



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 30, 2026

Day 40

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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

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Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
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Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP)
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
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Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
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Hoyle, Rhiannon, Edmonton-South (NDP)
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Kasawski, Kyle, Sherwood Park (NDP)
Kayande, Samir, Calgary-Elbow (NDP)
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)
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Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)
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(UC)
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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

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

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| Nate Horner | President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance |
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| Tany Yao | Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development |

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Stephan
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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Renaud
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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Al-Guneid
Armstrong-Homeniuk
Calahoo Stonehouse
Cyr
Ip
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Rowswell
Yao

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 30, 2026

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, being that this is the first sitting day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by the Strathcona Christian Academy elementary choir. I invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker: The Legislative Assembly is grateful to be situated on Treaty 6 territory. This land has been the traditional region of the Métis people of Alberta, the Inuit, and the ancestral territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Iroquois, and Nakota Sioux people. The recognition of our history on this land is an act of reconciliation, and we honour those who walk with us. We also acknowledge that the province of Alberta exists within treaties 4, 7, 8, and 10 territories and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to be able to introduce students from Sherwood Park from Lakeland Ridge public school. They've been here learning about the Legislature all day. If I could just have them all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, seated in both the members' and public galleries are pupils of the Strathcona Christian Academy elementary school choir, who just finished providing the wonderful rendition of *O Canada*. They are accompanied by their teachers Adrienne Roussel and Andrea Mehta and a few parents. Thank you, all, for being here with us today. I invite you now to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, I'm also pleased to introduce constituents from Canmore, Melissa Yarmoloy and Chris Cooke. Melissa and Chris run a wonderful cafe in Canmore that you're all likely

familiar with, Blondie's Cafe. I ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

We have other guests, starting with Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud to rise and introduce some incredible advocates from Alberta's trans community, including Victoria Bucholtz, Chris Boodram, Fae Johnstone, Shanni Pinkerton, and Ashley Noelck. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you some incredible guests today. We have Megan Bergman and Madison Dubé from the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association as well as Leanne Niblock, Melissa Logan, Aimee Winegarden, and Alex Jap from the Alberta SPCA as well as our new chief provincial veterinarian, Dr. Hussein Keshwani. I would ask that you all please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Member Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly parents that are here at the Legislature today to raise the voices of their kids: trans kids, gender-diverse kids, nonbinary kids. Karla Sunday Stephens, Marike van Tienen, and Dale Ladouceur, please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you parents Dawn Zimmermann, Shala Neufeld, Misty Crowell, and Cynthia Bale. Thank you for raising four extraordinary trans kids. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Terry W.N. Thuo, trustee for Calgary Catholic school district wards 3 and 5, becoming the first Black individual elected to the board since its founding in 1885. With 14 years of supporting children with special needs and as an active community volunteer, her leadership reflects a commitment to inclusion and faith. I ask that she rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All roads lead to Sherwood Park, but it turns out a lot of roads from Sherwood Park lead here, with Strathcona Christian Academy and Lakeland Ridge here, but I want to introduce two students from Edmonton from Grandview school. They're in grade 9. We have Max Shipman and Owen Marchand, who are here to learn about government on their free time. Will you two please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to congratulate the students from Strathcona Christian Academy for their wonderful rendition of the national anthem. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

New Democratic Party of Canada Convention

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend New Democrats gathered in Winnipeg for their national convention, and what unfolded was nothing short of chaos. From internal squabbles over equity cards and pronouns to leadership candidate Rob Ashton shouting “eat the rich” to a cheering crowd, this was a convention that raised serious questions about the direction of today’s NDP. It’s how far we’ve drifted from the simple idea that every Canadian should be treated as an individual, not some demographic check box.

At the centre of it all was the election of Avi Lewis, a self-declared eco socialist as the party’s new leader, who after his victory pledged his full support for the Leader of the Opposition to become Premier of Alberta. Yet, at the same time, the Leader of the Opposition appeared to be scrambling to distance himself from his new federal counterpart. Well, that’s awkward and an impossible task given the clear constitutional ties between the federal and provincial wings of the party.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans know exactly who Avi Lewis is. He’s a prominent advocate of the Leap Manifesto, called for a full ban on new pipelines and all fossil fuel development at a time when the world needs Alberta energy more than ever. As expected, several NDP MLAs were in attendance in Winnipeg celebrating this outcome, and this is part of a long and consistent pattern of opposition against Alberta’s energy sector from members of the Alberta NDP: opposition to pipelines, opposition to development, and opposition to jobs that sustain families across our province.

While the NDP drifts further towards ideological extremes, our government remains focused on what matters: building pipelines, growing our economy, and standing firmly with Alberta’s energy workers. Mr. Speaker, this is the clear choice before Albertans: a party tied to radical policies that would shut down one of our most important industries, or a government that will defend it, grow it, and fight for every single job it supports. Our province was built on hard work and a thriving energy industry, and we’ll never let the NDP, federal or provincial, take that away. [interjections]

1:40

The Speaker: Order.

Official Opposition Energy Policy

Member Kayande: Last week Alberta’s New Democrats released a first look at our energy policy. I spent my career in oil and gas, and I know the difference between the performative statements of the members opposite, who talk about energy, versus doing something. We have spent the last weeks and months speaking with industry stakeholders, communities, Indigenous people, and leading experts around the world to figure out how Alberta can meet this moment and be more than just a bystander, to be a world leader of the energy industry.

These are difficult times. Global instability means that energy markets are getting disrupted. As everyone who’s tried to fill their gas tank in the last month knows, when things are uncertain, regular people pay the price. That’s why we need to take action, but the window of opportunity will close as this government flails