 2026, the UCP will define eligibility. Here's where the change happens. They'll define eligibility as a disability that results in a permanent inability to work. So we're going from substantial limitation to permanent inability to work. Now go back to: we don't know who is going to decide these things. We don't know who's going to say, "You are employable; you are not employable," but now they're juggling around the words. Permanent inability to work: that's AISH after July 2026.

Now, what they fail to tell you is that AISH, until July 2026, already has the ability for people with disabilities to work if they can. It's not a lot of money that they can retain monthly, but they can work and earn up to just under \$1,100 a month to augment their AISH income. That allows the dignity of work that this government has been crowing about. AISH has always allowed that. In fact, it was in 2018 that an NDP government raised that earning limit to just under \$1,100.

Now, here's the rub. ADAP after July 2026 basically is really just called AISH employment. The core benefit will instantly be reduced by \$200, but this government says: "Don't worry about it. It will be great because they can work." Here's their definition of the ADAP program. Here's eligibility, here's what we know: someone with a severe disability with some ability to work. Let me define some ability to work. Certainly, there's an equation that they've identified that they can earn a certain amount before their income is reduced, but for the most part, Mr. Speaker, people with disabilities are on this program or receiving these benefits for a reason because their disabilities are complex enough that they permanently impact the rest of their lives.

I am quite sure that the vast majority did not grow up thinking: yeah, that's something that I want to be on when I get older, to be on a program that is incredibly restrictive. It is incredibly difficult to get on. It's incredibly difficult annually when you have to renew and reprove that you need things. It is a tough program to be on. It is not an easy program to be on.

Now, what is the difference between the two programs? Well, I have real problems with the fact that this is a mass reassessment. Government likes to say: no, it's not. Call it whatever you want: changing your mind, getting assigned to a new program. I'm calling it reassessment because that's what it is. That is what is happening and what will continue to happen until July. The big change, the only change really, is that they will get their income reduced by \$200. Remember, they already all had the ability to retain employment earnings.

This government did not consult. They did not consult their own experts. We had an open letter from 19 previously appointed members to the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities that said: stop; this is dangerous; people will be harmed. Most of those folks were appointed to the Premier's council by Conservative governments. We have had advocates stand up and say: please stop; this is dangerous. We've had constituents from all over the province – I bet you there is not one constituency office in this province that did not receive an e-mail from an AISH recipient saying: "Please stop. I'm really afraid. I can't lose \$200. I don't know where I'm going to find a job." Every single constituency has people with disabilities. They all have families, and they all have loved ones. At least I hope they do.

Over the last couple of weeks we have tabled proof from academics, from legal experts, from people with lived experience, from their supporters, from communities, from people with no

vested interest, and all of them are saying the same thing: this is spin and it's going to harm people; stop.

You know, this government will say: but it'll be okay; people will work. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? If I could snap my fingers and there would magically be jobs for everybody that wants them and is capable of having them and has transportation to get to the job and can get in the building and has the accommodations they need, I would be thrilled. I'd be thrilled. That would be, like, the happiest day ever, but that is not the reality. Even if you only took 16 per cent of AISH recipients who currently work, even if you just took that little piece – what is it, like, 20,000 people? – if you took that little group and said, “Poof; go find work,” where are those 20,000 jobs going to come from?

I'll tell you that finding an accessible and inclusive job – I did this for many years. I can comment on this. Finding and matching appropriate jobs with employees, getting them to the place that they can manage these jobs requires a lot of skill and effort. When it works, it's awesome and it's beautiful and I love the work, but it's difficult to do. Thinking that magically we will have thousands of jobs by July 2026 is ridiculous, but more than ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, it's dangerous. It's very dangerous. Throwing millions of dollars at an employment preparation program, like this government continues to say they're going to do: what is that going to do? We already have these programs. If you go to their annual report – the 2024 annual report is clear – their target is 67 per cent, and they didn't even hit it. That's three months after finishing a program. For that whole time people have lost \$200, still don't have the job, but life is better. It is not better. It is dangerous. This is a dangerous move.

I wanted to maybe remind members of this House, because I think it's been a while since most of us lived on under \$2,000 a month. I used AI, because, you know, that's what we do now. I asked them: for a single person with a disability, not a profound disability, sort of an average disability, living in the Edmonton area, a single, independent person, can you give me just a rough estimate of what their budget would look like on AISH? Sure. Housing, \$1,200 a month; utilities – heat, water, electricity – \$150 a month; Internet, \$70; groceries and food, \$350. It's a little bit higher, Mr. Speaker, because most people can't drive. Particularly in the winter wheelchair users have a hell of a time. They have to use apps that cost money to get their groceries delivered. Transportation, bus pass – God forbid you live outside of a big city, then you're using Uber or something. And then disability-related expenses at a mere \$70. That could be for equipment. That could be for the lube that is no longer covered by aids to daily living for catheter equipment because this government cut it. That could be to pay for or to save up for a new battery for your wheelchair. That might be for new clothes for a job interview. Who knows what that is, but the whole budget comes to \$1,940 a month. So let's take \$200 off that until they can find a job to make life better. What do we cut? Where do we cut? Food? Do you just, like, get a tent? Do you go live in an unsafe place? Do you just say, “Screw it? I don't need that medication.” What do you do? Where do you cut?

8:20

This government is giving their parliamentary secretaries more money to make it fair. They got more money for their housing allowance to make it fair and affordable. But they say about AISH recipients living on \$1,900: “That's generous enough. Let's cut it another \$200, and tell them they can work. Call it a day.” That is deepening poverty. That is dangerous. I know people talk about harming themselves daily. It's horrific. The jobs aren't there. This is deeply dangerous.

I urge every single person in this place: look inside yourself. Think about it. Maybe you're wrong. Maybe you got this wrong.

Look at the facts. Are you okay cutting income from really vulnerable, severely disabled, low-income Albertans? You already clawed back their Canada disability benefit that was meant for them. Now you're going to cut their AISH income by \$200. Make it worse and stand up and say: “No, no, that's not what we're doing. This is to make life better.” Well, that is balderdash. I urge all members – all members – to look inside yourself beyond the politics, beyond the party politics.

I am quite sure that every single person in this place knows somebody that has been forced to live on AISH. They have no other way to support themselves. They don't have a family to help them. They don't have an employment income to support themselves. They're just on AISH. Think about that person. How are they going to survive with \$200 less? How is that going to be finding a job for them? Think about that before you vote. I urge everybody to vote no and just defeat this awful omnibus bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 12 and, in particular, the changes this government is proposing to make to the AISH program and this new program they're creating, ADAP. I have a lot of folks in Edmonton-City Centre who are on AISH. The folks we hear from a lot at my office, they need help. They need support. Some of them, actually, they're good folks. There are some that send me regular letters, they send us jokes, they're friendly, they ask for help. But you know what? Sometimes they just want to connect with folks, too. So we build a real relationship.

I also have a number of organizations that support people who are living on AISH. You know, I had the chance back in September to visit one of those local organizations that supports and advocates for people that live with a disability. They do great work. They told me about some of the impacts of the change that was in place then, this government's decision to claw back \$200 from every individual on AISH, forcing them then to get that money back by applying for the Canadian disability benefit.

Now, when I talked to the folks at that organization, you know, they told me they had seen an incredible surge in calls. They told me that they went from 403 calls received in August to over 4,000 in September. They discovered that when folks were calling the AISH offices and they had questions about this transfer to the Canadian disability benefit and how to navigate and what they had to do, they were telling them to call this organization for help. That's what the government agents were doing.

Now, I don't blame those agents, those operators. I know this government has made a lot of cuts. They put them in a difficult position. They are strapped; they are struggling. It's another example of how this government downloads its responsibilities onto others, so this organization is struggling to keep up with this incredible call volume. I asked them, “So, you know, of the folks you're talking to, how many understood what was going on? How many felt that they were blindsided by this change?” They said about 75 per cent of the folks that called them were completely caught off guard because, Mr. Speaker, folks on AISH have some challenges. They have some challenges keeping up with e-mails, reading letters, understanding, comprehending, but this government doesn't think about these things when it makes changes. We've seen how badly they communicate with just everyday people, how little they actually consult, and when you're dealing with folks that are living with disabilities – some developmental disabilities; some physical disabilities – they have challenges and this government does not appear to have made any significant effort to ensure those

individuals understood what this government was doing to them, so this organization is left picking up the slack.

They told me about one man they talked to, the man with one leg on AISH. He applied for the Canadian disability benefit and was told he didn't qualify. He called AISH, and he was told he should just reapply. He had spent \$400 on getting a doctor to go through that process and sign off and everything with him, and AISH refused to reimburse that amount because he'd been denied for the CDB.

The fact is, what we have seen already from this government is that when they make changes to the AISH program – as you know, a few years back they decided they were just going to move the day on which they were going to pay folks their AISH payment simply so they could save a few dollars on the books, Mr. Speaker, and make things look a little better for themselves. We saw the chaos that caused for so many people: the overdraft, the issues, the costs, the fees. This government puts its own interests first and doesn't think about the impacts for other people, including vulnerable people who are just getting by on AISH.

That is what we've seen with this process with the Canada disability benefit. This government rushed ahead to make sure they were covering their bottom line, to make sure that they were getting what they needed, but they appear to have done a pretty poor job of actually helping with that transition, making that a smooth process, trying to make sure it didn't have negative impacts for the people that actually live on AISH.

When I hear my colleague from St. Albert talk about what she's hearing from the community about their concerns about this government's plan to shift everybody off AISH and onto ADAP and the minister says: "Hey, we're not dismantling AISH. We're not blowing it up." Well, it's true; they're just emptying it out, clearing everybody off the rolls, and then they'll decide who they want to let back on, and Mr. Speaker, when I hear her talk about the concerns she's hearing and the lack of information and the lack of clarity, the uncertainty, and then I hear the minister stand and say that she's wrong, I know which of the two I'm more likely to believe. That's my colleague from St. Albert. Because we've seen it over and over with this government, every single file they touch, that they do not consult, they do not provide information.

On my own file, Public Safety and Emergency Services, I've heard how little actual conversation, consultation, how much uncertainty everybody in the system has around this minister's creation of an Alberta provincial police force. They don't talk to anybody. They just make moves and expect everyone else to fall in line. [interjections] So when we are talking about the ADAP program – and the member over there says: oh, yeah, at least we're making moves. Yeah. Sure. Step on people's toes, crush people's incomes, create chaos in their life: great moves.

Mr. Speaker, it is actually possible for a government to accomplish and do things and bring people with them instead of stepping on them. This government is so busy trying to rush ahead with all these great big ideas and ideologies that they don't give any consideration to the impact it actually has on people, and in the process – you know what? – they are blowing up systems, all kinds of programs, all kinds of impacts for people. That is why I am deeply concerned by the manoeuvres I see in Bill 12 here and what this government intends to do with the AISH program.

I hear the concerns from people who e-mail my office every day, and when the Member for St. Albert stands along with community advocates like Zachary Weeks, they are not fearmongering. They are not creating this uncertainty. They aren't doing the minister wrong because he's trying so hard to communicate with everybody and they're getting in the way. They are trying to fill in a significant gap where this government is not communicating with people on

AISH, is not providing certainty, and where what the minister stands and says in the House does not match with what he publishes on his website.

Mr. Speaker, the last people who need that kind of chaos, that uncertainty, are people who are already living hand to mouth, who are struggling every day just to get by. It's unfortunate the disrespect we hear from this government when they talk about, "Well, this is what AISH was paid in 2015 and this is what we're paying now," and misrepresent the entire process by which we came to actually index that program.

8:30

There's been an awful lot of inflation since 2015, Mr. Speaker, and the fact is that we passed the law that set up the indexing. It didn't get in on our budget because it came the next year, but we set it up. When the UCP came in, they immediately took it away. The significant increase that happened out of the gate was because we set that up in the legislation to catch up on what they would have gotten between 2015 and 2018. So the minister can be as disingenuous as he wants on the record. We know the facts, and so do folks on AISH. It might play nice in question period, not so much in reality.

I wanted to have this opportunity to speak to this bill, Mr. Speaker, because I want to speak to my constituents who reach out to my office who have these concerns, these good folks who are just trying to find a way to have a good life, who somehow find some joy, a joke or two, community. The Member for St. Albert, Zachary Weeks, these folks have created a space where people feel supported, where they can actually talk to other people who are struggling like them. When they hear from the Member for St. Albert, they see someone who actually cares. They don't see that when they look at this government, this government that just creates chaos in their lives, uncertainty, more difficulty.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. It's not just these individuals. It's their family, it's their friends who see how this government is treating the people they love. They're not going to forget that alongside all the impacts they've had on teachers with the notwithstanding clause, the impacts they're having on health care workers, the impacts they're having on trans Albertans. People know people, and people talk. This government is digging itself a bigger and bigger hole in terms of its credibility with Albertans. Bill 12 is just another example of that.

Now, we could hope this government would have some sense, some empathy, some care. They're going to ram this bill through. We know that, Mr. Speaker. They've got the majority. That's what they do. But I sure hope in the months to come the minister and his staff really step up their efforts to provide some real communication to Albertans who live on AISH, who live with a disability about what's coming, how it's going to happen. I hope they do a better job than they did with the CDB because that's what those folks deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 12, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2), an act that – I mean, we see it all the time. I think the difference with this one is that there are pretty significant changes here that probably should have been done as their own pieces of legislation and not necessarily one big one, but I want to focus on a couple of things throughout the bill.

The first I would like to chat about is actually the heroes fund. I'm happy to see that the government has decided to increase the

fund. This was something that I feel that both sides of the House were asking for. When the wildfires were at their peak over the last couple of years, when we were having really, really bad wildfire seasons, we obviously lost one of our helicopter pilots in a tragic accident. Then the following season we also lost Morgan, who was a 21-year-old postsecondary student who was actually from Calgary who was just working for the summer and, unfortunately, got caught just outside Jasper. Those are significant moments in families' lives and have a serious impact on families and their financial stability. The pilot that passed away actually was a father of three children, and it significantly impacted their family when he was no longer because he was the primary financial provider for the family and his wife was staying at home at that point.

The question that I do have that I don't think I've actually heard from the minister – and I recognize this is under financial statutes, but I believe it sits with Municipal Affairs still – is that it's going from \$1.5 million to \$3 million, but I haven't actually heard from the government whether or not that means the payouts are increasing or if the fund is just increasing, if it's an unfortunate thing where we've seen first responders passing away in service and their families being eligible for this fund and if that just means that with more people applying and more families applying for the program, the payout has to be higher or if we're actually receiving a higher payout fund.

Is there an interjection? Minister.

**Mr. Schow:** I thank the hon. member for the question. As the minister responsible for the heroes fund I'm happy to answer the actual number. The paid amount is not increasing but the actual amount eligible. This basically reduces red tape for having to go back through a process. It allows the ministry to disburse this money quickly to make sure families who have suffered this catastrophic and incredibly unfortunate, tragic loss are able to do so with minimal barriers. The amount being disbursed to families who have lost an individual in the line of service is not going up, but the actual fund total is to make sure there's always enough money available to support anyone who's lost their life in service.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that response, just because I do have, obviously, families that reach out and ask and are looking for process. Again, I do think that both sides of the House can agree that this was a good move. That part of the bill I'm okay with.

I found a really interesting fact. I had approached the government a few years ago around the Securities Act, me nerding out on a really interesting part that most people don't actually talk about very often. The thing that's really interesting about the Securities Act for someone like me is that there are levers that the Finance minister can use that can be supportive in helping capital investment for certain projects in the province. I recognize that provincially we have to align with the federal government. We have to make sure that our securities acts are mimicking each other and that we're not creating any type of financial environment that could potentially create fraud.

A couple of years ago I had some agriculture producers that came to me who were talking about looking at trying to create some big projects. There started to become a consistent theme from individuals that were looking at supporting these projects and trying to help them get off the ground, that there is actually a barrier in capital investment and being able to attain capital and being able to match those funds when you go to the bank. If you're not able to demonstrate the long-term return on the investment, the banks are less likely to want to lend you the money to help with your start-up costs.

The problem with agriculture producers and the bigger projects is that sometimes you can't demonstrate that long-term return as quickly because of commodity prices, because of the variables, and different things like that. So I had approached the minister to say: is there an opportunity here for us to look at the Securities Act and to look at our different banks, whether it be ATB, whether we'd be looking at AFSC, and could we amend the Securities Act to be able to support agriculture producers in being able to raise some of that capital dollar to help drive some of these products?

In fact, it happens in other jurisdictions, Saskatchewan being a prime example – more specifically around co-operative models and being able to help do group funding in a co-operative level that the Securities Act can then be able to find some of the amendments needed to create that to happen. We don't allow that to happen here in Alberta. So if a group of individuals want to come together and, let's say, build an abattoir, for example, the Securities Act actually prevents some of that from being able to happen by the way that we have currently built the system.

Part of that is federal, and I recognize that there needs to be a conversation with the feds around it as well. But because the Securities Act was opened, it would have been a great opportunity for the government to go, "Huh. Well, is there an opportunity here?" If we look under section 13(2) and (5), the definition is adding the following to the definition of forward-looking information: "any other disclosure involving future-oriented statements, as prescribed by regulation," which adds a regulation-making authority respecting circumstances when a person or company would not be liable for information disclosure or omitted disclosure in compliance with either the act or regulations. Yada, yada, yada. That is specific to climate-related disclosure. It would have been really great, while we are opening up some of these definitions of forward-looking information, if we could have looked at "how do we create some of these projects?" or if there was another section that could have also been amended while we were amending the act to allow for some of this investment opportunity.

8:40

I just want to flag with the government – somebody has all that information because I gave it to someone once upon a time – that there are opportunities within some of these other amendments that could help with economic growth, job creation, all of those things. The government is aware of them because I have met with ministers to discuss this. I just felt, like, because I was standing here and talking about Bill 12, that I would highlight that piece as well. I just find it interesting that there isn't more in here given that it's a financial statutes act that actually would help with some of that job-creation potential and some of that economic growth.

My colleagues are very good at talking about the impact to AISH. This bill is a lot of cleaning up of a lot of mistakes, I would say, in the sense of, like, the AIMCo debacle and, obviously, the billions of dollars in assets that keep getting moved around and some of the issues that came up under AIMCo that were pretty significant, that I think Albertans should be very concerned about and should probably keep their eye on all of their pension plans. Yet I don't really see – where's the job creation? Where is the opportunity to look at putting money in people's pockets? Where is there opportunity for business development?

It's supposed to be a financial statutes amendment act, and really all I see is that the only people getting money are parliamentary secretaries. Everybody else seems to be losing money in this amendment or has lost money in the past. It's either they lost their money because of pensions, they're going to be losing \$200 because they're on AISH, but if you're a government member, you get a raise. When there was an opportunity to look at some statutes

that could actually be job creators and help economic growth and address some of the capital investment opportunities that businesses are facing in the province and bring us on par with other jurisdictions, that wasn't done.

I kind of think it was a flop, politely. It didn't achieve I think what it could have achieved. In saying that, I won't be supporting the bill. I can't support something that only allows the government to make money in their own pockets and not the rest of Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Member Tejada:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise again to talk about Bill 12, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2). I'll talk a little bit more about the changes to AISH, the transition to ADAP, and some of the implications there. One thing that I didn't really get to speak to yesterday were the many conversations that I've had with constituents, with stakeholders. As MLA for Calgary-Klein I'm very proud to have so many hard-working organizations in my constituency that serve the disability community. You know, I've heard from the workers in these organizations, the people who access the help within these organizations, and the constituents themselves that are calling and e-mailing, people who are family members of folks who are disabled, who are reaching out to our offices, who have been for months in quite a state of distress.

I've heard so much in this House over the last few days about – you know, I've seen accusations lobbed at the members on this side of the House about how we are misinforming people, disinforming people. At the same time I am hearing from disability advocates that were appointed by this government who are concerned with this legislation, who are concerned about the impacts on the everyday ability to survive for folks who are disabled, and what I'm getting as an overarching concept, I guess, or theme from the people who have lived experience as disabled people is that they're already living in extreme poverty.

The nickel and diming by this government, first, forcing them to apply for the Canada disability benefit, having them go through all of the different processes – and these are folks with a range of disabilities. But having seen the paperwork that they've had to fill out, having seen the steps that they've had to take to meet this government's demands in order to have that same \$200 clawed back, the labour that was involved, the cost outlay, in order to satisfy this government so that they could just take that \$200 that they could have used on medications, they could have used on groceries.

I have a constituent with various dietary needs who has to pay a little bit extra because she needs to go gluten free because she's celiac. The steps that this government forced her to go through in order to take the money: it boggles the mind. It adds insult to injury. These are folks who are already struggling, sometimes even with cognitive disabilities, and this is what they are being forced to do. Some of them don't have the supports. They don't have access to folks who can guide them through the process. It's a real shame, and it's something that I'm ashamed to say is happening in one of the most prosperous provinces and one of the most prosperous jurisdictions, I would say, even on our continent. To think that the most vulnerable people, who depend on us, are being forced to work even harder for that little bit of money that they need to survive: it's unfathomable. It's unforgivable.

I would say that the advocates that are working on their behalf, the people that they have backing them up: they won't forget. They won't forget. The arrogance that we have been met with in this House by the side opposite around what this means to people: what

it tells me is that they are either ignoring constituents or they're listening and it's not a concern for them.

One thing I would offer is that if the side opposite believes that folks are being misinformed – you know, some of the folks on the other side know what it's like to be in an opposition caucus. You have limited funds, you have limited resources, and I would say that the government has all of the gears of government available to them. They have communication departments. They have people who can do the work. If they are talking about combating misinformation, they have the tools at their disposal and, I would say, a responsibility . . . [interjection] If the member wants to go on record, he can go ahead and do that.

They have a responsibility to the folks that they serve. If you have an entire government department that is tasked with supporting these vulnerable people, it is your responsibility to ensure that they have the information. If you are upset, you feel they are being misinformed, well, then please do a much better job at informing them because for many of these folks it is life and death.

8:50

So while there's a lot of bluster on this side, while I know that we are in the last few days of session and that people get very heated in here, this is a plea. If you feel that people are being misinformed, then please inform them. Let's practice a little bit more transparency. Let's take a little bit of pride in our work, if you have that pride in your work. That is not served by bluster in this House. That is served by informing the people that you serve, and a much, much better job can be done.

I'll share an e-mail that was shared with me by a disability advocate, someone who is a community advocate who does as much as she can to help others, even in her vulnerable state.

I am writing to you today as a disabled Albertan who is deeply concerned about your government's recent decisions. These policies are making life harder for the most vulnerable people in our province. The proposed changes to the AISH program, particularly the introduction of the new Alberta Disability Assistance Program, are a step backward. Forcing people who are already approved for AISH to re-prove their disabilities is a cruel and unnecessary punishment. This causes immense stress and anxiety for people who are already struggling. Some people on AISH are even considering Medical Assistance in Dying.

I will stress that I am quoting a letter. This is not from me as an MLA.

This does not show respect or dignity; it takes it away. Many of us in the disabled community feel we are being treated unfairly. We are worried that the government's rhetoric about providing more "person-centred" support through ADAP will actually lead to a reduction in crucial benefits and an increase in barriers. While we've been told that AISH is the "most generous" program in the country, many of us are still living in poverty. It's unacceptable that in a wealthy province like Alberta, people with disabilities can't afford basic needs like safe housing and healthy food. Comparing our program to others is meaningless when we aren't meeting the basic needs of our own citizens. I have personally experienced the challenges of the housing system. The recent announcement that tenants on AISH in community housing will now see their rent increase from 17% to the regular 30% affordable amount of their income is devastating. This change, announced alongside the ADAP proposal, shows a lack of understanding of the realities we face. For many, this will force them to choose between having a roof over their head and other essentials. The only thing left to cut from our budget is groceries, which is already a struggle. This will force people to rely on food banks, but for many of us, this is not a reliable option. For someone like me with Celiac Disease, finding safe, gluten-free food at a food bank is nearly impossible. I also have an eating

disorder . . . that makes me a very picky eater. I am not alone in this; many vulnerable people have specific dietary needs that food banks cannot meet. This is a matter of basic health and survival, not just finances. Finding meaningful and well-paying work is also a huge challenge for people with disabilities. New technologies like Artificial Intelligence . . . and the rise of unpaid volunteer work are taking away paid job opportunities, especially those that have traditionally been . . .

Sorry. There's lots of crosstalk over here.

. . . available to us. These trends make it even harder for us to become financially independent. We fear that ADAP will further restrict our ability to earn an income while on the program, trapping us in a cycle of poverty. The government's actions do not align with the values I believe in as an Albertan. We often stand up against unfair treatment from the federal government, but it's hard to make that case when our own government is making life harder for its most vulnerable citizens. This isn't fairness; it's exploitation. History will remember how this government treated its most vulnerable people. A true measure of leadership is how it treats those who are struggling, not just the powerful. I urge you to change course and choose a path that reflects fairness, compassion, and the belief that every person deserves dignity.

I will leave their name.

I guess I leave with that. There's so much more to say. The fact that there is now an increase to the budget of parliamentary secretaries. The fact that this government went ahead and increased the living allowance for MLAs who are from out of town, and that amount was a \$270 increase, and now we're looking at the folks who are on AISH, who have been forced to get that \$200 clawed back, that would have provided some support: another \$200 less on this new program and increased rents.

With that, I urge every member of this House to vote against Bill 12.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it is an honour to get on the record on Bill 12, not because I'm supportive of the content of the bill but because the contents of this bill very much impact the people that I was so honoured to be elected to represent here in this Chamber.

I've talked a lot about my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, which is an incredible constituency with some wonderful people, but we do have our challenges. According to the Legislature Library – shout-out to them – Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has the second-lowest income in the entire province. So you can imagine that every single day in my constituency we hear from folks who are struggling. My incredible office team – I know some of them are watching tonight; hello – deal daily with folks who are on AISH, folks who are struggling with housing issues, who are living in hotels, who don't know where they're going to find their next meal. The list goes on. There are significant struggles with affordability. So when we learned that Bill 12 would be fundamentally impacting AISH and fundamentally impacting my constituents, we knew we had to speak out and fight back.

I'm so grateful, in my remaining minutes here, for all my colleagues and especially the Member for St. Albert, who has been one of the fiercest advocates for folks with disabilities her entire career. I'm just so grateful for her.

I want to just briefly get on the record. You know, I think about the individuals. A number of folks are watching at home right now. There have been so many fantastic disability advocates who've been speaking out, who've been fighting hard. I think about the fact that I got into politics because of people and because of the incredible relationships that I've made and knowing that every

single day in this Chamber the decisions that we make impact those people. I think about Zachary Weeks, who got a few shout-outs tonight, Mike Wing – you know what? If I start listing people, I'm going to feel like I'm missing because I know there are so many of you out there every single day.

I do want to mention one person because his story is an important one to me, and that's my constituent Ian Young, who's been an incredible advocate for disabled Albertans since I met him. In fact, I actually met Ian Young back in 2018, I believe it was. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, was it 2018 – this is mostly me testing to see if he's listening – when the NDP indexed AISH? I believe so.

**Mr. Sabir:** Bill 26.

**Member Irwin:** That's right. Bill 26. See, look at this guy. I just wanted to put him on the spot.

I met Ian Young at that time when the NDP was announcing that AISH and income support would be indexed to the cost of living. It was a move that helped so many, including Ian, only for the UCP to come in the next year, when I was elected, and deindex those programs. I still remember the Premier at the time and a number of these folks on the front bench all voting in support and the Premier at the time saying that it wasn't going to be that onerous, and I just thought: "Holy crow, you need to talk to my constituents. You need to talk to the people that my office works with every single day and hear just how onerous a change like that was." Since then, I mean, it's been a pattern of attacks on disabled Albertans.

To frame this positively, I just think of Ian, and I think of Zachary, and I think of all those advocates out there who are fighting every single day, who are speaking out. But you know what? They're tired. They're tired of having to fight every single day just for basic dignity, for enough money to get by. They're tired, but they don't stop, and they're going to keep fighting no matter what legislation this UCP government continues to ram through without consequence.

9:00

To all those folks out there watching, all those disability advocates, to all the disabled Albertans who are struggling right now: we see you, we love you, and we won't stop fighting for you. With that, I urge all members of this House to vote against Bill 12.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:01 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

|                     |           |                 |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Jean Johnson        | Rowswell  | Yaseen          |
| Against the motion: |           |                 |
| Al-Guneid           | Ellingson | Kasawski        |
| Arcand-Paul         | Elmeligi  | Metz            |
| Batten              | Eremenko  | Pancholi        |
| Boparai             | Ganley    | Renaud          |
| Brar, Gurinder      | Goehring  | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej        | Gray      | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse  | Guthrie   | Shepherd        |
| Ceci                | Haji      | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman             | Hoffman   | Sweet           |
| Dach                | Hoyle     | Tejada          |
| Deol                | Irwin     | Wright, P.      |
| Eggen               |           |                 |
| Totals:             | For – 43  | Against – 34    |

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

#### Bill 11 Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2)

**The Chair:** Pursuant to Government Motion 21, agreed to on December 9, 2025, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of Bill 11, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) in Committee of the Whole.

With that, we will start the debate with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to begin this incredibly rushed hour with talking a little bit about what happened earlier today when a member of the government caucus tried to do a drive-by smear on a very prominent doctor's reputation and misused a number of things that he'd said without context and without – it was interesting because the member referenced that I have a hobby. I like stand-up comedy. I encourage all members of this place to get a hobby.

I will say that in stand-up there's a set-up and there's a punchline. The member was very good with the set-up, but he forgot the punchline, which is that Dr. Meddings said that the market might warrant some consideration except that any time it's been tried, it hasn't worked. It's simple. He says that the reason why it doesn't work is because we have a fixed number of anaesthetists that can't work much harder than they already are, Madam Chair.

I know the minister says, "Well, people will just add more hours and work more hours, and then they'll go in a private system when they're working even more," but the truth is that there are a finite number of anaesthetists working in the province of Alberta and many of them are already working incredible hours and if we prioritize them working in private centres, they aren't available to do their work in the public ones, which deal with the more acute cases, of course. You don't go to Alberta Surgical Group for your cancer operations; you go there for less acute, higher output procedures.

I want to take one of the ministers at their word. We've heard some contrary things about what this bill does. Given that there are multiple ministers, they have different understandings. But I want to take the

Minister for Primary and Preventative Health Services at her word when she says that this will not include family doctors. Therefore, I have proposed an amendment to ensure that is indeed the case, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1.  
You may proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks. I propose that Bill 11 be amended in section 1(12) in the proposed section 8 as follows: (a) in subsection (2) by striking out "A physician may elect" and substituting "Subject to subsection (2.1), a physician may elect;" and then adding to it (2.1), which says "A physician may not elect to practise as a flexibly participating physician if the services provided by the physician include family medicine or other primary care services;" and then (c) in the proposed subsection (3), by adding the following after clause (b), "that the services the physician provides do not include family medicine or other primary care services."

**9:10**

Madam Chair, I know that originally we had the minister for Acute Care say that it would eventually include family physicians. Then we had the Minister for Primary and Preventative Health Services say that it wouldn't include family physicians at this time. We're simply putting forward an amendment for the minister to be able to say it clearly, in black and white, in legislation and for there to be no ambiguity for the people of Alberta about whether or not this means they will have to pay for a family doctor. If we pass this amendment, then we can all say with confidence that the government will not be charging you to see a family doctor because we're keeping family medicine and primary care out of this piece of legislation. The minister might want to say: trust me; we'll do it in legislation. The days of trust are gone, and that's why we're putting forward this specific amendment.

I'll pause on this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other members to join the debate on amendment A1? The hon. minister of health.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the amendment. We have made the commitment right from the very beginning that we would not include family physicians. I don't feel it needs to be in the amendment. We will have it included in regulations and make sure that all Albertans can be confident in that. That is something we have committed from the very beginning. We don't need the amendment to do that because, in fact, that is the commitment that we have made.

Again, I do appreciate the intent of this amendment, but it is not necessary.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'll just close on this by saying: I think it is necessary for Albertans to have confidence that this won't mean that they have to pay for a family doctor, and the best way to do that would be for all members to pass this, which clarifies that family medicine and primary care are not included. Trust but verify. The days of trust are gone. It's time for verification. Let's pass this amendment and get on with it, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members to amendment A1?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**Ms Hoffman:** Let's try the next one, Madam Chair.

To our wonderful page team, please. Yeah, I know. You just finished the last one, and I'm giving you another one. Thank you so

much, Malcolm.

This one's longer, so it'll take me a little bit longer.

**The Chair:** Oh, yeah. It's a two-pager. This will be amendment A2. You may proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** This one is the one that everyone is really going to like, both sides of the House. This one is the rationale upon which the government says that they are bringing in this bill. They say that this is about wait times in the public system, that this is about making sure that everyone can get their surgeries faster, that everyone can see a specialist faster. This very simply covers language that's been in other pieces of legislation around reporting back. This is about measuring and reporting back on the wait times to see specialists, the wait times to have procedures done, for it to be done publicly twice a year around the fiscal year, March 31, the close of that. Then September 30 is the other six-month period for the government to report it publicly on their website and then to table it in the House within – so within 15 days of it being the end of those two six-month periods, it needs to be reported on the website, and then it needs to be tabled in the House subsequent to that. If the government isn't actually achieving what they said this bill would aim to achieve, then they can't continue down this path.

Again, if the government actually says that this is about reducing wait times, this is the best way for us to have confidence that that's actually what this is about. It will require the government to measure those wait times, report on them publicly, and if they aren't achieving any reduction in wait times, then they can't expand upon this path. It's simply going back to the very root of why the government says they want to bring in this two-tiered style of accessing services.

If this truly is about what the minister has said, then she and all members of the government will join us in voting for this. We'll have more transparency and openness, and we will make sure that we stand by the intent of the bill originally.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members to amendment A2? The hon. Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I once again really appreciate the intent of this amendment, but, in fact, we want to go one better than this. We will make sure that we have a public-facing dashboard that will in fact inform all Albertans. They can go onto the website and find out this information. It is our intent to have very robust assessment and audit of the new practices, whether it's participating flexibly, participating or nonparticipating. In fact, right now, under the current way things are run, we have no clue as to what is happening within the private health care realm because they don't report to us.

Under Bill 11 private health care will be reported, and it will be kept separate from the public health care and flexibly participating. We'll keep separate records. They will have to report, and we will be making as much as possible transparent to the public, so this is not necessary. Looking forward to making sure that Albertans have all the information and the transparency they need to judge for themselves if this works in the future.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks. I'm happy for the minister to report more often than what we're suggesting through this legislation. This legislation says twice a year. Why this is necessary is because if it doesn't work, the experiment needs to stop. That's what this says: that if there isn't a reduction to wait times, then the government can't keep moving down an Americanized, privatized, two-tier health care

system.

This is simply a check, and that will determine whether or not the government – again, the government said this isn't paying to see a family doctor. This isn't about Americanization. Well, if it is leading to longer wait times like we see in the United States, then the government needs to pause it and go back to the principles of the Canada Health Act. If the government refuses to do that, then it of course leaves Albertans to wonder and to lead to the common-sense conclusion that the government is indeed trying to push a longer, American-style, privatized, those who can get a shorter line and everyone else gets a longer line.

As Dr. Meddings very clearly said, the number of anaesthetists is finite in this province. This isn't simply about expanding the market to increase more opportunities, because there aren't more opportunities, and asking anaesthetists to just work more overtime is not safe practice, Madam Chair.

Again, I urge all members of the Assembly to vote for this. If the government thinks that they can go even further than that, that's great, but this is really about saying to Albertans whether or not what they said is their rationale is actually their rationale, or if it's about Americanization, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of health.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to speak to the points that have been made by the member opposite, if, in fact, anaesthesia is an area that needs to be looked at, we have the tools within Bill 11 to make sure that we restrict that discipline from being part of the flexibly participating. It is a very nimble system. We've thought through all of those pieces, and if in fact we find that we need to switch gears or do something differently, we have that ability to do it, because we will have that in regulation.

Madam Speaker, we will be compliant to the Canada Health Act. We will fulfill our health care guarantee to all Albertans. So, again, while the members opposite want to create fear that we're going to some form of an American-style health care, that is not the case. We are aligning ourselves much more with Europe, which, in fact, has a dual-practice system that is working, it's functioning, and we will make sure that we monitor ours very, very closely and are nimble enough to make changes as they are needed.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Any others?

The hon. minister of health and preventative services.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to make an amendment to Bill 11, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2).

9:20

**The Chair:** This is not an original. Do you have the original, Minister?

**Member LaGrange:** Yep.

**The Chair:** Okay. This is amendment A3.

Hon. minister, you may proceed.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to begin by acknowledging government's commitment through Bill 11 to protecting access to virtual care and recognizing the role that employer- and organization-funded benefits play in supporting our health care system. This is an important and forward-looking piece of legislation, and the intent behind it is something I believe members on all sides of the House share. It ensures that Albertans can access timely care without unnecessary barriers.



However, Madam Chair, there is a need to change the current drafting of section 1(5) of the bill, specifically the proposed amendment to section 2 of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. As written, the new section 2(3)(c) excludes from insured health services any service that a person is eligible for under a contractor plan established by an employer. The intention is to ensure that virtual services funded through employer or organizational plans are recognized and supported without creating duplication within the public system.

The change, Madam Chair, is that the wording in its current form should be clearer in order to fully achieve that objective. As drafted, the exclusion only applies to benefits provided directly to an employee. It does not clearly include dependants, yet dependants are routinely and intentionally covered under these plans. If the legislation remains ambiguous on this point, it risks creating confusion, uneven application, or unintended gaps in coverage for the families who rely on employer- or organizational-funded care.

Additionally, the current language refers only to plans established by an employer. In today's health landscape, many Albertans access virtual care through group insurance plans or associations that are not tied to an employer at all. These group arrangements cover students, they cover retirees, they cover members of professional organizations, as well as individuals who participate in nonemployment-based plans. Under the present wording these Albertans would be excluded from the bill's intended protection simply because their plans are administered through an insurer or organization rather than an employer.

Madam Chair, we cannot afford the language to leave any gaps that affect Albertans who receive care through these non-employer-based group plans. The amendment I'm proposing today is straightforward. It does not change the policy direction of Bill 11. It simply clarifies the scope of the exclusion so that the legislation functions as intended and applies equitably to all Albertans who receive virtual care through employer-sponsored plans, association-based, insurer-administered, or other group arrangements.

The amendment reads as follows: A. Section 1 is amended (a) in subsection (5) by striking out the proposed section 2(3)(c) and substituting the following:

- (c) a contract, program, plan or arrangement established, maintained in force or renewed by an employer, insurer, association or other organization under which benefits for health services are paid to or on behalf of all or some of
  - (i) the employees, policyholders or members of the employer, insurer, association or organization who are residents, or
  - (ii) the dependants of those employees, policyholders or members,

And (b) in subsection 22(a)(ii) by adding the following after the proposed clause c.01):

- (c.02) defining "insurer," "association," "organization," "policyholder" and "member" for the purposes of section 2(3)(c).

This language accomplishes three important things. It clearly includes dependants, ensuring families are not unintentionally carved out of coverage. It recognizes the full range of modern group health arrangements, including those created by associations and insurers, not just employers, and it aligns Alberta's framework with other provincial models such as Quebec's, where similar provisions ensure consistency between the public and private virtual care environments.

Madam Chair, this amendment is not about expanding or restricting coverage; it is about legislative clarity. It's about ensuring that Albertans who rely on virtual care – employees, their families, members of associations, retirees, students, and others –

are treated consistently under the law, and it is about delivering on the core objective of Bill 11, maintaining access to quality virtual care at no out-of-pocket cost for the many Albertans who depend on these plans.

Just to highlight how many depend on them: approximately 676,000 Albertans accessed virtual care through these types of arrangements in 2023 alone. These are not fringe users. They are families, seniors, and working people across the province who benefit from timely access to services that reduce pressure on our public health care system. Madam Chair, the amendment I'm offering today ensures that Bill 11 delivers its intended results for all of them, and it strengthens the bill. It aligns it with current realities and avoids unintended consequences.

We've also been working collaboratively with the associations that represent these organizations, and I respectfully urge all members of this House to support this practical and clarifying amendment to Bill 11.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm not going to take long, Madam Chair, because we are under time limitation. I just wish that the government, when they realized that their bill had problems that they didn't even like, would have actually fixed their bill outside of the time allocation time, because certainly we have a lot that we would like to be able to offer on this legislation.

This doesn't substantially make this bill significantly worse, therefore I'll probably quietly vote against it, Madam Chair, but it is evidence that the government rushed their legislation and that they themselves aren't even proud of it, that they have to bring in something at this point to try to make it – it's not even going to make it less bad. It just clarifies what their original intention is.

**The Chair:** Any others on the amendment? Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A3 carried]

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for – oh, my gosh; where are you from? – Calgary-Mountain View.

**An Hon. Member:** It's all right, you're both new.

**Ms Ganley:** We haven't been here long, you and I.

Bill 11: this is American-style health care and people will suffer for it. Wait times will get even longer. Those are the facts.

Now, I know, we can hear it happening right now: what if we were to call it Nordic or European or Australian or whatever the latest UCP spin on this matter is to try and confuse Albertans in the hopes that they won't understand what's happening? Well, I think it's because the government knows that if Albertans see this clearly, if they understand where we are going – that people will be turned away because they can't afford to pay; that people will get sicker; that people will be dying from lack of care – they'll oppose it.

They do oppose it. The numbers are clear, but the UCP spin, spin, spin precisely because they know those numbers: the public-opinion numbers, at least. They don't seem to know the health care numbers at all. They know that if Albertans understand American health care, they won't support it. There are a lot of studies on public health care and mixed models. Somewhat ironically, many are from exactly the countries that the members opposite attempt to cite.

The thing is that in many of those countries, studies have been done by adding a pay-for-play tier, and the findings are actually pretty consistent. More investment in the public system, either in a

mixed system or a public system, increases the speed of access. More public is better. The more pay for play, the more the system slows down. There are studies from Australian provinces, from OECD countries, from many, many more. You can take your pick. Europe is definitely not an argument that supports what the UCP are trying to do here because they definitely won't be investing more in the public system. They haven't invested more yet.

9:30

The reason it won't speed up is because the shortage of resources is human resources. It's people. It's physicians, in specific, but also other health care professionals. As we add private medicine, those physicians are being taken out of the public system. It's not a question of adding more. That's not what's happening. Instead, we're adding inefficiencies because instead of triaging people based on need, we're now triaging people based on ability to pay, and that means that the public system, which is left with the more complex cases, slows down.

Okay. Just by way of a thought experiment I want to imagine for a moment – and I'm not going to concede this point – that there's some chance that the UCP might be right, that moving to American-style health care, that adding pay medicine would be helpful, and it's pretty clear that that's not going to be the case. Do we think that the UCP would be the ones to be able to make this work? I mean, generally the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, and the UCP's past behaviour is incredibly clear.

In the DynaLife debacle the UCP – and this is the finding of the Auditor General. It's not something the – well, I guess he's ultimately going to have his contract terminated about it. It's the finding of the Auditor General, and what he found was that in spite of no business plan, no basic due diligence, the department raising very valid concerns, concerns that were not only valid at the time but ultimately came to be the case, the department, the UCP ministers insisted on pushing ahead. The result was Calgarians waiting way longer for their lab tests and \$125 million wasted.

That is the UCP's record. They don't listen to evidence, they don't listen to the valid concerns of people working in the system, they don't listen to the concerns of their own ministry staff, and they push ahead with things that ultimately take longer and cost a lot of money.

We don't have the precise records of decisions on this one, or the Auditor General didn't, because, mysteriously, the records vanished under the UCP's watch. Madam Chair, I will tell you that generally innocent people don't disappear evidence.

Then there was the splitting of AHS into four, five, six, seven – whatever – bunches with no plan. No plan.

**Mr. Schow:** Was that a six seven reference?

**Ms Ganley:** It was. It was a six seven joke.

There was no plan at all for what this government was planning to do, right down to details like the fact that mental health wards within hospitals now had to contract to the rest of the hospital, now to another branch, for food services, for laundry services, for cleaning services, and no provision had been made for any of it. That's just one example. There are a million of these details in a complex system, details that should be thought of before one just rushes ahead with an idea that – I don't know – someone scribbled on the back of a napkin maybe. It seems like that's the way it happened.

And then there's attacking doctors. This government got up there and slandered family physicians. They basically said that they were on the grift. They cut their pay at the same time, and then they were shocked – shocked – and horrified that doctors left the province,

that our residency programs didn't fill. The results we can see all around us: tens of thousands of Albertans now without a family physician. What the UCP is doing now is not going to fix that problem. This is, I mean, the opposite of fixing that problem. It's taking more physicians out of the system, so it will actually be harder to get a physician in the public system.

I guess what I'd say, at the end of the day, to sum up the problems with this bill is that the evidence is clear in basically every instance. You will be hard pressed to find a study that contradicts the basic facts. The basic facts are that the more a government invests in public medicine, the faster the system goes. The more they allow the proliferation of a second tier, a pay-to-play tier, the slower the system goes. So it's not what they're suggesting at all. Even if there was some chance – some chance – that we might be able to speed up the system, this is not the government to do it. Every move they have made in health care in the last seven years has made the system worse, has slowed it down. Nothing has improved. At this point wait times for treatment for cancer care are so bad that people are dying while they're waiting. That's a huge problem.

This bill is American-style health care. It will make the system worse. It will hurt people. People will die. I could not possibly be more opposed. I would add, Madam Chair, that I think it is fundamentally anti-Canadian.

With that, I will urge all members to vote against.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and offer some thoughts on Bill 11. In opposing this bill, I'd like to talk about a constituent whose life I've recently learned about. His name was Michael Gaffney. Now, Michael was 10 years old when he moved to Canada from Ireland with his family. He worked as an emergency medical responder. He was also a talented artist and photographer. He was a loving husband to his wife, Lisa, and a loving father to his children: Alison, Daniel, Emily, and Lauren. Michael, tragically, died in 2021 shortly after being diagnosed with esophageal cancer. But Michael didn't have to die at such a young age. He died because the medical system failed him.

I had a chance to talk to his widow a few weeks ago, Madam Chair. I found out that Michael died because his family doctor was too busy to put the thought and time into analyzing the diagnostic tests that he had ordered for Michael and missed the cancer that he was suffering from. His family doctor was too busy to properly interpret these tests and get the diagnosis and send him for the treatment in time to prevent his cancer from taking his life. This current system failed Michael.

Bill 11 would do nothing to save him in spite of the government's insistence that this is exactly the fix that the medical system needs. This bill and all of the related health care changes that the UCP has engaged in over the last six years would only have saved Michael if he had had the money to seek private diagnostic analysis and health care. Let me say that again. Under this bill and under these reforms that this government is bringing forward, Michael would have had his cancer treated successfully only if he'd had the money to pay for the diagnostic test that he needed to get the treatment that he deserved. This bill wouldn't have given Michael's family doctor any more time. It does nothing to increase the number of family doctors practising in Alberta.

In fact, I'm quite concerned, after hearing the minister's response to my friend from Edmonton-Glenora's amendment to ensure that family doctors will never be allowed to practise dually in the private and public system here in Alberta. It doesn't increase the turnaround time for diagnostic tests in public labs. This bill is cold comfort to Michael's family and to people who are in Michael's

position who might be suffering from some yet undiagnosed problem and seeking public health care that they deserve to get.

9:40

You know, we here in the NDP pride ourselves on being the parents, if you will, of public health care in Canada. Certainly, health care was born in the province of Saskatchewan under then CCF Premier Tommy Douglas, but it was conceived right here in Alberta. I think it's important for all members to understand that Alberta has a very strong and proud history of promoting public health care in this country.

You know, many people here in this Chamber might be familiar with the name Irene Parlby. Irene Parlby was the Member for Lacombe from 1921 to 1935, one of the first women ever appointed to a cabinet in any government in the British Commonwealth, but before Irene Parlby was elected as the Member for Lacombe, she was the president of the United Farmers women's association. The United Farmers women's association in the early 1900s was instrumental in advocating for a government-run public health department, rural nursing programs, and Irene Parlby herself as the president of the United Farmers women's association of Alberta insisted that public health care was a human right and that public health care should be delivered by the government.

The government that she served in between 1921 and 1935 did a lot to lay the foundations for public health care in this country. Alberta was one of the first provinces in Canada to even undertake a public inquiry into the feasibility of state-run medical care. I know that public inquiries are something that this current government is allergic to, but it's interesting to know that public inquiries can be a tool for advancing the public good, and that's what the government of Alberta did in 1928. They undertook a public inquiry and determined that public health care was necessary and feasible for the province of Alberta to deliver.

In fact, later on in its term as government the United Farmers association government introduced the first government-funded health care system in all of Canada, provincially funded government health care. Now, we would look at that system today and say that it's very deficient. It only proposed a copay between enrollees and the government, so 50 per cent of the costs of the insurance would be provided by the government and 50 per cent would be paid by the insurees, but it was certainly a significant step forward in the provision of public health care, and that happened right here in Alberta.

Now, unfortunately, Alberta changed governments in 1935 and the Social Credit government threw that idea out, but the idea persisted, Madam Chair. It was only a few years later that Tommy Douglas and the CCF government in Saskatchewan picked up that idea, ran with it, and set up the hospital insurance scheme and later followed it with the medicare program that we have now adopted across the country and that many Canadians see as a right of their citizenship here in this country.

Bill 11 throws all of this out. By opening up the floodgates to American-style health care, people like Michael, who I mentioned at the top of my remarks, will suffer longer and die earlier while the wealthiest Albertans will live long and healthy lives, and private health care companies will make huge profits off people's anxiety and suffering.

Michael deserved a medical system that diagnosed and treated his cancer so that he didn't have to die, not because he had a huge bank account or was an important person in corporate Alberta or public life, but because he was a beloved human being and a member of our community and he had a right to health care. Our early governments in Alberta recognized that every human deserves health care as an intrinsic right, but by passing Bill 11 this

government breaks faith with people like Michael and with the people who laid the foundations of our province and laid the foundations of public health care in this country.

So for those reasons, Madam Chair, I urge all members to vote down Bill 11 and stand up for a better public health care system for all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity. I was struggling to find the words – like, how should I introduce myself when I'm speaking to Bill 11, Alberta's health amendment act, 2025? Looking at what this bill proposes, there's so much history and my mind, it goes like a picture because a lot of people in this Chamber, maybe on the government side, probably do not understand what we are discussing here.

[Mr. Cyr in the chair]

Even though we live in this very developed world, like, technology has made this global village of the world, and the U.S. is not far from here and we can easily compare how the universal health care in Canada and the private health care in America is serving their citizens, still I feel the majority of the government caucus members, specifically the private members of the UCP: none of them are able to acknowledge what this bill is proposing and what Albertans are going through right now, how it is going to make their bad situation worse.

So I struggle to start. Where to start? I have a lot of information. I wish I had a lot of time to discuss it. Should I bring a comparison from back home? There the public health system has become just a dream after privatizing health care 30, 40 years ago. You can hear these stories in my communities on a daily basis. There is a saying in my community: you can afford any problem when you go visit back home, but not to get sick. Don't get sick. Even though the comparison of our currency is 70 times to that of third-world countries, like in India, one can think it should be easily accessible and affordable when \$1 amounts to 70 or 80 rupees back home. But the stories you hear from those people – and people clearly not from that community but just very close friends of mine, people who went to India to visit during COVID ended up being in hospital, spent a quarter million dollars but couldn't save their lives, and you need probably another \$100,000 to bring their bodies back.

9:50

They are real stories in my communities and vice versa; I have other stories of the people who come to visit from other countries. I served as an insurance broker for, like, 14 years, serving general insurance and health and life insurance. The people who just walk in, I advised them many times. People who walk in with the bare minimum insurance of \$10,000, \$25,000 coverage, or \$50,000 worth of travel coverage and then they get sick and they lose that money in three days or five days and then they are stuck. Then they beg. Then they beg to their community, beg to their relatives, beg health professionals so they can get relief. They don't even care about if they're getting better or not because they know they are on a path to bankruptcy and might not even recover and lose their loved ones as well. They are real cases, real cases from the very province of Alberta where we are discussing Bill 11.

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

The government thinks the market can serve very sick people. It's not the government's responsibility to provide health care to

sick people. I don't know what kind of society you are envisioning to build. When you see how you are dealing with the education system, skill sets, and lack of capacity, and now we know that there are huge lineups wherever you go.

You cannot find a family physician. I deal with this every single day when newcomers in our communities, in my riding, in our neighbourhoods, come seeking help to find a family doctor. We try; sometimes it works, and the other times it does not work. So many times I called my own family doctor. I have pushed my own family doctor so many times: please, please, please can you take this patient only for me, for my sake. Then we have a situation where millions of Albertans who are fighting or struggling to find a family doctor to get help, and that is the time you are introducing the model and telling those doctors: you can also practice privately and directly charge those patients.

You're envisioning maybe – I don't know, like, there's so many aspects of this bill. Some of your rich friends may benefit because they are going to get contracts. Some people may be able to pay it, but how many of them will be without coverage and without any solutions? When we already have a shortage of doctors and huge lineups, and you are telling those limited numbers, without adding staff or capacity, "So we are giving you options; you can also now practice, like, in the other sector," how is it going to improve the sector? What is the math behind it? The destruction is clearly seen.

We can compare even when the health minister is, you know, singing about European styles, then probably trying to see which Europe she's talking about – Europe is not one country – and then struggling to find a comparison, but we can. We have first-hand experience.

What I wanted to say about Bill 11 – I know we don't have a lot of time. I have so many stories. My mom had been in the hospital for the past four weeks, and I lost her three weeks ago. My mother-in-law was in the hospital two weeks ago. I made many visits with my colleagues even to visit our former NDP leader in the hospital. I visited many community members. I have so much to share. I know this UCP, another category of this government, has invoked time allocations, so I have to think about my other colleagues. They have so much to share on behalf of their constituents. It's shameful.

With that, given the time, I conclude my remarks. Once again, I know there are some heads nodding, and people do understand the sensitivity and intensity of this issue but are afraid of their whips. This is so unconscionable. Please think about what you are doing before supporting this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North East.

**Member Gurinder Brar:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Ten million – 10 million – people lose their lives because they are unable to afford basic primary care, vaccinations, and emergency treatment; 1.5 million people die of tuberculosis because they cannot afford medicine; 2.6 million children die because of pneumonia. Tokyo, Delhi, Shanghai, São Paulo, Mexico City, Cairo, Mumbai, Beijing, Dhaka, Osaka: these are not just the name of cities; these are a hundred million people. One hundred million people. If you combine these people, these are the people who are pushed into poverty because they have to pay out of pocket. A hundred million people, equivalent to the total population of these cities.

If you try to count to 100 million out loud, one number per second, without eating, without sleeping, it will take three years and two months. Imagine, these are the number of people being pushed into poverty. If they stand in a line and each person takes about two feet, that's almost the circumference of the entire earth. These are

the people being pushed into poverty because they can't afford to pay out of pocket.

As of today, because of the public health care system in Alberta, not a single Albertan stands in this line. Not a single one because we have a health care that cares for us, our families, and our communities. We have seen that before COVID, during COVID, and we are seeing it still today. Yes, it is not perfect, but it's built on the principle of care, not profit. Bill 11 will add millions of Albertans to this line.

The UCP tore up the agreements with doctors. The then Justice minister even went to a doctor's home and yelled. No wonder this UCP government came out with Bill 14. In 2022 73 per cent of doctors said that they were considering leaving the province. Under the UCP we have seen emergency rooms turn into waiting rooms. The average wait time for an ambulance is up. A million Albertans don't have access to a family doctor. And this is five years, one month, 21 days, seven hours, and 45 minutes after the Premier promised to fix health care in 90 days.

**10:00**

Yes, we have issues with our health care, but these issues didn't come up on their own. These issues happened because of the deliberate policies of this UCP government. Instead of taking responsibility for the corruption they did in the health care, instead of launching a public inquiry into their own corruption, doing the right thing, investing in public health care, this UCP government is following the right-wing policy playbook: defund public service, people get upset, and then you privatize the service.

Madam Chair, today we are at the crossroads. One direction points towards profit-making private health care; make it a profit-making machine for people like Sam Mraiche, let corporations make money out of people's sickness. Or we can choose the other direction, the humane direction, where every child, even if it is not our own, gets the best care in the world, where if a senior on the other side of the street is sick, it becomes our shared responsibility to get the care they need, where if a worker gets hurt at work, they get treated without paying a single dime out of pocket.

We must choose the second direction for three simple reasons. In a public system we need a health card, not a credit card because in a public system care is a right, not a purchase. No Albertans are asked to mortgage their homes to save their lives. Public health care means when your child has a fever at midnight, you don't have to calculate the cost before heading to the hospital. It means illness is met with compassion, not a bill. Doctors check our pulse, not our purse. Public health care means the sacred relationship between patient and the physician is based on care, not profit. It ensures decisions are guided by science, ethics, and need, not by the size of the bank account. At the core are people, not profits because the goal of the public system is wellness, not revenue.

Let me share a story, Madam Chair, from south of the border, in the U.S. Shannon Latham, a 41-year-old mother of two, had type 1 diabetes, a lifelong condition requiring insulin to survive. Her employer changed insurance providers. Her new insurance required a \$1,000 deductible before insulin could be covered. Shannon did not have that \$1,000, so she attempted to ration her insulin, stretching doses, skipping injections, trying to make one vial last three or four times longer than medically possible. The result: within weeks she went into diabetic ketoacidosis, a painful, rapidly fatal condition caused by lack of insulin. She collapsed in her home when she was alone, and it was too late when she was found.

Her death certificate listed the reason of her death. Doctors and family members confirmed the cause. She died because she could not afford insulin, a medicine that costs \$35 U.S. to make – \$35 – and sells for \$300 to \$600 per vial in the U.S. because the U.S. is

full of people like Sam Mraiche, and that price killed her. Her father's words that her father told CNN: my daughter didn't die from diabetes; she died from the cost of the medicine; she died from a system that put profit above her life. That's the exact same system that the UCP is trying to bring with this bill in Alberta.

If the UCP had paid half the attention to recruiting health care workers than recruiting health ministers, our health care would have been in much better shape. All of these ministers say time and again that the private system is better than the public one, but the reality is very different than what their friend Sam Mraiche tells them. Countries with public health care have higher life expectancy, lower infant mortality, and lower preventable deaths. Medical bankruptcy is zero in public systems. On the other hand, countries with a private system like ...

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 21, agreed to earlier today, which states that after one hour of debate, all questions must be decided to conclude debate on Bill 11, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2), I must now put the following questions to conclude the debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 11 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:07 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For:

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

10:10

Against:

|                    |           |                 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Al-Guneid          | Ellingson | Metz            |
| Arcand-Paul        | Elmeligi  | Nenshi          |
| Batten             | Eremenko  | Pancholi        |
| Boparai            | Ganley    | Renaud          |
| Brar, Gurinder     | Goehring  | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej       | Gray      | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Haji      | Shepherd        |
| Ceci               | Hoffman   | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman            | Hoyle     | Sweet           |
| Dach               | Irwin     | Tejada          |
| Deol               | Kasawski  | Wright, P.      |
| Eggen              |           |                 |

|         |          |              |
|---------|----------|--------------|
| Totals: | For – 43 | Against – 34 |
|---------|----------|--------------|

[The remaining clauses of Bill 11 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

## Bill 9

### Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

**The Chair:** Pursuant to Government Motion 20, agreed to earlier, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of Bill 9, the Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, in Committee of the Whole.

I seek members wishing to join the debate. The hon. Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Tonight I rise to share the story of a family shared with me by parents who deeply love their children. This family has been watching debate in this House over the last couple of weeks. After some of the comments and characterizations we've heard, I think we can see why many parents who face situations like the one I'm about to describe do so in silence. They fear being judged, misunderstood, or labelled as unsafe, unfit, or abusive simply for asking reasonable questions or seeking balanced care for their children. They fear a system that may see them not as protectors but as obstacles. I believe it's important to share their story truthfully, respectfully, and without exaggeration to give a voice to families who feel they cannot speak or advocate openly for their children and to help ensure that no parent is ever afraid to advocate for their own child.

To protect the child's privacy, we will call her Sarah. That's not her real name, but her experience is very real, painful, and unforgettable. Sarah was raised in a loving home. Her parents taught their children compassion, acceptance, and dignity for every person. Her parents were and are very supportive of LGBTQ rights and taught their children to be the same. Sarah had a close bond with her family and a childhood filled with cherished memories, laughter, joy, and trust. She was confident and outgoing as a child. She made friends everywhere she went. She was extremely intelligent, and adults would often comment that she was far beyond her years. She was a talented artist and excellent student.

But when she was just 11, things began to shift. During the pandemic she spent more time online while her parents, who were essential workers, worked long hours. Over time they noticed she was withdrawing from family, becoming more secretive, and showing emotional distress and anger that they could not explain or understand. Her grades fell drastically as did her habits and personal hygiene. Her parents tried to get her support for her mental health. They supported her changing appearance by buying clothing that she liked that was gender neutral. She was clearly exploring her identity, but she never requested that they use another name or pronouns at home.

When Sarah was 12, her parents discovered that Sarah had been engaged in age-inappropriate sexual activity initiated by an older teen child. They began to try to understand what happened and discovered things that no parent would ever want to discover, things that haunt them to this day: pornography, other adult items. They had been grooming her for over a year to begin engaging in sexual acts. The older teen had also encouraged and glorified self-harm, and their daughter had begun cutting herself. This had begun when Sarah was only 11. The discovery was devastating. When confronted with what had been happening, Sarah spiralled into a severe emotional crisis. She expressed fear, panic, and thoughts of harming herself. The teen responsible for the abuse attempted to continue contacting her, worsening her instability and confusion.

She threatened to end her life. Her parents were terrified. They needed real help. Her parents immediately did what responsible parents do. They took her for emergency medical care as she was in acute distress, overwhelmed, frightened, and inconsolable. They explained that Sarah had experienced sustained harm, was in deep crisis, and needed trauma-focused care. They knew a declaration of suicidal ideation must be addressed immediately. They also made something absolutely clear, that they loved their child without condition. They supported her identity, whatever it might become. They were not trying to push her. They were trying to help her. They had never questioned her changing appearance, friends, or identity, but they also knew her identity exploration began at the same time as the online manipulation.

Any reasonable medical professional should have understood the importance of these events. The collapse of her mental health and the trauma that she endured gave her parents pause. They felt that before any major decisions were made about identity, names, or pronouns, they needed to help Sarah process what she had been through and the mental health crisis that she was facing, but, Madam Chair, the system that was supposed to help Sarah failed her from the start. She was in severe crisis. Over the course of four months, she was under the emergency care of three separate doctors. Within less than an hour of meeting Sarah and evaluating her, they all recommended initiating a path of medical transition. This happened before trauma assessments, before psychiatric evaluations, before consideration of her entire history, and before understanding what she had endured for over a year, beginning at the age of 11.

Her name and gender were changed on her official medical records without her parents' consent or knowledge. A doctor even suggested giving Sarah access back to the online spaces where the harmful interactions began, potentially reopening contact with those who had hurt her. Her parents were stunned and felt powerless to help her. The health care system would not treat the abuse and trauma first. Gender-affirming care was the only path that they provided, regardless of what she had endured, and they would only be seen as obstacles simply for asking for time and treatment of a child in crisis.

This happened right here in Alberta. Sarah was fortunate that her parents could advocate for her and find treatment that would address the trauma and abuse. Now, Madam Chair, this isn't a hypothetical story. This is not ideological, it's not political, it's not exaggerated, and it is not embellished. It demonstrates the love that parents have for their children. It demonstrates why they need to be involved in their children's lives so that they can support them and love them at a time when they desperately need it. It also shows that treatment standards of care have some serious and dangerous gaps that we can't allow to remain.

Sarah's experience is not the story of every child exploring their identity. I'm not saying that. This person is not saying that nor is it of every young person who identifies as a trans youth, but it is a real story from a real family. This is not about denying kids care, Madam Chair. We have a duty to ensure that care heals, that it stabilizes and protects, that it does not endanger. We also need to recognize the roles that parents play in keeping their children safe and supported no matter what their choices are or who they decide to be.

Bill 9 and upholding these rights through the notwithstanding clause makes that obligation non-negotiable. So, Madam Chair, I hope the members in this House join me and support it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When a parent, a child, and their doctor make a medical decision for that child, it should be

respected. That has been the case in Canada, but it won't be the case anymore here in Alberta. When a parent, a child, and their doctor make a medical decision, this government thinks it should intervene because it knows best. Government knows best. It's the theme of this bill but also the theme of this session, Madam Chair. I remember a time when the members opposite were libertarians. I'm not a libertarian. I wasn't excited for a libertarian government, so I'm surprised to discover that I would ever long for those days when the members opposite were libertarians because when they're not libertarians, it turns out that they spend their time taking people's rights away, and that is much, much worse.

**10:20**

Madam Chair, this bill uses the notwithstanding clause. It's the constitutional mechanism that a government can use to take people's individual rights away from them. It was put in the Constitution to be used judiciously, to be used rarely, to be used only in exceptional circumstances. I don't think anyone ever envisioned the possibility that it might be used four times in a month by a government. The notwithstanding clause was used by this government to force teachers back to work, and not just to force them back to work, to force them back to work by violating their rights, to force them back to work without a hearing, without arbitration, without an independent adjudication of the facts because this government knew that its arguments wouldn't withstand an independent hearing, that they would be forced to address class sizes and complexity.

If any neutral third party was able to look at the circumstances, they knew they were wrong. That's why they did it. Government knows best, though, right? So we see it used here again, this time to violate the rights of trans youth – youth, Madam Chair, who are already at higher risk of suicide, youth who are already feeling like they don't belong in this province. This government wants to make them feel worse. The notwithstanding clause is used on three more bills in this bill, and the idea that such a powerful constitutional mechanism, an override for individual rights, would be used just as a throwaway just because they felt like it is offensive to the rule of law and to our entire democracy.

The point of the Charter of Rights, of the Human Rights Act, of the Alberta Bill of Rights is to protect individual rights because we think individual rights are important. The reason that these laws have an elevated status, have an exceptional status, is because in our system, ensuring that a government doesn't decide that it's popular to pick on a minority group and take their rights away is considered incredibly important. That's why the notwithstanding clause is meant to be used judiciously. It's meant to be used rarely, but we see them doing it again.

What in this case are we doing it about? Well, it's to take away the rights of a parent, a child, and their doctor to make a medical decision for that child. It's to tell them that government knows best, and boy, have we heard some things in here, Madam Chair. It's troubling because the truth is that we know the facts. Doctors aren't running around there trying to give children the wrong treatment.

In addition to violating the rights of trans youth, this bill also violates the rights of girls. There is nothing more clear in terms of a human rights violation than imposing a different rule for girls than boys, and one of the bills that this applies to does exactly that.

If my daughter wants to participate in sports, I will need to sign a form attesting to her gender at birth. This is a form that I wouldn't have to sign if I had a son. I worry, Madam Chair, because we know that sports are protective, that participating in sports for young people makes them happier and less likely to have mental health struggles and more likely to feel a part of a community and less

likely to commit suicide, so I want that for her. I do, and it feels like this is forcing me into a choice I don't want to have to make.

Either I don't sign that form and I don't get those benefits for my child, the benefit of participating in sports, or I do sign the form knowing what it means for other people's kids, and I don't know how I explain that to her. I don't know how to explain to her that I put her rights and her interests in front, knowing that it would harm someone else's child. Sorry. She just turned eight and – yeah. I just don't know. I don't know how I explain that to her because they have a very concrete sense of right and wrong at that time, and I don't know how to tell her that I did something that might harm someone else to protect her.

That is what this government leaves parents with the choice of, and it isn't fair. It isn't fair. It's not fair to the kids that are being harmed. It's not fair to the parents. It's not fair to the children who have to pick to sign the form or not.

It wasn't always like that. It wasn't always like that, not even here in Alberta. In 2015 I amended the Human Rights Act, the very rights that are being overridden with this bill. We added gender identity and gender expression to the Human Rights Act, and do you know, Madam Chair? I was worried. I was worried it was going to be a fight. I was worried what would be said. I was worried what members in this House would say, and the harm that it would do to people out there in the world who are just trying to live their lives, and I was pleasantly surprised. I was so pleasantly surprised when that bill passed the House unanimously.

I was relieved that this wasn't a partisan issue, that neither of the, at the time, main opposition parties or the Alberta Party, none of the opposition parties at the time, the Progressive Conservatives or the Wildrose or the Alberta Party or the Alberta Liberals – they still had a member in here then, too. Everyone voted to support the bill. It was unanimous, and that harm wasn't done to the people out there in the world.

I did consultation on that bill. I heard how hard it is for people to access medical care, not just gender-affirming care, but for someone who is transgender to access medical care at all, for their broken arm, because physicians don't feel empowered sometimes to be able to deal with the medical complications because the education just isn't there yet, right? I'm not saying that it's anyone's fault, but I am saying that all people deserve the same care regardless of their individual characteristics.

What's really surprising to me, Madam Chair, and why I'm, I guess, so upset by this bill is because there are members in this House today who voted for those rights a decade ago and are now voting to take those same rights away. It really makes me wonder, you know: how does that happen? How do you believe that people deserve human rights one day and then just change your mind about that?

10:30

It's so capricious and it's destabilizing. Whose rights are next? Who isn't going to deserve rights next? It really surprises me, Madam Chair, and it disappoints me so incredibly deeply to see those people flip on vulnerable individuals and take their rights away because they think it might be popular. I just don't think that's how we should govern. Maybe that's not a very articulate argument, but I just don't think that's how it should be done.

It has been kind of dark times, but I want to end with a message of hope, because for a lot of people out there this is really worrying and troubling and dark and heavy, so I want to give them some hope.

I don't know that I've admitted this in the House before. I did not vote progressive in my first election. I voted conservative. I grew up here in Alberta. My dad is a geophysicist. I adopted, as many

people do, the politics of my parents, and I could tell you extensively about the arguments that have moved me since then. I could tell you about the importance of upstream intervention, about investment in the education system versus investment in jails. I could tell you about the importance of middle-out economics and that trickle-down economics doesn't work and that we create a better society and a better economy by investing in people. There are a lot of arguments that I could cite, but the truth is that what made me available to those arguments, what pushed me off for the first time was actually the notwithstanding clause.

I turned 18 in 1996, and in 1998 the Conservative government of the day threatened to use the notwithstanding clause against the Vriend decision, basically to deprive same-sex couples of the same rights that opposite-sex couples enjoy like benefits, and pensions, and things like that. In 2000 the government actually used it against the same-sex marriage act. So what initially pushed me off conservatism was standing up and looking around and saying:

These are not my people. The people over there, my friends who are having their rights violated, who are having their rights taken away: those are my people, and somehow I find myself on the wrong team. Somehow I find myself with the Conservatives, and the Conservatives are taking away the human rights of people I know and I love.

That didn't sit with me. I realized I was in the wrong place, and that emotional push is what opened me up to seeing the rational arguments. And I think that will happen with a lot of Albertans. I think that a lot of Albertans know or love a trans person; they know or love the parent of a daughter who's going to have to sign those forms; they know or love a teacher. I think a lot of Albertans are going to look up and say: why am I standing with these people who are violating the rights of someone I love? And I think that that's going to get us a better government.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak in support of Bill 9. I want particularly to address the conversation coming out of this Chamber. The space, the gap between what the members opposite are using as rhetoric and what the average Albertan believes is immense. It is logarithmic in scale. What they believe is a winning political agenda is so far away from average citizens' belief that I think that they will, by the end of at least this session, be running and hiding from their support of this right now.

They can speak now in, you know, boisterous solidarity and support, but I think when it's all said and done, they will run. I think we have to be honest what we are talking about first and foremost, and this will be a short part of my speech, Madam Chair. But let's be honest. The content we are talking about in Bill 9 and the reason for the invocation of the notwithstanding clause is because young girls who are completely healthy are being put under the knife for life-altering surgeries. We have young girls as well that are being treated to chemical hormones for irreversible damage to absolutely essential parts of their human dignity, including the ability to have children in the future.

Madam Chair, young girls are being told that they don't have the ability to play safely. In a best-case scenario, if the members opposite had their way, those young girls simply do not have a safe place to play or to change because they are being outcompeted by biological males in that same space. And in a worst-case scenario they are physically injured, because we will not address the honest-to-God reality that there are two different sexes that can biologically have different physiological traits. When we're talking about young girls, I think we have to be honest with ourselves that this kind of

legislation is not only appropriate but it is essential to protect them. They are among the most vulnerable in our society.

However, Madam Chair, the content of my speech will largely be around the notwithstanding clause itself and its importance because so much has been thrown that is not just – it's upside-down day, to borrow a phrase from the Leader of the Opposition in question period yesterday. They say the most insane, opposite things about the nature of the notwithstanding clause, that it's undemocratic, it's unconstitutional. There's nothing more democratic and nothing more constitutional than the invocation of the notwithstanding clause, that is subject to democratic accountability and review.

There has been a lot of talk about constitutionality in this debate and especially about the constitutionality of using the notwithstanding clause, section 33 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to pass this legislation. Let's put that debate to rest today, right now, Madam Chair. It cannot be unconstitutional to use constitutional powers, enumerated as number 33 in that same Constitution with the Charter, to do the job we were elected to do. That is, by definition, a tautology and is constitutional. The members opposite can spread all sorts of, you know, inaccuracies about this, but the fact remains that the Constitution is not unconstitutional. That is a silly proposition that my four-year-old can see.

Every one of us in this House was elected by the people of Alberta to exercise our best collective judgment in amending, in making, in repealing legislation. To say that we should abdicate that responsibility is not a light thing to do. But what it is would mean to repudiate the democratic safeguards that the Constitution had put in place in its formation and its repatriation in 1982. To say that you will not use the full democratic powers of the Legislature is to say that you want to live in something less than our democracy in Canada. That, Madam Chair, is what members opposite have been saying since day one in this debate.

It's important here at Committee of the Whole, on the night that we pass this legislation, that it be said on the record that it is a democratic institution that we are using through the Charter to make sure we defend vulnerable girls in our province.

I will go further. The notwithstanding clause is not just part of our Charter; it is a *sine qua non* of the Charter itself. It is no exaggeration to say that were there no notwithstanding clause, there would be no Charter. The cherished Charter rights that members opposite so invoke and say that members on this side are somehow tearing down or ripping apart or taking away from individuals: no, Madam Chair. I will address that point in detail later on.

Nonetheless, without the Charter none of those Charter rights would be here to invoke in this Chamber or by any court across the country, and to try and say that it is inappropriate for us to use that legal constitutional remedy to overrule activist courts is fundamentally, I think, undemocratic itself in its rhetoric, and I think it fundamentally politicizes the courts; again a point I will address in more detail soon.

**10:40**

I could mention Peter Lougheed and his absolute requirement in 1982 that this be included. We all know that story, but for the sake of members opposite and their partisan predilections I will instead be quoting heavily from the NDP Premier of Saskatchewan Allan Blakeney, who went emphatically in defence of the Charter and insisted that it be included, as an NDP Premier. Boy, we pine for the days when the NDP was a working-class party and respected the democratic institutions of this country instead of what we see from members opposite today.

Madam Chair, whether or not members opposite realize it, legalizing and outsourcing political decisions to the court and to

experts fundamentally undermines not just this Legislature and not just the Charter but the very democratic quality of our province. I'll quote from an academic, Tomkins, who writes on the Charter, who says in reference to legal liberalism: this encroaching idea that there are technical problems that only the courts can solve and they use Latin words that we can't understand and there are memoranda that we shouldn't really be engaging in here as the people's House but instead should be left to that ivory tower of individuals that are appointed, nine men and women in black, previously red, robes at the Supreme Court that get to tell us what the answer is. No, Madam Chair, that is not the case.

The reality is that when you look at the legal liberalism that's being pushed, the quote is as such from Mr. Tomkins. Legal liberalism is, quote: if not actually to abolish politics, then to at least constrain it by legal and constitutional formula so that it no longer matters what the outcomes of the political deliberations are. So it no longer matters what the outcome of the political deliberation here is. That is the point of the legalism, that they say, that it is really a court somewhere that gets to decide it. And I will add a partisan point here that they like that right now as members opposite, not as Blakeney did, oppose it at the time. They like it because they think they have the courts. They think that they are politicized to their end, and they will deliver those solutions politically for them.

What it goes on to say is: politics carried out by other means, obviously taken from Clausewitz's war by other means. Madam Chair, this idea that, somehow, if we just have experts solve this problem for us, we could have the courts as technicians solve these contrasting and conflicting political agendas, that it would be a better, more enlightened way to do it, this technocracy would be able to solve all of our conflicts: I will again quote from Blakeney.

If someone needs to make a final decision, the question is who.

Your choices are democracy, aristocracy or meritocracy. Fifty years ago, you could hear people go on about the merits of technocracy. What we needed was specialized experts to make the decision. The new aristocracy is to be judges. This is folly.

Blakeney continues:

It has never worked. Judges should measure laws and government acts against a measured standard. The fundamental decisions should be left to the public.

This, Madam Chair, is the fundamental point that we must focus on, that someone is making this decision. Whether or not we invoke section 33 as the accountable elected body or whether it is the court, unelected, invoking section 1 or an Oakes test, someone is reconciling these rights. It needs to be reconciled in some mechanism. This will be something that we must continue to come back to.

The reason we continue to have to invoke section 33 is not because we are somehow an activist Legislature. It's because for 30 years there have been activist courts that have been pushing their way into what are legitimate political disputes between factions of our public, and instead of resolving them here on the floor of this Chamber in a debating manner, we outsource them: reference cases and technical experts and legal Latin and experts from social science that get to say that this is the right answer for whatever they happen to have on hand that day, that decade, that year. No, Madam Chair, there is not a technical answer to these conflicts.

What we have is a genuine political difference between members opposite in terms of the nature of how to protect young girls and what we believe on this side of the House, and no court should be usurping this decision-making and no Chamber should be abdicating its responsibility to make those decisions. When that happens, as I said earlier, we are less of a democracy because we



think fundamentally the undemocratic version of the judicial review is a better solution than a body that must face the people.

This fundamental distinction, that the decision will be made one way or the other – courts have been doing it under the guise of some technical, distant ivory tower of section 1 for decades. Ever since the Charter was first patriated in 1982, we have seen the judicial activism grow and grow and grow. The problem, Madam Chair, is that if this continues, not only will we undermine our own democratic ability to make decisions as people balancing not a narrow case of a court in front of it at those particular facts, which are its responsibility as a court to decide, but we will no longer as a Chamber, with our very diverse background of people who are lawyers and people who used to work in gravel, people from all sides of the political spectrum, of all sorts of different histories and perspectives coming in – the debating Chamber itself along with government with its executive authority is the right mechanism to consider broad, complex policy decisions.

The wrong place, Madam Chair, is in a court, where they are looking at the one outlier instead of the broad policy conclusions. This is where you end up with a court that cannot quickly reverse decisions when they're seen to be wrong. This idea of a dialogue between the Parliament and the court is obviously proven to be a ruse that has continued to push more and more liberal legalism into our courts and therefore decision-making out of Legislatures and into unelected bodies that are unaccountable. Someone will be making this decision. Someone will be making this decision. The question is: will it be the body that is accountable to the electorate, or will it be the unelected ... [interjections]

**The Chair:** Order. Order.

Carry on.

**Mr. Williams:** ... legislators that are now wearing the black robes at the Supreme Court or appellate court level? Who will make these decisions? As the very, very acclaimed American Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia once said: in a democracy the people will have their say one way or the other. If they find that the decisions they care about are not being made on the legislative floor or through executive authority that is accountable to people and they see that they're being made in a Supreme Court chamber instead, then they will politicize that process. This, Madam Chair, is the central point that we must accept as legislators, is that whether it be involuntary with activist courts usurping what is a democratic decision or whether it be with lazy and ashamed legislators that will not step into the political fray, you will politicize the courts.

Members opposite have said: American decision-making, American political conversation around courts coming to Alberta. Madam Chair, no. It's the members opposite, if they had their way, that would further politicize our courts because they do not want accountability in this Chamber. And if the people want to have their say – in a democracy they will – you will find a politicization of the appointment process, as we've seen in the United States. Antonin Scalia confirmed at 98 to 0 in the 1980s. Now, if you look at whether it be Kavanaugh or any others or you look at the Nadon case under Harper within Canada, there has been an explicit politicization of our court appointment process, and that is bad. That court should be beyond political reproach. That court should be dealing with technical questions of law and should have political neutrality in what is a lively political debate between members on both sides of Legislatures across this country.

However, if we refuse to exert muscular autonomy as a Legislature at times through the invocation of the notwithstanding, we will be delivering a politicized court in a decade in every jurisdiction across this country. If we do not do our job as legislators

and walk into this debate and understand that we have an old-fashioned political difference between these two sides of the Chamber – instead of trying to hide it in legalism, hide it in technical language, hide it in experts that say X, Y, and Z, we should be honest with ourselves and with the Albertans who expect us to have our most important conversations in this provincial debating Chamber and say that we have a difference of opinion; it is political in nature, and this mechanism says that we must review it. We must review this decision because we are accountable to the electorate and it will expire within five years.

**10:50**

That, Madam Chair, is my final, and I think that the most interesting point that I will make tonight is that the accountability mechanism for courts, especially once they're politicized, becomes incredibly messy. I think the court should be terrified of ruining its incredibly good reputation and professional responsibility to stay out of politics, but instead it continues to wade in at a trial and, of course, at the appellate levels going up to the Supreme Court.

Justice McLachlin in her time said, importantly:

Before the Charter, Parliament and the Legislatures were free to limit individual rights and freedoms as they thought fit, subject only to the check of tradition and public opinion ...

She continues:

... And since the courts are [now] the ... arbiters of that law [and the Charter,] the courts assume a newly important role as the institution which determines what can [be] and cannot be a law. ...

The peculiarity of value judgments, she explained,

is that while they may seem rational, they are essentially arbitrary, ...

This is Justice McLachlin.

... in the sense that they cannot be proven true or false in the way statements of fact can.

Once again, however, the belief that the logic of the legal constitution is required that these arbitrary value judgments be made by judges.

They're arbitrary decisions for a court. The translation of the legalese, which they so love, is that they are not fundamentally questions of fact; they are questions of values, questions of virtue, questions of the political merits of a position. Those decisions need to be made here, and if they are not, we will see a politicization of the process.

The members opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, has claimed that this is undemocratic. Not true, Madam Chair. This is the most democratic and accountable mechanism. They said that this is authoritarian. No, Madam Chair. This is the way that we are not authoritarian. The oligarchy of nine men and women in Ottawa deciding for us without any true review on their decision unless we invoke the notwithstanding is the authoritarianism.

Some have said that this should be rare and sparing. It should be. The tragedy is – do not turn to the Legislature to find out why, but to the activism of the courts to see why we must invoke our muscular responsibility as a Parliament to defend those young girls and boys in our society who would suffer from incredibly egregious activism and very bad laws were it not for the ability for Legislatures like this to listen to the people.

I will quote again Mr. Blakeney. But first I'll say, Madam Chair, that I concede some defeat at least tonight. I see the steely faces of the members opposite and I know they have not been convinced. I know unfortunately that they will continue in their moment of solidarity and intersectionality to oppose Bill 9, to oppose protecting young girls in our society.

The truth is that I do not believe that will last long. Once this vote happens and we continue, I can tell you that the members will tuck tail and run with no literature in the mailbox of every single voter in Calgary and rural Alberta in the next election saying that they will repeal Bill 9, saying that they will fundamentally allow, again, this pernicious idea that girls should not be defended in our society. I know that I have not convinced them, but I also know that they will not follow through. The gap between what those members believe in their rhetoric and what Albertans believe is logarithmic in scale. Come the next election they will continue to run.

I will close with this quote, again, from the NDP Premier of Saskatchewan.

Right now, the conventional wisdom is that our splendid parliamentary system, with a wise electorate, somehow elects only fools and knaves. Fools and knaves who appoint judges who are wise. Jean Chrétien is often portrayed as a fool and a knave, except somehow the judges – most of whom he appointed – are invested with a superhuman wisdom. But these things come in waves. The day will come when the public will want more decision-making power back.

Madam Chair, the day has come in Alberta where this elected, accountable, democratic body is asserting that power again, and unfortunately we will continue to have to do that as long as there are activist judges and threats to the young girls in our society.

I will support this legislation. I implore every member opposite to do the same.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Member Tejada:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm honoured to rise in response to Bill 9, a bill with a name that does not reflect what its impact will be. I stand here as a mother to two girls. So you'll forgive me if all these discussions about protecting girls fall a little flat. You most certainly are not protecting my girls or the girls of many of the families I represent.

This bill is a flagrant abuse of power. It takes away the rights of a specific group of vulnerable children. It will give educators more work, moral injury, and yes, the continued use of the notwithstanding clause is an admission that this government knows that bills 26, 27, and 29 would never stand up in the courts. It builds in a five-year term where no one has recourse. It's an intrusion on jurisdiction. It is an invasion of privacy, an assertion that this government thinks it knows best.

All those references to unelected judges? Forgive me, I have to step back and think about all of the weaponized language here, the rage-baiting, the attempts to cast aspersions on our institutions when it is this government that is abusing them. It's another example that this government will happily attempt to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, our Constitution, the Alberta Bill of Rights, and the Alberta Human Rights Act.

It was done very creatively. It was a veritable salad bar of word salad that said very little. It is long past time for this government to get to the business of governing. If you care about kids, fund their classrooms. If you care about health care, publicly fund and publicly deliver our health care. If you care about the people you represent because they are multitudes, including trans people. All of those people deserve dignity; all of those people have inalienable human rights, as the Premier once said herself. Stop your focus on culture wars and division. Human rights aren't negotiable. They are not subject to one party's term in office. They are not subject to your political whims.

Now I'm just going to speak as a mother, and I'm going to echo the words of my colleague from Edmonton-Manning: parents know best. This is the supposed government that stands for parental rights, for freedom of speech, for libertarianism, which the Member

for Calgary-Mountain View mentioned, yet they are willing to insert themselves in the relationship between you and your child, in the relationship between families and educators. To legislate the telling of stories that again, to echo the Member for Edmonton-Manning, to insert yourselves in the stories and the lives in very delicate situations, which are, frankly, none of your business. It's not your story to tell. It's not up to you to out a kid because you know what? Actually, those kids have agency, too. Those kids know when they are safe. They know when to tell their story. It is not up to you. I grew up in the '80s in Alberta under Conservative governments with kids who chose to go by different names, and no teacher was ever compelled to tell their story for them. This is an abuse of human rights. It is a manipulation and an abuse of the Charter, and yes, if you're using it like Frank's RedHot, I'm sorry. Your credibility is going to be lost on a lot of Canadians.

**11:00**

I say this as a mother. I say this as a mother to two girls. I say this as a mother to queer kids. I say this as an adopted mother to many, many queer kids. This is not protecting children. It is invading the rights of women everywhere, and I want you to start talking to your constituents. I want you to connect to the teachers like the one that I met that had to talk to a room full of 14-year-old girls who trusted him in their gym class. I want you to put yourself in his place and listen to the hearts of all of those girls break as their privacy was breached. I urge every member in this House to vote against this bill. It is unconstitutional, it is an abuse of human rights, and it is abuse of our Charter.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 9. I won't use the title because the title is nothing about what this bill is all about. As I begin, I want to apologize on behalf of all members in this House to the trans community in Alberta. You don't deserve to be attacked.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order, Madam Chair.

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

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise very quickly under 23(h), (i), and (j). The member opposite does not get to speak on behalf of all members of the Assembly. That certainly creates disorder on this side of the House. If he wants to speak on behalf of the opposition benches, he's well within his ability to do so, but I encourage him, at least on my behalf, that he doesn't get to speak for me.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for – where is my brain tonight?

**Member Irwin:** Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's not a point of order. We've got very limited time due to this government implementing time allocation. I ask that we continue debate and carry on.

**The Chair:** I might say, hon. member, it's important to speak through the chair, and there is very limited time. The clock is still ticking. I'm trying not to take my time on this ruling, but let's keep the temperature in check.

The hon. member may proceed.

### Debate Continued

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, it is my honour to stand with the community against this bill. I say this because I think it's important that we in this Chamber are here as our true selves. I'm not going to speak on behalf of every person in this Chamber, but I'm going to ask every person in this Chamber who has ever been othered to think about the children who are struggling with gender dysphoria and who are being targeted by bills 26, 27, 29, and now Bill 9. Put yourselves in their shoes, and then think about how you vote.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, just direct your comments through the chair, please.

**Member Ellingson:** Madam Chair, it is something to listen to members from the other side suggest that our position on this bill is about a winning agenda. We take our position because we have empathy, and we believe that we should be here to govern all people, including those who are the most vulnerable among us.

I'm going to go back to something that was said a few days ago. The Minister of Justice said, in invoking the bill, that the UCP has the final say in the matter. No, Madam Chair. We, the Alberta New Democrats, stand with trans children, girls, women, teachers, and all Albertans who deserve their Charter rights to be respected and upheld, for it is they, not the UCP, who have the final word.

Bill 9 invokes the notwithstanding clause to shield bills 26, 27, and 29 from legal action. The UCP is invoking the notwithstanding clause because they already know their bills are unconstitutional. We already know that an injunction was awarded against Bill 26. The good work of Skipping Stone and Egale brought forward the evidence and the lived experience of trans children, showing that in granting that injunction, the courts found that Bill 26 would cause irreparable harm to trans youth. The government knows the courts will rule against them because these bills are indeed unconstitutional, and they violate the Charter rights of children, but the UCP have proven that they see the judicial system as a nuisance. They know better; the judicial system be damned.

Albertans, pay attention. The UCP want to dismantle the judiciary and assume absolute power and make the decisions on everything in your life. The people should be the decision-makers. The people should do so through the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches of government. Our courts are nonpartisan. Just because they rule against you doesn't mean that they are partisan.

This bill is deeply hypocritical, Madam Chair. The UCP suggests that these bills are upholding the rights of parents, but what about the parents that are supporting their children through gender dysphoria? There's a lot more to say about this bill. I am vehemently opposed as are all members on this side, and I will cede the remaining time to my colleague.

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

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise tonight to speak to Bill 9, and I can't believe that this is the space that we are in in this province, that this government has put forward this piece of legislation that we know is discriminatory, harmful, and unnecessary.

We've heard from people all across the province. We've been CCed in e-mails to the Premier, to the ministers, to MLAs on the opposite side of the House expressing deep concern, an urgency to stop this piece of legislation, fear, and honestly, disbelief. Constituents, Albertans, are deeply concerned about the direction of the province and the feeling that vulnerable children are being

targeted through legislation. Teachers, health care providers, families, parents: we hear over and over the medical-based evidence of the increased risk of suicide, the depression, the mental health for our transgender youth. None of those facts are being considered when it comes to this piece of legislation and the way that this government is moving. Medical professionals all across the province are united in opposing this bill and urging the government to respect evidence-based care. That is completely disregarded.

The use of the notwithstanding clause has completely shaken public confidence, and it's an incredibly dangerous precedent. This piece of legislation is targeted towards the trans community. It's targeted to a community that is struggling, and it's creating incredibly dangerous circumstances for those youth and children in our province. We know, Madam Chair, that girls at the age of 12 traditionally withdraw from sport. As the shadow minister for tourism and sport, I've heard from countless women, professional athletes, cisgendered women who are deeply concerned about the impacts of this legislation and what it's going to do to girls. There is no rational explanation for why this government is targeting vulnerable children and using the notwithstanding clause to justify it. If they truly believed that this legislation was within human rights, they wouldn't have to use the notwithstanding clause. It's absolutely disgusting.

11:10

I wish that I had more time to read the countless correspondence that I've received from constituents in Edmonton-Castle Downs and from people from all across the province, from e-mails, voice mails in unanimous and urgent opposition to Bill 9. But this government has limited debate. They've stopped the voice of the representatives, which essentially stops the voice of Albertans. They're not listening to the Albertans that are reaching out and pleading with them. Professionals, medical-based evidence from medical care for young people to mental health supports, none of that is being considered or talked about. We know what the truth is, and they're not listening, Madam Chair.

When we have constituents and people all across the province reaching out, overwhelmingly believing that Bill 9 will worsen mental health outcomes for transgender youth, that it's going to show increased depression, anxiety, isolation, and risk of suicide, that should scream to the government to not proceed with this legislation. Many reference evidence from the United States showing significant increases in suicide attempts in areas where similar legislation was introduced. They know this information, yet they're still proceeding.

Many of the people I've heard from raised serious concerns about the bill's requirement for teachers to disclose a student's identity to parents. From someone who's worked in children's services . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 20, agreed to earlier, which states that after one hour of debate all questions must be decided to conclude debate on Bill 9, Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, I must now put the following questions to conclude the debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the clauses of Bill 9 were agreed to]

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

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

|                    |           |                 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Al-Guneid          | Eggen     | Metz            |
| Arcand-Paul        | Ellingson | Nenshi          |
| Batten             | Elmeligi  | Pancholi        |
| Boparai            | Eremenko  | Renaud          |
| Brar, Gurinder     | Ganley    | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej       | Goehring  | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Haji      | Shepherd        |
| Ceci               | Hoffman   | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman            | Hoyle     | Sweet           |
| Dach               | Irwin     | Tejada          |
| Deol               | Kasawski  | Wright, P.      |

Totals: For – 43 Against – 33

[The clauses of Bill 9 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

#### Bill 14

#### Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to move an amendment to Bill 14.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1. You may proceed.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you. Madam Chair, the amendment reads: the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall to move that Bill 14, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, be amended by striking out section 6(8).

In the simplest terms what this amendment is doing is repealing the immunity that the Justice minister included in this bill for himself and his buddies from any sanctions of the Law Society. Yesterday my colleague the former Justice minister, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, said she won't need it. No other Justice minister should need it. Albertans expect their top lawyer in the province to be held accountable and at least to the standard where other lawyers are held if not higher. That amendment is absolutely self-serving, unnecessary, completely – I guess I'm

looking for some parliamentary word. I think it should not be included in this bill in any way, shape, or manner.

I urge all members of the House that, if you're confident that your Attorney General has done nothing wrong, don't be scared of the Law Society. It regulates thousands of members. That's for the public interest. That's to uphold ethical standards that every lawyer should abide by.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**11:20**

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to join the debate on A1? Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Any other members to speak on the bill?

**Mr. Sabir:** Madam Chair, I have another amendment to move. [interjections]

**The Chair:** Order. Order.

This is amendment A2.

The hon. member may proceed. You do not need to read it into the record.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That will save me some time. I will explain what this amendment actually does. This bill is one of the most undemocratic, heavy-handed pieces of legislation that the UCP has brought forward. It undermines courts. It undermines democracy. It undermines the Chief Electoral Officer's office. It undermines the Law Society. It undermines the Alberta Law Foundation. Although you can't fix this bill in full, we'll try to make it a bit better and repeal certain sections that relate to the government making the Chief Electoral Officer check with the Justice minister whether a citizen initiative proposal shall proceed, whether they are similar to each other, and taking away the Chief Electoral Officer's power to refer matters to the court on constitutional questions.

This afternoon all members of this Legislature also received a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer. Essentially, the Chief Electoral Officer is saying: either trust me and leave these things with me and don't interfere in the independence of my office, that will erode the trust and confidence of Albertans in the election, or keep this garbage with you and deal with it in the minister's office. That's essentially what he said.

What this amendment is doing is taking away the minister's power and giving it back to the Chief Electoral Officer so that he can refer matters to the court as he sees fit. The other thing it's doing is taking away the requirement where the Chief Electoral Officer is required to consult with the minister. I think that's inappropriate. That's making the Chief Electoral Officer's office kind of political. It's not a good look. It's not good for the independence of that office. That's what it's doing. Also, I think it will make sure that the ability to reject an application for an initiative petition rests with the CEO of Elections Alberta and not with the minister or any confirmation with the minister. In general this amendment will make this bill a bit better and at least take away the impression that somehow the Chief Electoral Officer is bound to consult with the minister on things – what to approve, what not to approve – in secret confirmation. That's inappropriate.

I urge all members of the House to stop interfering in the Chief Electoral Officer's office, maintain the integrity and independence of that office, and vote in favour of this amendment.

**The Chair:** Are there others that wish to speak to amendment A2? Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there others that wish to join the debate? The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I certainly appreciated the debate on Bill 14, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. I do want to thank all members for sharing their views on this very important bill.

I, too, have an amendment to put forward, and I'll send a copy to you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this is a two-page amendment, and this will be known as amendment A3.

You may proceed.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you again, Madam Chair. Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, who presented an amendment prior to this one, but it didn't quite hit the mark. I want to certainly thank the conversations and debate that we've had in this Assembly. I also want to take the opportunity to thank the Chief Electoral Officer for providing us with his views in relation to Bill 14. In response to the input that we've received, I would like to introduce the amendments that you now have before you.

Specifically, the amendments do the following. They propose to remove the requirement that an application must not relate to a proposal that "in the opinion of the Minister, is the same as or substantially similar to a proposal that, within the [previous] 5 years, was the subject of an unsuccessful referendum ... or an ... initiative vote." That section would be amended to be removed. This would remove another barrier and encourage additional participation in this important democratic process.

The amendment would also address concerns raised by the Chief Electoral Officer concerning the roles and responsibilities of the minister and the Chief Electoral Officer as an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly. I propose, then, to remove the ability for the minister to refer a matter relating to the citizen initiative proposals to the court. This is because, Madam Chair, the power is not necessary as the power already exists within the Judicature Act. It already provides a mechanism to refer a matter to the court for a hearing or for consideration.

I move that we pass this amendment to address the CEO's concerns raised in the letter that we received earlier today, Madam Chair. The government folks have been working very hard to address those concerns. We think that we have reached an appropriate balance, and I would encourage all members to support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I had the opportunity to review the letter from the Chief Electoral Officer where he cites multiple problems with this government's bill. We have just received the amendment and are therefore reviewing it now.

What I would say is that it does not appear on its face, to me, Madam Chair, that this addresses his concerns in the main. In fact, it appears to create additional consolidation of power. This is giving the minister the power to determine sort of what constitutes "substantially similar," so I think the problem overall – and, I mean,

one of the Chief Electoral Officer's problems was that he wasn't consulted on this, right? These legislative officers have a job to do, and this Legislature should respect that job.

Yeah. Different branches of governments have different jobs. It's clear to me, given the statements of some of the members in the House tonight, that checks and balances are a thing that is lost on some of the members opposite. The idea of suggesting that the court doing its job as part of that system – they call it the constitutional dialogue when the Legislature legislates and then the court comes back with an opinion and then the Legislature re-legislates. They talk about this a lot in law school, this constitutional dialogue. The idea that allowing the courts to participate in that dialogue in that system of checks and balances is somehow an abdication of legislative responsibilities is, well, honestly, a statement that makes me feel like my law degree is going to leak out my ears because it's that ridiculous. It's literally like: do we know what any of those words mean?

11:30

I think my point, Madam Chair, is that the purpose of offices like the Chief Electoral Officer is to be an independent voice to hold to the rule of law, and the reason that the rule of law is important is specifically to protect individual rights, the systems that we rely upon, anything like that, from the tyranny of the majority, right? Like, that's the idea, that what you're trying to do is to prevent the centralization of power.

I actually had the opportunity to speak about this tonight, and then I came up with an interesting allegory. The rule of law is something that I wouldn't say is always super well understood. The lawyers talk about it a lot, right? But I think it's important for all of the people that are impacted by us here to understand what the rule of law means. My favourite children's story when I was a kid was Alice in Wonderland, and in Alice in Wonderland there is a character, the Queen of Hearts, who's famous for running around yelling: off with their heads. The Queen of Hearts is the representation of centralization of power. So when we lose the checks and balances that I'm talking about, when we take jurisdiction away from the courts, from independent offices of the Legislature like the Ethics Commissioner, the Chief Electoral Officer, any of them, when we lose those checks and balances, what we get is a centralization of power. Then what you essentially have is one person holding all the power surrounded by yes-men, and they wind up beheading people for saying something vaguely insulting, right? That's the problem. That's the problem, Madam Chair, at the end of the day with this bill, is that it centralizes so much power.

One of the things that is most important about the rule of law in terms of holding legislators like myself, like everyone else in this room accountable is that we are governed by the same laws that everyone else is. So if we pass a law, we have to live by that law, too, and that alters the way we think about the law. It alters the way we interact with the law because we know that it applies to us, to our families, to our friends, to our children.

When you get a government who thinks that they should exempt themselves from the law, who writes laws that are for other people but that don't bind them, that's a really big problem, Madam Chair. That's a really big problem, and I think that people do understand. They do understand. I mean, from the time we're in kindergarten, we understand basic fairness, right? We understand the concept of fairness. So if you are creating a rule – and they actually have classes do this now because they have discovered that children are much more likely to abide by a rule if they feel that they've had some sort of hand in creating that rule, so children now do that in a classroom. They all create the rules together. And I think that if a

five-year-old can understand it, people in this room should be able to understand it, too. That's the main problem with the bill, and this does nothing to address it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have a quick question for the minister. The minister is striking out the entire section 13.1, which deals with referrals to the court. If he could clarify: while he is taking his ability to refer matters to the court under this act, does this restore the Chief Electoral Officer's ability to refer a matter to the courts under this act?

**The Chair:** Any other members to amendment A3?

**Ms Hoffman:** It would be great if we could support this amendment, and having actual information on what it does would be useful. If the minister would care to defend the amendment, we would love to be able to be informed in making this decision.

**The Chair:** Any other members?

**Mr. Amery:** Well, look, I'm excited to hear that the members opposite might support this bill, Madam Chair. It restores and addresses many of the issues that the Chief Electoral Officer provided to us in the letter that we received here today. Again, the folks from our end have been working very hard to get these amendments in place so that we can demonstrate our commitment and respect to consultation and working with the CEO. Part of that includes removing that ability to refer away from the minister. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora had asked for, it will no longer be in the hands of the minister. It will no longer be in the hands of the CEO. It will rely on the referral under the rules described within the Judicature Act, which provide for a mechanism to refer matters to court. Those have existed for a very long time. They're nothing new. We're not introducing anything to change that, but it would certainly take away that component of referral to courts by the minister, as the CEO had asked for.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think that the minister has implemented everything that was contained in the Chief Electoral Officer's letter. They may have made some amendments, but no, it falls far short of what the Chief Electoral Officer is asking, and it clearly shows that the government didn't consult the officer beforehand. They didn't do their homework. The best course of action will be, instead of doing this patchwork, to pull this bill, do their homework, and bring it back some other time.

I don't think I will be supporting this amendment, and I urge all members to ask the minister to go back and do the homework first.

**The Chair:** Any others?

Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A3 carried]

**The Chair:** Any others to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah. I rise to speak to Bill 14, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. Looking at this bill is exactly showing the same pattern we have been debating in this House. It demonstrates another set of the same patterns we have seen since this session started, that this UCP government operates on no moral ground. They do not believe in ethics, and they do not

believe in the rule of law. The outcome of their efforts for the last two months: they are afraid of facing Albertans, to face Albertans in their ridings, in the communities.

The proposal of this bill in this House also demonstrates that this UCP government does not even have confidence in its own ideas and does not even dare to go in public on their own track record. All they are trying to do: use parliamentary legislative loopholes to shut down debates and abdicate their ministers from their responsibilities, transparency, and accountability that they should hold to the general public. That is what this bill is about. Instead of understanding and taking lessons from listening to Albertans and – how many of those ministers are there, 14 or 16? I know that list just keeps growing. It's hard to keep track every other day. There's no new addition to the list. Their own constituents are fed up with them, seeing what is happening in this Legislature.

11:40

The government has a majority in the House. They have more members. They're taking advantage of that because it's a game of numbers at the end of the day. Albertans send their representative to the House that they will go, they will take their issues seriously and debate their issues in the House to find a real solution, and all this government did: play sentimental games, emotional games, to wedge politics. They've been so confident. They were very confident and bragging about two pieces. Their friends actually spoke in the rural area, singing separatism, and now they are seeing the outcomes that are not going to eventually support, to go back in their ridings, in their communities, and they will face the anger from their constituents.

They are not even willing to give them a time to give their feedback in the next general elections, but they are tired of their representatives. So to deal with all those challenges, they have brought forward this bill to deal with the very important institution they are part of: democracy, democratic institutions that are required for any healthy and strong community and a society.

In the law profession all the members are required – it's not in one profession, actually. I come from a very semiprofessional industry, and then all the members are always required to uphold the higher ethical standards. But in this case, the government believes just everyone in this province except one person. So I'm saying: what are they hiding?

Madam Chair, we cannot support this bill. This bill needs to be defeated every step of the way.

Thank you,

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Member Boparai:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak on Bill 14, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. The government tells Albertans this bill is about democracy and access to justice, but anyone who has spent time reading the fine print, especially given this government's track record, knows Bill 14 has as much to do with democracy as a fox has to do with guarding a henhouse. In this bill the fox isn't just guarding the hens. He is writing the rules for the farm, installing the security cameras, and fighting the farmer.

We are not debating harmless housekeeping. Bill 14 is not housekeeping; Bill 14 is a government kicking everyone else out of the house, locking the doors from the inside, and then claiming they smell something burning while holding a can of gasoline behind their back. This bill is ministerial overreach. It places sweeping discretion in the hands of a Justice minister to determine which petitions are valid, which citizen initiatives can proceed, and which

voices get heard. This is not oversight; this is overreach. This is not strengthening institutions; this is suffocating them.

Madam Chair, let us talk about the Justice minister for a moment because Bill 14 hands him authority that no one in a healthy democracy should ever possess. It is like giving the referee a team jersey and then acting surprised when the calls start getting lopsided. When one elected official can define the rules, judge the players, and decide who gets to be on the field, the game is no longer fair; it is fixed. The government will say that these powers are needed to streamline the process. Let me translate that for Albertans: streamline work to clear the path of anyone who might disagree with or challenge you.

We have seen this tactic before. In other bills brought by this government, they use lofty language – neutrality, modernization, efficiency – to mask a transfer of power away from independent regulators and towards themselves. The result has never been more openness, never better accountability. It has been fewer safeguards, less scrutiny, and a justice system bent toward political convenience rather than public interest.

Madam Chair, Bill 14 is not about fixing a system. It is about fixing a narrative. It constructs a legal force field around this government's mistakes, allowing ministers to avoid the public scrutiny that true democracy demands. When you have spent years stumbling from scandal to scandal, from failed lawsuit to failed pet project, from headline to headline, what do you do? You don't change your behaviour. No, you change the laws and bend the rules. That's what Bill 14 is. It is a political broom not to clean up the mess but to sweep the evidence under the rug.

We should not pretend the context is neutral. Albertans have watched this government trip over ethics investigations, court challenges, and conflicts of interest. They have watched the dismantling of independent oversight and the centralization of decisions inside the Premier's office and ministers. Madam Chair, Bill 14 does not improve justice. It shields this UCP government from it. It retools the machinery of public participation so that ministers can become gatekeepers of petitions, judges of their own controversies, and architects of their own immunity.

What terrifies me most is how quietly this government is trying to smuggle authoritarian powers into a bill. They hope Albertans won't notice. Democracy is supposed to be loud, messy, full of debate and disagreement, but Bill 14 would make it quieter not because people stopped speaking but because the government gained the power to stop listening.

Madam Chair, I represent Calgary-Falconridge, where constituents are diverse, resilient, honest, and hard-working. They do not want to be ruled by ministers who treat democracy like it's their personal sandbox. They do not want referendum questions filtered through political interest. They do not want citizen initiatives evaluated by the very people those initiatives might be criticizing. They want fairness. They want accountability.

Madam Chair, my constituents and all Albertans want to know: who is really pulling the strings in this government, and how much will it cost them? This is especially troubling given that the Minister of Justice is seeking immunity. What for? What is his family member and good friend Sam Mraiche advising him to do now? We know this UCP government will hand away a quarter of a billion dollars in sole-source contracts to Sam. What is this government and minister trying to protect themselves from? The truth? The truth that my constituents and all Albertans deserve to know?

Adding to the never-ending issues with Bill 14, the Chief Electoral Officer wrote a letter to Mr. Speaker and the Justice minister to raise urgent concerns about this bill. He warns that the proposed amendments to the Citizen Initiative Act risk significant harm to Albertans' trust in our democratic process. He explains that

while the CEO would still process applications, the discretion would rest wholly with the minister, meaning the executive would be directing an officer of the Legislature on how to act.

**11:50**

Madam Speaker, voting in favour of this bill is like a chicken voting for Colonel Sanders. For these reasons my Alberta NDP colleagues and I cannot support Bill 14. This bill is dangerous. It is undemocratic. It is self-serving. It concentrates discretion where independence should prevail and converts participation into permission.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Some comments on Bill 14 from the media: "It's a genuine gasper," is what one columnist said. I'd say it's bonkers. This is a political stunt I haven't seen since the Conservative Stockwell Day put on a wetsuit and drove a Sea-Doo across Lake Okanagan in Kelowna. I thought when I read it that maybe it's an April Fool's Day joke, but it's going into legislation. It's an incredible abuse of power. It's trading on a very cynical bet that people don't care about our democracy.

Madam Chair, when I had my time at U of A as a student and was doing my commute back and forth from Sherwood Park with my friends Andrew and Anil\* and we talked about the world and thought about what was going on, we got engaged and we thought bigger things about the world and about the future. When I came to this Legislature with a different mindset I thought: what's the best thing for the future, especially of this province? You know, when I got involved with things at the university, I got involved as the chief returning officer, which is the same role as the Chief Electoral Officer. The U of A is no small population. I mean it has a larger population than probably, you know, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, so you're running a decent-sized election there. That time and that period gave me a chance to really think about democracy and what's important and about what's important to fairness and about political competition and fairness.

So it's really strange to be presented with Bill 14 in a rushed attempt by this government – I think it was brought in yesterday; today they tried to bring in an amendment – because the bill is overruling decisions by independent elections offices, the executive office that holds our democracy in check. It's overruling judgment by legal experts from the Court of King's Bench to enable the Alberta – what's that APP stand for? The Alberta whatever? Independence project?

**Member Irwin:** Prosperity Project.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Prosperity Project. It's that group that took over the UCP. It's enabling them to have their separation referendum. This is a bill that's brought forward so they can go start their petition to get a separation referendum in this province, so I'm very disturbed by that. The UCP, that's now running their party by separatists, is now enabling them to go start a separation referendum in Alberta, which we've talked in this House about how much uncertainty that's going to create.

The bonkers part, in addition, is that it gives the Justice minister immunity from sanctions from the Law Society of Alberta when acting in the role as Attorney General. I suspect that the current Justice minister, who's embroiled in scandal, is expecting a consequential event at some point in the future where maybe the other shoe is going to drop, so he needs immunity. I'm actually surprised in this bonkers bill that the government didn't add the

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

power for the Premier to pardon convicts. I thought that would certainly be in a bill like this.

This is creeping authoritarianism. The government is passing a bill to override independent elections officers. They said they brought in some balanced amendment. It was a patch job for something that needs to be sent back to the drawing board, and most of it needs to be taken out.

The funniest part and I think the part that is going to be the least funny to the UCP during the next election is the banning of specific words to be used in the names of political parties. It's been brought up in debate. It's been brought up in question period. It's been brought up on the weekend at social events. That is bonkers. The new progressive conservative party cannot be the conservatives because there can be only one with that brand. To be using this legislation in order to limit the opportunity for political competition is terrible, horrible, and very bad for our democracy, Madam Chair.

We have independent offices. We have an independent office for the Ethics Commissioner, which has been watered down by this government. We have an independent office for the Auditor General, which whenever he looks to investigate the government, the government says: "No, thanks. We will not fund you, and you can exit at the right door." Now the Chief Electoral Officer has written a letter with very strong language to say that the separation of powers between the legislative body and the executive is fundamental to our system of democratic government and that to ensure that our government plays well, we need to have those proper roles enforced.

Madam Chair, this bill is bonkers. I cannot wait to vote against it.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to oppose Bill 14. You know, this bill is another example of how this government doesn't really like the rules and they make them up and they go along and then they change the rules and they realize they're misinterpreting the intent of the law and: oh, people are misinterpreting it; oh, we forgot to consult this guy, and now we need to come back with this amendment that doesn't really fix it.

I have to say, Madam Chair, that I was really hoping that we would be debating with a government that would actually do their work before we came to the Legislature floor for time-allocated debate where we only have an hour. I don't actually even have enough time to say all the ways that this bill is a piece of garbage.

All right. Here are the highlights. This bill is the latest attempt for the government to put more power into the minister's office and subvert the democratic process. This is not what Albertans want. Albertans want a strong, solid democracy, and this bill weakens that democracy in some pretty fundamental ways, largely by putting too much power in the minister's hands. So this amendment does appear to not require the Chief Electoral Officer to refer to the minister for direction on citizen-led initiatives anymore, but it also doesn't require that those questions are determined whether they meet constitutionality, and that's still important, Madam Chair. If people propose questions that aren't constitutional, we're just going to waste a lot of money and a lot of time and a lot of volunteers will donate their time and money to canvass and get petitions only to find out that their question is unconstitutional. But don't worry about it because the Premier the other day said, "Well, we'll figure out how to make it meet the Constitution," which I also thought was a little bit weird and shady.

Also this bill says that the minister would no longer be accountable to the Law Society and its professional standards, but

also the bill allows the minister to direct and force bylaws the law society that can't be amended or repealed. This bill allows the Minister of Justice to set the rules, force the Law Society to accept them, and then is not held accountable by professional standards. Are you kidding me? You don't get to just make up the rules and then say, "Oh, well, I don't need to abide by them because I'm the minister," through the chair to the minister. That is the most dishonest thing I think I've read in a piece of legislation.

What is also annoying here is that the Chief Electoral Officer wasn't consulted, which is why we end up having this rushed amendment debate. But it's also not the first time the Chief Electoral Officer hasn't been consulted. In Bill 54 in the spring the Chief Electoral Officer also wrote a letter to the government saying that Bill 54 impacted free and fair elections by deteriorating service provided to electors, compromising Albertans' trust in democracy, removing elements of transparency and accountability, eliminating voting anywhere and vouching, and reduced the Election Commissioner's ability to investigate.

This is a pattern of influencing the independence of free and fair elections, and that is not free or fair. That is the essence of elections here. By stripping the Chief Electoral Officer of authority through Bill 54 and this bill we are removing safeguards in our democratic process. It leads to wasted money and effort, and it concentrates power in cabinet yet again.

There's a pattern with this government of centralizing control in cabinet. This is one of 13 different bills that we have debated and the government has passed that centralize power in a minister's office. Bill 18 was all around federal funding approvals. Bill 17: ministerial control over health care decisions and recovery facilities. Bill 20: interfering in municipal councils. Bill 21: taking over local emergencies. Bills 25, 27, and 29: the antitrans bills, interfering in health, education, and sports for the most vulnerable Albertans. The All-season Resorts Act puts power in the minister's office to approve resorts. Bill 52: the minister makes changes without talking to the Alberta Utilities Commission. Bill 50: more municipal interference. Bill 34: decreased FOIP access approved by the minister.

## 12:00

In this session we have debated the Water Amendment Act, 2025, Bill 7, putting power in the minister's office to approve interbasin transfers. Bill 13: professional societies. For crying out loud, Madam Chair. This government needs to stay in its lane. This government is drunk on its own power, swerving through all the lanes, knocking down the pylons of democracy, accountability, and transparency on its way to where? Nowhere good, I can tell you that.

The last thing I want to talk about is that this bill introduces overt partisan influence over electoral processes through this ridiculous nomenclature stuff. Not allowing certain names to be used for political parties: that's petty. It's a government that's afraid of competition. It says that voters will be confused. Give voters more credit. Give me a break. This is about being too afraid to allow honest competition. Leaders don't stifle competition. They welcome it. They choose to lead and bring people with them because they have a vision that people want to be a part of. They don't just kick up a big stink and take their toys and go home any time somebody disagrees with them.

This government doesn't have a vision for Alberta. This government wants to just create a whole bunch of ridiculous pieces of legislation that actually stop people from using a name in a political party. Goodness me. This government should be ashamed of its actions here tonight.

That is all the time I have, Madam Chair.



**Dr. Metz:** Madam Chair, I rise today to speak to Bill 14. I am in firm opposition to this bill. It is garbage. Bill 14 proves that this government believes they're above the law. It is giving the government, the UCP, more power. This government shows that it has forgotten that their role is to represent the people and to make sure that we can all live safely and in good health and that their role is to govern well for the people, not just for their people. This bill takes away the rights of Albertans to hold this government accountable. It is an authoritarian act. Yes, one more step towards – I can't say the word – authoritarianism. It's like "aluminum."

It's part of a pattern of such acts, repeatedly invoking the notwithstanding clause against labour rights, girls, and vulnerable children; secrecy in every ministry such as removing most of the internal and public dashboards within the health system. Yes, promising something is coming, but we've been hearing these promises for a very long time. Lack of stakeholder engagement before bringing in new laws – we see this very clearly with this bill – that make errors in the drafting of it, and we're really at risk for unintended consequences. Bringing in new legislation like this with no time for public engagement.

This bill had first reading December 4, and through a series of limits on debate, either through time allocation or shutting down our free speech, it will go through this government and give this government power and be read into law within less than one week. This bill removes the rights of citizens without them even having a chance to know about it or react. It gives power to the UCP government, yet it is sold as a housekeeping bill. It's rammed through with no opportunity for public consultation.

Let's be clear. This is a horrendous bill. It is coming at the same time that government is further dismantling public health care, removing the expectation that Alberta's professionals will actually act professionally and be required to understand issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and it comes in the wake of inflicting moral injury to our teachers.

Let's be very clear. This bill will do exactly the opposite of what was promised by the minister in first reading when he said, "this bill will strengthen public confidence in our democratic processes and ensure all Albertans have an opportunity to share their views and participate in democracy." That quote should tell all of us that we cannot trust this government. We need to look far beyond what they say and look at what they are actually doing. They are making Alberta less democratic, more secretive, and more authoritarian every day. They're consolidating power in the cabinet. They do not listen to experts. They are changing laws to insulate themselves, such as the law in this bill where they are making the Justice minister immune from sanctions of the Law Society. As the chief lawyer in Alberta he should not have a lower standard than other lawyers. Perhaps it should be higher.

This bill also gives this government the authority to determine the educational needs of lawyers and law students in Alberta. Currently all lawyers are required to take training on Indigenous cultural sensitivity. This is one of the truth and reconciliation committee's calls to action. It is one of the very few calls to action that is actually currently being acted on. It is shocking to me how long our society has taken to act on these calls to action, which are to make Indigenous people our equal partners and to reconcile the wrongs that have been perpetrated on them and continue to be in this society.

I wonder if the members opposite know there are 94 calls to action. They are very nicely organized by theme so that we can focus on those that apply to our area of influence. There are 18 calls to action under the subheading of Justice. Call to action 27 states:

We call upon the Federation of Law Societies of Canada to ensure that lawyers receive appropriate cultural competency training,

which includes the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

This bill also dictates the training of law students, which is call to action 28, where they "call upon law schools in Canada to require all law students to take a course in Aboriginal people and the law" and then states that it must include the same content as that which practising lawyers must cover. This bill will forbid this requirement in the education, which is one of the very, very few successes of the call to action of the truth and reconciliation committee.

This bill takes away the independence of the Chief Electoral Officer, who is in place to make referendums and elections fair. It allows the UCP government to potentially tip the balance in their favour to satisfy their extremist base and consolidate their power. This is because they are afraid. This is not democracy. The Chief Electoral Officer should not be taking direction from the executive branch of government, and I understand this part of it has now been changed.

This bill allows the Justice minister to decide whether a question gets sent to the court for review or if it proceeds without any legal check. This bill also goes against the rule of law. As Judge Feasby recently stated,

the public is entitled to the fruits of this process that has been conducted largely at their expense so that if they are asked to vote on Alberta independence, they have a tool that may help them make sense of the legal dimensions of the secession of Alberta from Canada.

Members, I cannot support this bill, and I hope that the members opposite will understand what they are doing if they choose to vote with their government in bringing in this bill. There are many egregious things, but removing one of the few calls to action that is actually there is certainly a major part of this.

I will now cede my time.

**12:10**

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Member Tejada:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 14, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. I think we're seeing a pattern over these last few weeks of a centralization of power, ignoring the rule of law. [interjection] Sorry?

**An Hon. Member:** Last years.

**Member Tejada:** Last years, yeah.

What we're seeing very, very clearly here is manipulating laws, manipulating processes to favour themselves, and now we get, actually, like, other added ingredients in this recipe. We know that they're making up the rules as they go, and often I am wondering, you know: if the government can respond this quickly to manipulate laws to favour themselves, imagine what they could do if they actually used that motivation to do something that was materially good for Albertans on affordability, on housing, on human rights. What they would be able to achieve could be amazing. Unfortunately, that's not the reality we're living in here in Alberta.

I would say that probably the most egregious thing that I'm seeing as part of this bill is the Justice minister granting himself immunity. I'm getting e-mails from all over the country going: "What is going on over there in Alberta? This is madness." You're not imagining things, folks. You're not imagining things. We are in the Upside Down. Things are not good. This is really as bad as it sounds.

The UCP's Minister of Justice, the top lawyer of the province, is granting himself immunity from professional standards of all other lawyers in the province and what they would be held to. This is an abuse of power. I can say that I am so proud of the colleagues that I stand with and who I happen to be standing next to. I really loved your comments yesterday, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View talking about this immunity and how, really, as an ethical person this is not something she wants. It's not something anyone should ask for. When we're elected and, actually, I think just as regular Albertans walking around, it should be assumed that we will be working within the bounds of the law and that we won't need immunity later. That is highly suspect.

I would say probably the most egregious part of this bill – and I won't take too long because I'm not here to cosplay as a lawyer, but I will speak to this part of the bill, which I find very, very concerning and, really, every member of this House and every Albertan should find just as concerning. Yes, they are running roughshod over our human rights. They are manipulating laws. This is egregious and not at all normal.

I urge every member of this House to vote against this bill. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will speak briefly about this bill, which is a fairly authoritarian bill. On this bill and other bill debate we are seeing a trend here where the government members and members of the executive are getting up and ruling against the judiciary. As I indicated in the morning, the decision that Justice Feasby handed down: that was according to the provisions of the Citizen Initiative Act and in accordance with the power this government granted to the court just last May. And then to come back here and stand before this House and, really, throw insults on the judiciary is not something that we want to see in this Legislature because a functioning democracy depends on an independent judiciary.

The other thing. There was another example that somehow judiciary activists, even including Justice McLachlin, shot down the appointment of Marc Nadon. That decision was so simple. In order to be appointed to the Supreme Court, the Constitution provides that you need to be a member in good standing of a law society for 10 years. Marc Nadon was not a member in good standing for 10 years at that time of the appointment.

The second thing is that you need to be a member of a superior judiciary. He was a federal court judge, not a member of any superior judiciary. That's why his appointment was made null and void by the Chief Justice and, I must add, one of the most respected Chief Justices of this country, Justice McLachlin. But here we are seeing that politicians with absolutely no knowledge of law whatsoever are attacking that judiciary and a jurist of Justice McLachlin's stature. That's truly shameful.

Another thing that this bill is doing is rigging things in their favour so that they can reduce competition. They are banning the word "conservative" that any other party could use from use so that Albertans don't get confused with the UCP. Anyway, that's funny.

Another thing is that the minister is giving himself the power to make a regulation with respect to an education training requirement for the members of the Law Society and then giving himself the ability to tell them how to manage trusts and all those things and then exempting himself, refusing to obey the same rules that every other lawyer in this province abides by. Albertans certainly expect a higher standard for their chief law officer, not less or not this kind of immunity.

Then Madam Chair . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but I will because pursuant to Government Motion 25 agreed to earlier, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of Bill 14, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, in Committee of the Whole.

I must now put all questions on Bill 14, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, on the remaining clauses of the bill.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 14 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:18 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

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

12:20

Against the motion:

|                    |           |                 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Al-Guneid          | Eggen     | Metz            |
| Arcand-Paul        | Ellingson | Nenshi          |
| Batten             | Elmeligi  | Pancholi        |
| Boparai            | Eremenko  | Renaud          |
| Brar, Gurinder     | Ganley    | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej       | Goehring  | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Haji      | Shepherd        |
| Ceci               | Hoffman   | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman            | Hoyle     | Sweet           |
| Dach               | Irwin     | Tejada          |
| Deol               | Kasawski  | Wright, P.      |

Totals: For – 43 Against – 33

[The remaining clauses of Bill 14 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 9 and Bills 11 and 14 with amendments.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mrs. Johnson:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 9, Bill 11, Bill 14. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, can you just clarify with amendments for 11 and 14?

**Mrs. Johnson:** The Committee reports the bills with some amendments: Bill 11 and Bill 14.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

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

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 13

#### Regulated Professions Neutrality Act

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

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move third reading for Bill 13, the Regulated Professions Neutrality Act.

As I've said before, Madam Speaker, this bill is arguably one of the most consequential bills for freedom of expression in this House, and one that has been debated in this House for a very long time. Our reason for introducing Bill 13 is simple. Regulatory bodies should not be enforcing ideological beliefs.

In my remarks during second reading, I covered some examples of professional regulatory bodies who had gone too far and who had begun to police personal beliefs. As a result, professionals have lost their licences and their livelihoods because of this. Our government won't stand by that, Madam Speaker. This legislation keeps professional oversight focused on the main areas that we expect regulators to focus on, competence and ethics, not personal opinions and not identity, and it makes it clear that professionals can share their views outside of work without any kind of interference from organizations that regulate their industries.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I want to be clear what this legislation seeks to achieve and briefly explain why this bill merits the support of this Assembly. First, Mr. Speaker, the bill draws an important and long overdue line around expressive off-duty conduct. Professional regulators will no longer be able to discipline individuals for what they lawfully say or do on their own time except in the most serious of circumstances, things like threats of violence or criminal acts. This change protects the public interest while recognizing that professionals are also citizens who should not have to surrender their fundamental freedoms when they leave the office, the classroom, the clinic, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 13 also reinforces the principles of neutrality and fairness that Albertans expect from their regulators. The act makes it clear that regulators may not pursue ideological agendas that discriminate against their members. They must treat all professionals equally. Fairness, we think, is not optional.

Bill 13 further clarifies that regulators cannot mandate education or training that is not related to competence or ethics. Professional development needs to build skills, not enforce beliefs. It's really

that simple. Mandatory training must have a connection to the professional competence and to the ethical responsibilities owed to the public. Professionals need to be able to focus their time and their attention on learning that actually helps them serve their clients, their patients, their students, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, this is principled legislation that safeguards the freedom of expression and upholds professional standards all at the same time. Albertans deserve to have professionals who are competent, who are ethical, and free to think independently. With Bill 13, we're standing up for those values and securing a stronger future for Alberta's professions.

Once again, I rise to move third reading of Bill 13. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On third reading of Bill 13, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This bill and the remarks that we heard are the perfect example of government talking from both sides of their mouth. With Bill 13 they're claiming that they are standing up for fundamental freedoms and protecting the freedom of expression. Just an hour ago they were debating Bill 9, where they are taking the freedom of expression, fundamental rights, section 7 rights, section 15 equality rights from Albertans because they disagree with them. They don't feel fit in their value system. The government cannot have it both ways. That's hypocrisy of the tallest order for government to claim such things, that they stand for any fundamental freedoms.

The bill does three things. One, it prohibits regulatory bodies from sanctioning its members based on anything that relates to cultural competency, unconscious bias, or their expressive conduct off-duty. The second thing: it prohibits regulatory bodies' ability to sanction members or make policies with respect to cultural competency, unconscious bias, diversity, equity, and inclusion. It also tells the regulatory bodies that they cannot affirm anything that stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This is not a neutral bill. With this bill government is imposing its own worldview onto the professionals, on to the regulatory bodies, and nobody was asking for it. No one was asking for it except for Roger Song and a few of Roger Song's colleagues, who earlier this year, I believe, brought a special resolution before the Law Society of Alberta essentially urging the membership to get rid of the path Indigenous competency course. It's a very basic-level course that simply tells you what the Indigenous treaties are, what the different Indigenous languages are, what happened in residential schools, what happened in the '60s scoop, how Indigenous rights are now protected by section 35, 35.1: very basic, basic-level of information.

12:30

Certainly, there was a group of lawyers who thought that that was too much that the Law Society was asking from them, and they exercised their democratic right. They brought that before the Law Society. That motion was voted on, and an overwhelming majority of lawyers, professionals, thought that it was important that we keep this cultural competency course. One can argue that it's more than a cultural competency course because we do know that in our justice system Indigenous people, black people, persons of colour, and poor people are overrepresented. In our penitentiaries, in our – what do you call it? – detention centres: exactly the same thing. They are overrepresented.

If you are practising law, it doesn't matter what area of law, I think that's something that makes you a better professional. Knowing your society, knowing your clientele, knowing the

environment you work in: that makes you a better professional. It's only the UCP that thinks that this is not a good thing, that nobody should be culturally competent, nobody should know anything about cultural bias, nobody should learn anything about DEI.

They say that this bill applies to a hundred professional bodies and a hundred professions. Not one of them came in favour of this bill, not one. Most professionals are professionals. They are measured. They know that what they say carries weight. They know that because of their professional status they have responsibilities as well, and they conduct themselves with utmost professionalism. It's only a few who just want to be part of the profession and still want to say, vile, inaccurate, inappropriate things in the name of freedom of expression.

It's just like those people who were refusing to get immunized, in government terms, and still were insisting that they should be allowed to go to the bars as well. I guess the bill is for those people that don't want to get immunized but still want to go anywhere and pose a threat, cause harm to other people.

We tried to bring forward an amendment because free speech doesn't mean hate speech, just a simple expression to include in the bill that this doesn't mean or give licence to anyone to spew hate speech in the name of freedom of expression, and still the government turned it down and the Justice minister turned it down. Governments, usually conservative governments, are very good to choose who will carry water for them. This time they chose the Justice minister for that. That is truly shameful.

I urge all members of this House to stand for your constituents, stand for the diversity that Alberta has in this province, stand for equity and equitable policies, stand for a diverse and inclusive province. Vote against this bill that doesn't help our province. This is a solution instead of a problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a lot to say and not a lot of time to say it, so I'm going to move quick. I am going to speak to Bill 13 and raise a concern that I know has been raised with multiple ministers on the other side just today. E-mails have gone to the Minister of Justice, the ministers of hospitals and surgical health, primary and preventative health, Mental Health and Addiction, and Advanced Education to raise concerns about this element of Bill 13, but so far there has not been a response.

In short, the concern that has come forward is that the elements of Bill 13 which ban the ability for a regulatory body to have mandatory training in cultural competency, anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion clash with the requirements for accreditation for medical schools under the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

They are raising this concern with this government that if they move forward with Bill 13 as it stands, there is the potential that we have our medical schools in Alberta looking at losing accreditation. We are looking at resident students who graduate with their medical degree in Alberta not being able to get their national accreditation. I will try to break that down quickly in the time that we have.

This comes directly from a member of the accreditation standards committee for the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools, a physician here in Alberta. In short, there are two elements: the CACMS element 3.3, which doesn't just suggest diversity; it mandates that medical schools must have effective policies and practices to achieve it. If Bill 13 prohibits those policies by labelling them as ideological or political, the University of Calgary, the University of Alberta, by extension the southern

Alberta medical program, which this government is founding and is a good program which they are proud of, may not be able to fill that accreditation requirement. In fact, they won't.

Then there is also the second element which is – pardon me here. Sorry. We've got a lot, like I said, that we are trying to cover here – cultural competence in health care disparities, 7.6, which says that a medical school must ensure that

the medical curriculum provides opportunities for medical students to learn to recognize and appropriately address the unique needs of people of diverse cultures, genders, races and belief systems, in particular the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, as laid out in this executive briefing note by Dr. Kannin Osei-Tutu, is because there is demonstrable, actual evidence that a lack of such training leads to increased deaths: 50 per cent higher mortality rate for black men after elective surgery, 30 per cent higher mortality rate for Indigenous patients after surgery.

Here's the challenge. Mr. Speaker, the government may say: "Well, these are medical schools. They aren't regulatory bodies, so therefore they aren't, you know, professional associations." Here's the thing. A medical student, a resident, is also considered a professional under their college. For example, if a resident wants to take medical leave, they have to go through the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta. They are, in fact, part of that group, and Bill 13 says that no member of that group can be required to go through mandatory training on these very things. Yet if they do not go through that mandatory training, they are not eligible to be accredited by the royal college or by the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

This government, Mr. Speaker, on a pure ideological basis has chosen to rush ahead with this legislation which they think is just going to be this simple thing they can do on a lark, but I've been hearing all day from physicians in this province. We have a letter from the Canadian Nurses Association, all kinds of medical bodies who are saying that this is a problem. This has the potential to injure people, to hurt people. As I just outlined, a lack of this training can kill people, but not only that. This government is rolling the dice on potentially losing accreditation in our medical schools, undermining the ability of our medical graduates to get the accreditation and the support they need.

**12:40**

The Minister of Advanced Education is shaking his head. Now, he has not had a conversation with any of these bodies. He has not responded to their e-mails, but, of course, we know that's how this government operates. They don't actually consult with experts. They don't actually think about the consequences of their actions, which is why we have bills in front of this place where they're having to amend what they just did six months ago.

So the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this is a genuine concern that multiple actual medical experts are reaching out, the people who are doing the work of ensuring that we have the doctors we need, the health professionals we need, ensuring that that southern Alberta medical school which the minister now has the duty to see through is actually going to be functional and actually going to be able to churn out doctors that are actually accredited nationally and able to actually go out and practice here in the province.

So if they don't think this is a concern, then by all means let them stand up and show their evidence and explain why it's not because we've got an awful lot of medical experts who seem to think this is going to be a sincere problem, and we do not need more isolation for our province. We don't need our province to continually be made a laughing stock by a government which is pursuing all these ridiculous ends for its own political purposes. Alberta is not a

country yet, Mr. Speaker, so that means we've got to work with the national accreditation in Canada.

So for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I am going to move an amendment.

**The Speaker:** I'll just need to see a copy, hon. Member, and I'll let you proceed.

Please proceed.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Myself to move that, The motion for third reading of Bill 13, Regulated Professions Neutrality Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 13, Regulated Professions Neutrality Act, now not be read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence.

Also known as a hoist amendment, Mr. Speaker.

In short, because this government has given us such limited time, because they did not bother to consult and they are still refusing to consult, this bill needs to be held to ensure that we do not do significant damage to our ability to train medical professionals and continue to operate our medical schools and keep other health professionals working in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has moved an amendment, which we'll call HA1.

And now I'll recognize the hon. — no, you're not standing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Sorry, I just — people are standing. I just had to figure out who wanted to speak and who doesn't.

**Ms Wright:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to speak in support of the hoist amendment. This bill, indeed, should not now be read for a number of reasons.

To begin with, it might appear to be what the minister says it is, Mr. Speaker, cleaning up a few things, clarifying a few things, keeping regulators where they belong in their own lane, except that when you begin to look more closely at its contents, when you begin to speak with colleagues, when you hear from experts in medical fields as we've just heard from, things not only become more nuanced but become less certain and, in fact, more troubling. That's because while it purports to protect freedom of expression when off-duty, it is in fact a little bit more insidious than that because it dictates or rather limits regulatory bodies in terms of what behaviours they can discipline members for. In other words, this is the UCP yet again overstepping its authority. What we see in reality with this bill is a bill coming from a government, Mr. Speaker, that does not at all trust its regulatory bodies and the people who are professionals to regulate themselves.

There is, in fact, a pattern that we do see. We can look back to 2022 and early 2023 when this government took the regulatory function away from the ATA and imposed a new code of conduct as well as a new teaching commission on teachers. Perhaps that was a bit of a first act, if you will, Mr. Speaker, for this particular bill.

The ATA at the time, much like many of those who are members of regulations now, were concerned. A couple of the things that the president was concerned about included the notion that the ministry and the minister at the time said that the association couldn't be involved in teacher discipline because there was a conflict of interest, that the new process was at arm's length from the government yet, at the same time, knowing that the minister had enshrined in legislation the ability to interject the minister's opinion at the end of the process. So there was a question at that time, Mr. Speaker, of whether or not the process was truly an independent process.

One of the things that the ATA was most concerned with, and you heard it echoed here today in my colleague's comment, was that these were decisions that were unilaterally made. The ATA was not properly consulted, and in fact, one of the things the ATA said was that they could have found a better path forward that would have served members and the public, but this was something that the ministry simply had decided to do.

As my colleague alluded to, we have heard very, very recently from medical professionals, not the least of which was folks from the Canadian Nurses Association. They have a number of concerns, and what they have said to us, Mr. Speaker, is that Bill 13 threatens equity, ethics, and safe care. They're looking at four found implications should this bill pass, the first of which is that there's implications for nursing practice: it might narrow the scope of that off-duty conduct. There are implications for nursing education, implications for nursing research, implications for nursing policy and leadership.

Dr. Bukola Salami, who is an RN, who is also a full professor and Canada research chair in Black and racialized people's health, also says that Bill 13 poses a serious risk to public safety and human rights. She notes that under this proposed legislation, Mr. Speaker, regulators would be prohibited from requiring education or training unless it is strictly tied to professional competence or ethics. This means that regulators could not mandate cultural competency, unconscious bias training, or diversity, equity, and inclusion education, even when such training is essential to ensuring safe and equitable care. I don't know why we'd want to proceed with this particular bill.

In addition to that, we've also heard from Nicole Johnson, who is a clinical assistant professor at the U of C Department of Pediatrics, a physician, and also vice-president of the Black Physicians' Association of Alberta. Nicole is concerned, as it may capture clinical training competencies directly tied to preventable harm, mortality reduction, national medical accreditation, as you heard my colleague talk about. Nicole noted as well that it risks clinical harm, accreditation conflicts, economic and workforce repercussions: because indeed, why on earth would doctors and nurses want to practice in this province, Mr. Speaker?

The passage of this bill indeed risks all of those things, Mr. Speaker. The passage of this bill would indeed not be helpful to Albertans. It certainly would not be helpful to the people that we are interested in working in our medical professions, not the least of which to say in so many other professions which are currently regulated. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly endorse my colleague's amendment.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for acknowledging my slight acknowledgement to my mother when she's at home: Ada Carol Burnett,\* as you might have known.

Mr. Speaker, pleasure to get up tonight and speak to this hoist amendment that has been brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I know it was one of former minister Brian Mason's favourite words in this Legislature, not when he was in government but when he was in opposition: hoist amendment. I had happened to like the word myself, although I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if the measure goes far enough. I think we should be doing something other than hoisting this bill: we should be hoisting this government. That's really what we should be doing.

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

Mr. Speaker, speaking about, of course, Bill 13, the Regulated Professions Neutrality Act. As Alberta families and friends gather together to spend time over the holiday season, what will the major topics of conversation be at the dinner table? Will Bill 13, the Regulated Professions Neutrality Act, also called by many the Jordan Peterson bill, be top of mind for most people? I severely doubt it.

12:50

People will be talking about things that hit close to home, as they normally do. Their well-being and livelihood are always most important to people in this province. Things like how many days Grandma waited in an emergency room hallway before being admitted to have surgery for her broken hip is what families will always talk about or whether your sister can find a family doctor in rural Alberta or if Uncle Albert will have to pay a hundred bucks for a COVID shot he used to get for free.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 13 definitely needs to be hoisted and not read now and read for a third time six months from now. Bill 13 which, amongst other things, restricts over 100 regulated professions from protecting free speech outside of work hours will be mentioned by no one at the family dinner table because people in Alberta in 2025 are too concerned about their access to health care, paying for their rent, mortgage, groceries, fuel, and utilities to be caught up in the UCP wild goose chase legislation to silence anyone in any organization they deem to be an opponent. Perhaps that is part of the strategy, Mr. Speaker. While Albertans struggle with the cost of living, while young people cannot find their first non-gig economy job, while seniors are hit with higher prescription costs and lower seniors' benefits, the UCP strikes with Bill 13 hoping that people will not notice.

Well, I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the people around most Albertans' holiday dinner tables will not notice, but members of the 100 affected professions will notice, and for professionals who are looking for a jurisdiction to practice in, this bill will be part of their consideration. Do they want to practice where the government intrudes into the independent operation of their professional organization, or do they seek employment where professional organizational independence is protected and respected? The answer is obvious. Bill 13 will turn away qualified professionals from choosing to work in our province and opt for a jurisdiction where government does not insert themselves into the administrative processes of their professional organizations.

Hoist the bill, therefore, Mr. Speaker. I say: hoist the bill and read it not now but third time six months' hence.

Bill 13 is just one of the string of draconian pieces of legislation brought forward where the UCP concentrates power into the cabinet to control people and organizations, and this is intentional, Mr. Speaker. The government has no respect for the division of powers in our parliamentary democracy.

But there must be some members – I'm certain of it, Mr. Speaker – of the government caucus whose conscience is grinding away at them over there, who are thinking that even the thousands of dollars of salary increases to become a parliamentary secretary are insufficient to convince them to swallow their belief in our democratic system and permit themselves to wallow in the muck of parliamentary meltdown perpetrated by their cabinet leadership. They have an opportunity now before their self-respect totally disintegrates and washes down the drain along with their prospects for re-election to join two of their colleagues who have already chosen

to preserve their dignity and quit the UCP caucus to sit as independents.

Having sat with some of the members opposite in the Assembly for 10 years now and believing their values to be compromised by the government's authoritarian legislative agenda, I am certain that many feel drawn across the floor. There is no shame in doing so. Such an act in service of preserving the foundations of our parliamentary democracy would be the most honourable act one could perform as a faithful parliamentarian.

I invite those members now to rise and publicly proclaim their allegiance to our Constitution and our Charter rights and Alberta human rights by crossing. I encourage them to do so by crossing the floor to demonstrate that no government and no minister in this province is above the law and letting our electoral process decide if Albertans vote to bring in a new government that heralds and vows to preserve our fundamental pillars of democracy and deals with the issues that really matter to Albertans today.

Hoist this bill. Let the government members who can no longer stomach what their cabinet is shoving down their throats vote with their feet and as soon as possible walk across the floor and before that becomes a stampede, let all Albertans flood to the polls to mark their ballots to return to a normal government in this province that listens to and responds to Albertans' needs.

Happy holidays.

[Motion on amendment HA1 lost]

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:56 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

|                    |           |                 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Al-Guneid          | Ellingson | Metz            |
| Arcand-Paul        | Elmeligi  | Nenshi          |
| Batten             | Eremenko  | Pancholi        |
| Boparai            | Ganley    | Renaud          |
| Brar, Gurinder     | Goehring  | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej       | Guthrie   | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Haji      | Shepherd        |
| Ceci               | Hoffman   | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman            | Hoyle     | Sweet           |
| Dach               | Irwin     | Tejada          |

|         |          |              |
|---------|----------|--------------|
| Deol    | Kasawski | Wright, P.   |
| Eggen   |          |              |
| Totals: | For – 44 | Against – 34 |

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

**Bill 9****Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025**

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Justice I am pleased to rise and move third reading of Bill 9, the Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025.

With that, I move to adjourn debate.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:02 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

|                    |           |                 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Al-Guneid          | Ellingson | Metz            |
| Arcand-Paul        | Elmeligi  | Nenshi          |
| Batten             | Eremenko  | Pancholi        |
| Boparai            | Ganley    | Renaud          |
| Brar, Gurinder     | Goehring  | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej       | Guthrie   | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Haji      | Shepherd        |
| Ceci               | Hoffman   | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman            | Hoyle     | Sweet           |
| Dach               | Irwin     | Tejada          |
| Deol               | Kasawski  | Wright, P.      |
| Eggen              |           |                 |

|         |          |              |
|---------|----------|--------------|
| Totals: | For – 44 | Against – 34 |
|---------|----------|--------------|

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Government Motions**

(continued)

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

**Time Allocation on Bill 9**

22. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9,

Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, that last division was five minutes I'll never get back.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 22. I think this is debatable, isn't it? Yes.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. Here we are again. Here I am again speaking to the fact that this government is limiting debate, another substantial bill with debate limited to only one hour. It was over a month ago that I stood up and I spoke up against the UCP's limiting debate on Bill 2 and the invoking of the notwithstanding clause against teachers, and here we are again. Since then they've limited debate a whole bunch of times, and since they became government nearly 80 times, and this ... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let's hear the speaker that has the floor, please.

**Member Irwin:** You know what? I want to use this time, because it's pretty clear from the members opposite that there's a complete lack of respect for folks in the gallery and folks watching at home, to quote some trans community members, folks with lived experience, like Rowan from Trans Rights Edmonton, who said it so well by asking the following questions. "If the UCP feel that this bill," Bill 9, "and bills 26, 27, and 29," to which this bill refers, "were justified, then why would they need to pre-emptively invoke the notwithstanding clause? And if this bill is just so important to so many Albertans, as this government claims," and as the Minister of Municipal Affairs claimed earlier, in what was a stunning display of something, "then why debate it at night? Why not debate it when more people are available to witness their rights being stripped away?"

Let me point out that it's 1 in the morning, it's cold, it's winter, and we've still got members of the community who showed up. Marni, Star, Ashley, Hestia, Tess: thank you. They all showed up because their rights matter, and no government, no matter how undemocratic, no matter how authoritarian, is going to stop them from showing up. While this government will ram through this bill, just like they will ram through so many more over the next little while, the fight isn't over, Mr. Speaker. The UCP government have made it clear that they see the courts as gatekeepers, a pesky annoyance to just be ignored, but those folks there and folks at home won't be ignored.

1:10

The UCP might not want to face the courts, but they will, like we've seen in Saskatchewan, where the Supreme Court is hearing appeals to that Conservative government's use of the notwithstanding clause. It's absolutely wild that this UCP government has used the notwithstanding clause or will use it four times in this session alone, using a lever that was intended by its makers to be used in emergency situations, to be used as a last resort, to be used sparingly, to be used only when absolutely necessary. The UCP government want to normalize its usage. They want us to become numb. They want us to be distracted, to be overwhelmed. We can't let them and we won't.

Albertans spoke out loudly when the rights of teachers were trampled, and now it's transgender Albertans. Who's next? Who's

next? There's no limit to what this government thinks they might be able to do. But we won't stop fighting. We won't stop fighting because trans rights are human rights.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 22 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:11 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

|                    |           |                 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Al-Guneid          | Ellingson | Metz            |
| Arcand-Paul        | Elmeligi  | Nenshi          |
| Batten             | Eremenko  | Pancholi        |
| Boparai            | Ganley    | Renaud          |
| Brar, Gurinder     | Goehring  | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej       | Guthrie   | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Haji      | Shepherd        |
| Ceci               | Hoffman   | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman            | Hoyle     | Sweet           |
| Dach               | Irwin     | Tejada          |
| Deol               | Kasawski  | Wright, P.      |
| Eggen              |           |                 |

Totals: For – 44 Against – 34

[Government Motion 22 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 9

#### Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

(continued)

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 9, Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, and yes, I will use the title of the bill because that's exactly what this does.

Now, we've talked a lot about what this bill does in this House, particularly hearing things from the NDP that are factually incorrect, but I'm going to bring it back to what this bill is really talking about, and that is protecting children in the province, protecting their reproductive rights and their ability to make adult decisions when they become adults. To do that, I'm going to bring

it home with a story and talk about a young woman from my constituency named Hannah Pilling.

Now, if you're not familiar with Cardston, it's a small town about 15 minutes north of the Montana border, and this is a town, amongst others in southern Alberta, where we excel in sports. We compete very well, and we walk into gyms and football fields and we defeat teams that have a school population greater than our whole town's population.

Mr. Speaker, we always punch above our weight in southern Alberta when it comes to sports, and Hannah Pilling is no exception to that, a talented young athlete who stood out as one of Alberta's fastest female athletes in grade 11, as an underclassman. Now, because of her talent Hannah fully planned on using running as a way to obtain scholarships that would support her through university and the rest of her life, set her up for success, but in the spring of 2023 she would compete in zones and, unfortunately, not qualify to compete in the provincials and showcase her talent at the highest level in this province because she lost. To whom, Mr. Speaker? A transgender athlete. A biological male.

The opposition will no doubt like what I have to say this evening, Mr. Speaker, but the truth of the matter is this. Hannah's story is not in isolation. Hannah's story is one of many in this province and around this country, and it goes on. A petition was started by her father entitled Save Women's Sports, and within a matter of days of finding out that she had not qualified for provincials, there were over 7,500 signatures from people around southern Alberta demanding that the province protect women's right to have their own leagues and sports spaces. Thankfully, the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association made the right decision to allow Hannah to compete, but it wasn't without a lot of heartbreak, disappointment, and frustration.

You know this very well, Mr. Speaker; I'm a fan of sports, as I know many other members of this Chamber are. I fully appreciate that taking a loss is part of sports: doing it gracefully, doing it with dignity, something maybe the NDP could learn how to do. But there is a fundamental difference between losing against someone in a fair head-to-head match versus losing to someone who should not be eligible to compete in that division, like Hannah did in grade 11 by losing to a biological male in the sport that she excelled in and trained in for her entire life leading up to that moment.

Now, I've sat in this Chamber for the last several days, Mr. Speaker, hearing MLAs from the opposition talk about this bill and talk about what it means and even reference the case, particularly I think they've referenced this case with Hannah Pilling, minimizing it, suggesting that this push to protect women's sports is based on just one person's experience. How absurd is that? Everyone in this Chamber is inclusive until it's their daughter that gets trampled playing soccer. Everyone is inclusive until it's their daughter that gets knocked out playing basketball. Everyone is inclusive until it's their kid that gets hurt, and then they get a stark realization that the playing field is not fair.

1:20

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker. I'll use the words of the members opposite: even one – even one – is too many. It's happened right here in Alberta. As the Minister of Tourism and Sport at the time who introduced this bill, I talked to parents, I talked to athletes, I talked to postsecondaries, I talked to provincial sport organizations, and the feedback I heard was very concerning about the detriment that it can be to athletes who are forced to compete against other athletes who are biologically stronger and more physically capable because they are biologically male.

Now, I'll tell you there was a question about enforcement, Mr. Speaker, and how this was going to be enforced. The Leader of the



Opposition was asked this exact question before he became an elected member of this Assembly, right down the hall asked how this would be enforced, and this is what the Leader of the Opposition said. I quote: I sure hope it's not about the minister, using my name, going into the locker room and checking out people below the belt. We are talking about minors. Using my name, suggesting I'm going into locker rooms and checking minors below the belt: the thought is not only disturbing but is disgusting. The member has also referenced spanking members in this Chamber. It begs the question: this is what the member is willing to say out loud. Heaven forbid to even consider what the member thinks on his own personal time. It's disgusting. It is despicable.

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

**The Speaker:** A point of order is called.

#### **Point of Order Insulting Language**

**Mr. Nenshi:** This is the first time I've risen on a point of order myself. Under 23(h), (i), and (j) the minister is clearly using insulting language and causing disorder in this Chamber. He needs to apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** The government side.

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, I am simply quoting the direct words from the member, the Leader of the Opposition, that were said in this building only a few steps outside this Chamber. Now, if the Leader of the Opposition doesn't like the interpretation of what he said that there is video evidence of, maybe the member should look inward and choose better language in the future, because he's very good in this Chamber of taking what members say and spinning it to make it sound like it's completely something different. But in this instance that's a direct quote. Not a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Well, I would say that this is a matter of debate. I would caution the hon. Government House Leader to not take this to a place where it becomes a point of order. Yeah. I'll leave it at that.

Carry on, but do your best not to make it a point of order.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you for your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

There will be parts of this conversation that are uncomfortable, and members on both sides of the Chamber are going to have to deal with that because it's a very serious matter. I can tell you parents and female athletes across the province and across the nation are looking at Alberta for leadership on this, and they are deeply grateful that we are taking a lead under the leadership of our Premier.

The fact is that it is members of the NDP who have fuelled the narrative that says that if you support this legislation, you are hateful, you are intolerant, you are a bigot. Mr. Speaker, Bill 9 reaffirms that female athletes deserve to have an equal playing field, and this is not a fringe viewpoint. In reality, a number of top international sports federations, including World Aquatics, World Athletics, have taken similar steps, and the International Olympic Committee is looking at making the exact same changes in future Olympic Games. The highest governing body of sport in the world is recognizing the unfair playing field. Bill 9 aligns with international sports federations as safeguarding opportunities that women fought for through the generations.

Now, to the best of my knowledge – I'm not sure if members opposite or members on this side have competed for a scholarship, competed for an opportunity. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if they have, then they know very well what it takes or what it takes to try to make it to the next level. There are examples across this entire province. For example, in Ontario last year a volleyball game between Seneca college and Centennial College featured five transgender athletes. Those are five scholarships missed out on by biological females. While those transgender athletes play on the field, play in the volleyball court, biological female athletes watch from the sidelines, missing out on opportunities, missing out on scholarships, something they trained for their entire life.

I have friends who are women who get up every morning and have to get up every morning, 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock, drive an hour to go train, just to have the opportunity to get better every day, to maybe compete for a scholarship. Imagine doing that your entire life and losing an opportunity to compete to have your school paid for – your school paid for – because someone else is taking your spot and it's not a fair competition, Mr. Speaker. Now, this is just one part of the equation. Just one part of it.

There's fairness and then there's safety. Now, this was a topic discussed by many members in this Chamber. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about safety and a few different aspects of it. First and foremost, it's obvious that safety of athletes needs to be paramount on the court and on the field of play. It is an indisputable fact that men are naturally bigger, larger, and stronger, stronger bone density. Not only will men run faster and jump higher; they will hit harder, have more forceful impact than could ever be considered what some would say is safe. Imagine what that damage could do on the field of play.

I'm going to take it one step further. Members have referenced their own daughters in this Chamber. When we talk about safety and what this means, Mr. Speaker, do members in this Chamber think that it is okay for your daughter to go into the change room and be exposed to male genitalia in the change room when you should be going into an otherwise safe space? Imagine for a second. Let's bring it home.

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order.

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Sabir:** Under 23(h), (i), and (j) I think the Government House Leader is now stretching what members have said about their families, and that will certainly cause disorder in this House. If the member wants to make comments about the bill, use of the notwithstanding clause, which this bill is about – we have debated bills 26, 27, and 29 on their merits. This bill is only about invoking the notwithstanding clause, that is invoked here to trample the Charter rights of Albertans. If he wants to be relevant to the debate, he should talk about the bill. Bills 26, 27, and 29 have already been debated. I think that kind of behaviour will cause disorder in the House.

**The Speaker:** Government side.

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the members are uncomfortable sitting through a speech that is absolutely factual. If they don't want to talk about it, then they're welcome to vacate the Chamber. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. I am debating the substance of the bill, which is protecting women in sports, protecting parents' rights to know what's going

on with their schools, and protecting kids from making adult decisions for when they become adults. If that makes the member uncomfortable, that sounds like a problem for him.

**Mr. Nenshi:** The bill is one page long, and it says nothing about . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. We don't debate during points of order. Just one person on each side, and that's it.

Now, I was listening carefully to what the member was saying, and the House is required to go with my memory here because that's all I have. My recollection of the member's comments was something like: I wonder if members. I don't think he accused anybody of anything. He wondered out loud what people might think on the other side. It's clearly a matter of debate, not a point of order.

Carry on.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

**The Speaker:** Nine minutes and 31 seconds.

**Mr. Schow:** Lovely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I will continue although it does make the members uncomfortable.

Mr. Speaker, again, what I said is: imagine for a moment if the children of the members opposite or my children went into a change room and were exposed to the naked genitals of someone of the opposite sex, particularly as a minor. It is not something that should be allowed. It is not a safe place.

1:30

If someone is not transgender that did this, this would be a problem. This would be something the police would be called for, and rightfully so, but for the same reason if someone does it but they identify as transgender, we are supposed to say there's a difference. Mr. Speaker, tell me the difference. What could that possibly be?

Now, I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have a quote here. This is from a journalism professor at the University of British Columbia, and I hesitate to say the term "doctor," but Katje Thieme, maybe. It says, and I quote,

Let. Little. Children. See. Penises. And. Vulvas. Of. Various. Ages. And. Sizes. In. A. Casual. Normalized. Totally. Safe. Way.

The world will thank you for it. And so will those children when they grow up.

Mr. Speaker, this is groomer language. Suggesting that we should be exposing minors to genitalia of members of the opposite sex, again, is abhorrent. I'm not sure why the members opposite or people like this so-called doctor would even consider that this is normal. It's not. I'd perhaps argue that, even worse, the NDP suggests the need to tell other people's daughters that a person that is identifying as a woman is no longer safe. They should tell them that they're safe. Just deal with it. That's not fair. It's deplorable, and I cannot fathom how any person of this Chamber or any parent in this province can be okay with that.

It's about safety, Mr. Speaker. The most frustrating part of this entire debate is that the NDP are the ones who've spent so much of their time trying to convince Albertans that they're the ones standing up for women's rights. That's laughable. There's nothing else we can learn from the members opposite on this. The NDP have failed women and have abandoned the fight for women. The NDP have failed women.

Moving on from fairness and safety in sport – I think I've made my point pretty clear – I want to speak for a few minutes around the

policy around gender reassignment surgeries and puberty blockers. Before I do, I want to make one point around terminology. This is something the NDP and the left are masters in, full credit: using carefully chosen words like "gender-affirming care" to describe what is actually a very painful, excruciating process that can include removals of breasts, genitalia, and the uterus.

I think we need to be real here and have an adult conversation about what this entails for minors and what this bill is trying to protect and why the notwithstanding clause is being used. I recognize all members may not be comfortable with that, but we shouldn't be comfortable with what's going on here, particularly when we talk about our children.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure all members of the House realize what it details when we describe top surgery or bottom surgery, but I'm happy to go into it, as uncomfortable as that may be. In simple terms, top surgery means the removal of breasts, known as a mastectomy. Now, I think members of this Chamber, either directly or indirectly, know someone who has been affected by this for breast cancer. It is a terrible, terrible experience to go through, but now we're talking about it for minors. Then the opposite is true of breast augmentation or the addition of breasts for minors.

Now I'll spend a moment talking a little bit about other parts of this that the members call "gender-affirming care," particularly top surgery, as I mentioned. This is happening in Canada: surgical removal of breasts of a female minor. Up to this point we have spent a large amount of time talking about puberty blockers, but you have to start asking the question: where do we draw the line for young people identifying as transgender? At this point it is going to cause irreparable harm for them in their entire lives, because from what I hear from members opposite they want to give more options for minors in what they call "gender-affirming care".

Mr. Speaker, this includes surgeries, very painful, invasive surgeries like a vulvectomy or vaginectomy, the removal of the vulva or the vagina; phalloplasty, scrotoplasty, using skin from the other parts of the body, most often the forearm, to create a penis or a scrotum; a hysterectomy, removing reproductive organs such as ovaries or uterus; vulvoplasty, vaginoplasty, which removes the penis, testes, and scrotum and creates a vulva or vaginal canal. I simply have to ask the members: why would they be fine for this for surgeries on minors? Why? Why are the members so comfortable for minors to undergo this surgery? The fact is there are members on that side of the House who are okay with it and would be happy to expand access to these surgeries to minors if given the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, that is the basis of today's discussion. It is the reason for using the notwithstanding clause, drawing a line and protecting children from making irreversible changes at such a young age. The idea of allowing minors to medically transition before we even let them drive a car or vote is abhorrent. In some instances, at the ages we're talking about, we don't even let our kids choose their own bedtime or their own curfew, but we're letting them choose an option to make irreparable, irreversible decisions for their bodies that will take away their ability to reproduce in the future. I just don't understand it.

I have to talk about one more thing, Mr. Speaker. This has been used so much, and I think it's disgusting. In every single case the members have referenced when it comes to children struggling, it's either provide the surgery, provide the puberty blockers or the child will commit suicide. It is not that simple. Our province has a number of supports for those who are struggling with all kinds of issues. I can tell you that most parents love and want to protect their children, but when they're being told that if they don't provide this surgery and these procedures or puberty blockers, then their child will commit suicide, that is abhorrent. How could you even say that

to a parent? As a parent, if you're told that with little information, what are you to think?

The public needs to know that the government is putting safeguards in place to protect minors from this kind of bad advice. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I believe wholeheartedly that the NDP is on the wrong side of history on this, and they will soon realize it. In 2030 I will stand in this very Chamber and I will vote again to re-invoke the notwithstanding clause for another five years. I shouldn't have to, but I will. If the members opposite ever somehow find themselves back in the government benches, I can assure you . . . [interjections]

Incredibly aspirational on the other side.

**An Hon. Member:** We have dreams for Alberta, too.

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah, I would call them nightmares.

Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you is that on this side of the House we will always stand to protect children, protect parents' rights, and protect female athletes from having to compete against biological males all the way through postsecondary. The members opposite won't. They have quit on women, they have quit on parents, but on this side we will never quit on Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Order. Okay. Third reading has been moved.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging the Albertans from across this province who have shown up and spoken up to defend the inherent human rights of all Albertans: the transgender youth and adults; the parents and family members of trans Albertans; the medical professionals, including experts in gender-affirming care, psychologists, and pediatricians; the civil rights and advocacy organizations, like Skipping Stone and Egale; the brave families who challenged and successfully got a court injunction against the UCP's Bill 26 because the court found that the implementation of the bill caused an irreparable risk of harm to the rights to life, liberty, and security of the person and the rights to equality of Albertans; to the Alberta girls and women who are discriminated against simply for being girls and women when they want to participate in sports just like boys and men; the parents and family members of these girls and women; the teachers, school administrators, and coaches; the sports and athletics organizations at both the school, postsecondary, and professional levels; the concerned Albertans who are watching an increasingly authoritarian government casually violate their fundamental human rights.

I also want to acknowledge those Albertans, especially the trans youth and adults, who because of fear, isolation, and their own mental well-being are not able to speak out. It is our job in this House to be the voices of all these Albertans, especially as their government is not listening.

**1:40**

We need to be very clear about what Bill 9 is and what it isn't. Despite the disingenuous title of this bill, it has nothing to do with protecting children. This is about protecting the UCP. It's about protecting them from challenge; challenge from parents, challenge from medical providers, challenge from young people, challenge from girls and women, challenge from Albertans also, Mr. Speaker, challenge from the courts that require the government to pursue their legislative goals in a way that respects the rule of law and fundamental human rights of the people this government serves.

With Bill 9 the UCP is trying to avoid responsibility for proving to Albertans that the depth and the breadth to which they are violating Albertans' human rights is justified and reasonable. By pre-emptively using the notwithstanding clause, which was never

how it was intended to be used and may in fact be unconstitutional itself, the UCP doesn't want to have to show their work. The government members have spoken with such confidence that their policy choices are right and justified, but they don't want to have to prove it. They are afraid of being asked to prove it because they can't prove it.

The notwithstanding clause is not a free pass to violate Albertans' rights as freely, casually, and broadly as the government wants to. It's not a free pass to throw away human rights. It's not a free pass to never have to answer for why and how and whether there was another way to do what they wanted to do without impairing Albertans' rights to the extent that they have. But the UCP thinks it is a free pass. They don't want to just violate the rights of Albertans; they want to do it without question and without challenge. That, Mr. Speaker, is authoritarianism. What the UCP is wilfully ignoring is that the Charter allows governments to limit or impair Charter rights as long as it is demonstrably justified and reasonable in a democratic society. That's in section 1 of the Charter. Here's where the government's position falls apart. They can't prove that it's reasonable, and they can't prove that it is justified. The way that they are doing it undermines our democratic society, and they know it.

Every time the Premier or minister stands up to defend their choice to violate the rights of people of this province in bills 26, 27, and 29, Albertans are served up a hot mess of a word-salad explanation that defies logic. It's not based on evidence or reason. It's based on social media conspiracies. It's based on untested conclusions, questionable and disputed research, and anecdotes. This is what we call the tyranny of the anecdote, Mr. Speaker. One thing may have happened to one person, somewhere, one time, so we have to violate everyone's rights to keep it from happening again.

The surgeries that they're supposedly protecting youth from simply don't happen in Alberta. Last night the minister of hospitals randomly threw out some statistics, late after midnight, a statistic that the government has never been able to produce in the year since this issue has been a topic in Alberta conversation, despite research and FOIP requests and media questions. In fact, Alberta health has repeatedly stated that the information that the minister quoted just isn't collected or reported in Alberta. Sure, we can suddenly trust the number the minister through out last night because suddenly he's the only person in Alberta who knows that information. How convenient.

The Premier repeatedly states that they don't want children making decisions that will permanently affect their ability to have children later in life, but that is not what children are doing. First of all, these children are not making decisions on gender-affirming care on their own. They're not just rolling into a doctor's office, ordering puberty blockers or hormone therapy from doctors like they're ordering a Starbucks coffee. These decisions are being made by their parents, with the care and advice of medical professionals, after months, sometimes years, of all kinds of medical care and support.

These decisions are not irreversible. The research is clear on this point despite the inaccurate statements from the UCP. Guess what? If the medical research does change, that is up to medical professionals and parents to understand and make decisions based on changing information, just like any other medical care. It is simply unbelievable that the UCP does not understand that parents make medical decisions every single day on behalf of their children and about the health of their children. Every one of us in here who is a parent has at some point sat anxiously with our child in a doctor's office, bringing them the health concerns of our child. We listen to the advice from these medical professionals. We're advised

of the risks, the pros and the cons, different options for treatments, possible side effects of taking a specific course of action, and the side effects of doing nothing. Every single parent has made agonizing decisions about our children's care, and we make those decisions with our child's input, putting what's best for our child above everything else.

While this government has a deeply troubling obsession with the fertility of children, parents have an obsession with their child's well-being, with their mental health, with them staying alive. We've had two members of the UCP now stand in this House and refer to these very parents, the ones who are agonizing over their child's care, as bad parents. This is not just deeply disrespectful and degrading, but it's also proof that this government has no business making decisions for the children of this province. It's proof that they have no business thinking that they have the right to replace the judgment of parents with their own. It's proof that the UCP needs to mind their own business.

Now let's get to the completely unreasonable and unjustified choice of this government to make every girl aged 12 and over prove that they are a girl to play a sport in this province. The UCP knows without a doubt that they could never justify this decision to so broadly humiliate, degrade, and discriminate against women and girls in this province, because the entire justification for this action is one anecdote of one high school student in Alberta who didn't qualify in a race, allegedly because of a trans athlete. That's it. One anecdote of one story in Alberta, when there are an estimated 250,000 girls in Alberta between the ages of 12 and 17. The UCP is choosing to discriminate against them all based on one anecdotal story of one high school student by forcing them and their parents to prove that they are a girl.

Not to mention the fact that it opens these girls up to further humiliation and discrimination because anyone can challenge the gender of these children for any reason, especially if they don't present in traditional feminine ways. Let's be clear. It is racialized girls who will be targeted the most by this; racialized parents of daughters know this.

To add insult to injury, the UCP don't even trust parents to attest to the gender of their own child. No, parents will have to pay for and produce a government-issued document, a record of birth so that the government can prove what gender their child is. The UCP wants the last word on the gender of your child.

Mr. Speaker, this province has never seen a government so obsessed with the genitals of children and their fertility. The government has no problem legislating on these issues, but finds it utterly distasteful to have to defend it. This broad, unlimited, overreaching discrimination is completely unjustifiable and it is not just that a court would undoubtedly find it unconstitutional. The UCP is too afraid to have to show Albertans that they discriminated against hundreds of thousands of girls – our daughters; our children – with no evidence or justification.

Mr. Speaker, the government is either confused by the logical inconsistencies of their own positions, which is a generous interpretation, or the UCP should be embarrassed by how unprincipled their positions have always been. A year ago they believed in parents' rights, but this year they believe they know better than parents. A year ago they believed in the freedom of Albertans to make their own medical decisions; this year they believe government should make medical decisions for Albertans.

Maybe there is a common thread here. Maybe it's rights for me but not for thee. Maybe the common thread is division, it's cruelty, it's power, it's antidemocratic. That is the common thread that is woven through all of this government's actions. Alberta's children don't need the UCP to protect them like this.

After over six years, Alberta's children need protection from the UCP. Child poverty is rising in this province at unbelievable rates. More children and families are using food banks in Alberta. Alberta ranks first in Canada for the highest proportion of kids who go to school hungry. Low-income families can't afford to send their children to early learning because the UCP cut the child care subsidy. Their education is at the lowest funding level in this country. Children are being taught in crowded classrooms without the supports they deserve. Families of children with disabilities wait unbearably long times to get FSCD, and most shocking, the children in this province who this government is actually legally responsible for, the children in care, continue to die in devastating numbers.

No, Mr. Speaker. The UCP has no standing to talk about protecting children. The biggest threat to the well-being of Alberta children is not their parents; it is the UCP. I cannot imagine a government less qualified, less capable of leading with compassion, less competent to make policies based on evidence or fact, less trusted with the rights of Albertans than the UCP. Bill 9 is a stain on this province's legacy, and the UCP and every member of this government is on the wrong side of history.

1:50

I and the members of the Official Opposition will know that while we couldn't change the government's course of action tonight, there will come a time when the voices of Albertans will erase the UCP's dark and antidemocratic legacy. The long arc of history bends towards justice, Mr. Speaker, and it will be the decency, the compassion, and the strong, loud voices of Albertans that will bend it.

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

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Mr. Speaker, I rise not only in opposition to Bill 9 in this final debate, but I do so with strong condemnation over the stripping away of rights of Albertans in this province three more times by this UCP government with limited debate time. The notwithstanding clause and this government's continued use of it and threats of continued use are threats to all of us.

Sitting across from this government that cheer when they take away the rights of Albertans was not something I ever thought I would see and have a front row seat for when I made the oath to protect and serve all folks of this province. We are reminded that our decisions and our representation in this place is not to be done for love of power, but the use of the notwithstanding clause is nothing but an authoritarian overreach by the UCP, the consequences of which are being played out on the streets, in our schools, in our hospitals, in our third places all across this province.

What Bill 9 signals to our community, including to our trans community who are the most marginalized and most vulnerable, is that they are political tools by the government to blame, deflect, and hide the fact that this government is incompetent. Instead of addressing the real problems of Albertans, they have created a problem that does not exist.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 9 does not do what the other side is arguing, and, my goodness, were those some arguments. Yikes. They are trying to relitigate their really bad antitrans bills that they felt they had such justification for their extreme measures. With the first scintilla of challenge by the courts, the Premier wrote to each of her ministers to subvert the rule of law in this province. Boy, oh, boy, was it shocking to see in so many ministers' letters that they would do so. But I digress.

Let's be honest. This is not relitigating those bad bills. It is about the notwithstanding clause. Had it been one time, it would have

been an example that political science students would have been studying for years, but the unprecedented abuse of it four times in two months by a government that is concurrently stifling dissent: the opposition's ability to debate in this House; organizations and unions that fight for the rights of Albertans. It's not hard to see a pattern forming, Mr. Speaker. Albertans will show the UCP to the door, and I for one cannot wait for that day.

For the other side, that's not legalese. Although the courts are clear, the power Albertans have here will show them where to go. Despite this government, the ministers who call the courts gatekeepers, they do so because they know their decision to use the notwithstanding clause is reviewable. This is not the end despite the authoritarian stomping of their feet over this garbage bill.

Mr. Speaker, I meet with trans Albertans and their families and allies all the time from across this beautiful province, and they have many thoughts about this government. Many of them I want to share here.

I think about my friend Candace who just wants their little one to grow up in a world where they can be the most beautiful two-spirit person and whose doctor has told them their best access to health care for life-affirming care would be to move out of province.

I also think of Quinn, who shared the heart-wrenching news that their sister died by suicide because of the rhetoric in this Chamber and the legislation that was created to target their sister, a trans girl.

I think of Hestia and Jax, siblings who despite all odds by the UCP have grown up and live authentically and fight vociferously for not only each other but for all trans folks in this province. I think of Hestia sharing her very vulnerable story about her insecurity, about not being able to access life-affirming care much younger. I think of Jax picking her up and loving her unconditionally because they were lucky to receive life-affirming care before puberty and who gets to live alongside his amazing and strong older sister who has sat in this Chamber every day to listen to the care and love on this side and the grandstanding on the other side.

I also think of the amazing trans folks and allies who are seated in the gallery tonight with Hestia watching as the rights of Albertans are stripped away with fanfare by the UCP: Marni, Tess, Star, and Ashley.

I also think about Dean, who has succeeded and receives the life-affirming care that he so rightly deserves as a trans man but who runs into difficulties on his educational journey because this government is signalling to our public institutions that discrimination is okay as long as it's done to trans folks in this province.

I think about Ryder, who is forced to join a sled hockey team outside of this city because the rules prevent him from playing with his teammates that he has been playing with after fighting his health battles, a sport he is so proud to play and one he fights hard to advocate for despite this government's attacks on him.

I think of Toni, who is running a gym and affirming sports programs despite this government's bad legislative decisions and whose business partner stands beside him and who is the mom to my good friend Charlie, who doesn't understand why their government has taken away the rights of such a loving and accepting community.

I think of Rowan, who has brought this community together through Trans Rights YEG after the Premier made comments setting the stage for this government's antitrans bills numbered 26, 27, and 29, a trans man who called out this government's ineptitude in honest ways and sometimes heated ways because it is sometimes necessary given this government's failures.

I think of Bennett from Egale, who has been fighting this government in court while being a trans man living through a time where he is defending his existence across this country, who is using his legal skills to justify members of our community's humanity.

I think of Adebayo, who is making space for trans Black refugees in this province, who is spreading trans Black joy in spite of the notwithstanding clause.

I think of Elli, who is sharing queer joy in organizing queer businesses in Alberta so that we have legacy building, fundraising opportunities, and ways to connect with each other in beautiful and good ways.

I think of the trans community's allies. Many of them have written me: trans youth, parents of trans youth, doctors, and Albertans. Mr. Speaker, Albertans. I want to read some of these e-mails. From Marck, a trans youth:

I am a trans youth. I wish you will find the mercy to not pass a bill that will make multiple trans youth [hurt] themselves. I have personally been scared for my safety as a youth in the province you are claiming to protect. You claim to be "for the kids" with the strike and this. Both of these are harming youth. I wish you don't pass the bill.

I hear from Rick, who says:

I did not vote conservative, as I have my entire life, to have the leader become a dictator and hide behind policy that would not stand up in court. Stop bringing GOP style politics to Alberta. Start being a leader for all citizens, not just your coveted right-wing portion. Be better, do better. Stop the games, debate properly, do not remove more charter rights from Albertans [as] you already have. Shameful it was done with all teachers in this province.

If this party continues to use the notwithstanding clause, that is not the party I voted for. If it continues, I will never vote conservative again. It's absolutely disgusting how you have all acted this past few months. Despicable behaviour.

I have an e-mail here from Clarice, who says:

My daughter is at the wheel in regards to her gender identity and the treatment she receives . . . as she enters into puberty she finds herself battling with the fear of voice change, facial hair and the additional results of male puberty. Due to the UCP's transphobic laws put into action in December 2024, my daughter will not be able to receive a prescription from her doctor for hormone blockers when they become necessary.

I also received an e-mail from Kiandra, who says:

As a mental health support in schools, I have been the first safe adult a student has come out to as trans or gender non-binary or gender queer over a dozen times. I have supported students in navigating conversations with their parents when they are ready, and I have navigated the very real fears trans students face at the prospect of their parents finding out they are trans. Some students are lucky and find support when they come out in their own time. Others are not. Some face their worst fears turned to reality. Others still have chosen to navigate their journey silently until they are older with only confidential support.

2:00

Have there been times where students coming out or being outed has resulted in harm to students necessitating me involving Child and Family Services? Absolutely. Will forcing students to be outed to parents cause the same harm? Undoubtedly. Will creating fear to come out to safe adults cause irreparable harm? Undoubtedly. Will denying expert medical professionals the right to treat trans children as they see fit undermine the medical profession and prevent the experts from providing quality care? Yes. Is that my opinion? No. That is fact. Is it my opinion that the abhorrent use of the notwithstanding clause (again) for Bill 9

is because the UCP government knows this legislation would not stand up in court and is a violation of Charter Rights? Yes.

I've also got an e-mail here from Kelsey, who says:

Regarding the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act, the fact that the Act only requires these signed contracts for girls' sports is in itself very telling. It is at once misogynistic and misandric at the same time, so well done to the creators of it for multitasking. The fact that any parent may question for any reason any participating student is in a word grotesque. It is a sickening invasion of privacy of an innocent child. What right has a stranger to demand information about a child's genitalia?

This act also puts forth a narrative that implies that a girl who is good at sports surely cannot be so out of hard work and talent, but because she is actually a boy in disguise. Which is completely absurd.

Do they know why men's and women's sports were separated to begin with? It was because with the original standards of many competitive sports, women were beating men across the board and the men were getting upset about it. This is why men's divisions were created, and different metrics set for their performance. It was never about protecting women. It was about protecting male pride . . .

Preventing children from learning about sexuality only makes them vulnerable to people who would hurt them, and robs them of the language and understanding that would allow them to refuse and speak of what has happened to them.

Will opting in to lessons about science and history be next? Will children need permission to learn that the Earth is not flat? The abuses that were heaped upon the Indigenous by the Colonizers, or the events that led up to the World Wars and the travesties that followed?

Regarding the limiting of access to puberty blockers and surgery [the Premier] said that, and I quote, "children deserve to have their fertility preserved until they are mature enough to make potentially life-changing decisions."

[interjections]

Completely ignoring that science has proven that taking blockers alone should have no effect on a person's fertility, what Premier . . . implies here is that young people have no value except in that they might one day bear children.

Does she realize how horrible and intensely screwed up that is?

Children should be seen as children, not as potential baby-makers.

It is a shame that the other side just cheered for that.

I also had another e-mail from Nicole, who said:

Using the notwithstanding clause to . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Table them all.

**Member Arcand-Paul:**

. . . silence courts and override rights is an abuse of power. It does not protect children – it removes accountability and shuts down debate on issues that impact real lives. Alberta deserves leadership that listens, not one that hides behind constitutional loopholes.

I heard the member opposite say, "Table them all." They have been tabled twice now. Thank you very much.

I have another e-mail here from Wendy, who says:

By pre-emptively using the notwithstanding clause before these bills have the chance to be tested in the courts you are sidestepping the very checks and balances meant to protect our rights. In doing so, you override the rights of children, parents, doctors, and teachers. These are not abstract groups; these are the people who live, learn, teach, and care in our communities every [single] day.

Mr. Speaker, we are not relitigating those bad, garbage bills today. We are debating the unprecedented abuse of power this

government has committed against Albertans for the fourth time in Alberta history. The use of the notwithstanding clause is shameful. The Alberta New Democrats will withdraw these bills. We will legislate against power-hungry use of the notwithstanding clause because trans rights are human rights. The UCP should be ashamed. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

On the third reading of Bill 9, Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 – oh, sorry; no one was standing up. You wanted to speak? Okay. You're going to get to, but you just about lost your chance because I looked around and no – anyways, go ahead. The Member for Calgary-Acadia.

**Member Batten:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege – my absolute privilege – to join debate this evening in opposition to Bill 9. No, I won't tell you what the title is. I think it's very clear that there are some differing opinions here on what this bill will do. I want to acknowledge a couple of things right up front. I want to thank my colleagues on this side of the House for their very passionate, intelligent, and empathetic debate that they have provided tonight. I want to thank everyone who's here standing up against really, really bad bills.

I want to start by sharing a statement from Egale and Skipping Stone just to provide a little bit of insight as to why they immediately launched a lawsuit back when the three antipeople bills were introduced. "Simply put, gender diverse young people are being denied medical care because they are gender diverse and that is unconstitutional. We are fighting for a society where all people are able to live authentic and full lives." Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are, too.

Bill 9 cheats democracy the same way that Bill 2 did, where the UCP legislated Alberta's public teachers back into overcrowded classrooms with no additional resources. Oh, wait. They were offered something, weren't they? A COVID vaccine, I think, which earlier, go back a few months, was actually free for Albertans. I'm getting distracted.

Now, Mr. Speaker, by invoking the notwithstanding clause even once, let alone – what is it? – four times now, this demonstrates an incredible lacking, we'll say, in this government because if you need to invoke it over and over and over again or even once, that shows that you're not able to actually govern, you don't know how to compromise, you don't know how to negotiate. That's what that proves. It's so incredibly disrespectful. Then to use it on public servants and then to turn around and decide, "You know what? We're also going to take away these folks' rights for literally no good reason," it is – if you have to change the rules to win, you're not winning; you're cheating.

Now, we've heard this government claim that this bill is all about the children. There is definitely a misunderstanding here. On this side of the House we value evidence, we value prevention, we value early childhood development, we value parents, and we value the voices and the thoughts of young Albertans. Mr. Speaker, if they were in fact doing it for the children, would we not see legislation coming forward that actually supported young Albertans, that actually supported children? No. Instead, this is what we get.

Let me again share a quote: "Alberta's ban on gender-affirming care for minors is unconstitutional. It is also contrary to the Alberta Bill of Rights. If it remains enforced, gender-diverse young people in this province will suffer serious and irreparable harm." End quote. That is from the application brief for the injunction that occurred back in spring. Serious and irreparable harm, Mr. Speaker.

For the children? Come on. This bill has nothing to do with the children. Nothing. If it did, then what we'd find in this legislation –

we would find things that would actually support them, not try to insert government into spaces they should never be in. We've heard it over and over again that this government seems to have – I believe we called it an allergy earlier to something else. They have an allergy to professionals.

So what is this bill? Is this bill another attack on constitutional rights? Yes. Alberta children and youth? Yes. Is it another attack on, like, health care professionals? What is it that this government is so scared is happening between a patient, a child, their parents, and their physician? It's mind boggling. [interjections]

I've said it before, and I'll repeat my . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. There's crosstalk. You know, what we try to do is only have one person at a time speak.

2:10

**Member Batten:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is this bill about? Well, it certainly isn't about Alberta's young, but maybe it's just about centralizing power, like – I don't know – Bill 14. I've said it before, and I'll repeat myself again because this government seems to have some problems understanding. Here's the thing. Bill 9 does not actually address the very real concerns that Albertans are bringing forward. If that's all it did, that it was a distraction, a nonharming distraction, that would be one thing. This is a harmful bill.

I know that I have colleagues who want to get the last few words here, so I will cede my time, but I urge every single person inside this space to really think about the motivation for what they're about to vote for or against. Our responsibility inside this House dictates that we vote against it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

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

**Dr. Metz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is another garbage bill which I can't support. I want to share with you a message from a teacher that was sent after returning to the sadness of her classroom when she was forced back to work after this government used the notwithstanding clause. She was worried about use of the notwithstanding clause in Bill 9 to override the Charter of Rights for the two-spirit, trans, and gender-diverse children in Alberta. Along with her profound sadness for her impacted students, she noted that the bill is, sadly, also another way to further take away the rights of teachers to teach what they know is essential.

I previously spoke about how this bill removes the rights of parents, students, and health care providers, but I had not raised the impact of this on teachers. I had not thought about it. It really is a double whammy for them as they know very personally and very profoundly the emotional impact of having their rights removed again. She said:

After a lifetime of giving so much of myself to Alberta's children, I refuse to accept that my fundamental rights and freedoms can be now taken away again because I identify with the LGBTQ2S-plus group. I was one of those humans who ran a club in middle school. Many dedicated extra hours were further given to me to help children grow into the strongest citizens possible. Now, with Bill 9, I'm losing the right to teach equality, to tell children that in Canada they have the right to love whoever they choose and that their bodies are beautifully diverse, reflecting the natural variety of human biology. We had just started to establish safety and support for this complex group of students.

I want all of you to know that this bill is going to hurt . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members, let's hear from the person who has the floor if you don't mind, please. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Metz:** This bill is going to hurt many people. It's going to hurt all of the people, the children that are directly affected. It's going to hurt everyone that loves them. It's going to hurt their caregivers, their teachers, and all of us. I urge all of you to vote against this bill.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe we've got about two minutes left. Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Varsity for her words, and thank you to all the members who spoke tonight. I'm just so grateful for this team.

I think we can head back to our home constituencies tomorrow knowing that we fought hard for trans Albertans and we fought hard for human rights this session. We fought hard against a UCP government that invoked the notwithstanding clause an unprecedented number of times.

This government was taunting us, saying that we would have regrets. Let me tell you that this is a UCP government that's going to have big regrets about the decisions they made this past session. And let me tell you that we're tired for sure, we're a bit beaten down, but we are going to fight harder than ever before to ensure that Albertans don't just have the largest opposition in Alberta's history; they are going to have the strongest NDP government in 2027.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 22, agreed to on December 9, 2025, one hour of debate has now been completed and I am required to put to the Assembly all necessary questions to disclose of Bill 9, Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 in third reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:16 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

2:20

Against the motion:

|             |           |        |
|-------------|-----------|--------|
| Al-Guneid   | Ellingson | Metz   |
| Arcand-Paul | Elmeligi  | Nenshi |

|                    |          |                 |
|--------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Batten             | Eremenko | Pancholi        |
| Boparai            | Ganley   | Renaud          |
| Brar, Gurinder     | Goehring | Sabir           |
| Brar, Gurtej       | Guthrie  | Schmidt         |
| Calahoo Stonehouse | Haji     | Shepherd        |
| Ceci               | Hoffman  | Sigurdson, Lori |
| Chapman            | Hoyle    | Sweet           |
| Dach               | Irwin    | Tejada          |
| Deol               | Kasawski | Wright, P.      |
| Eggen              |          |                 |

Totals: For – 43 Against – 34

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a third time]

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 10, 2025.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 2:22 a.m. on Wednesday]







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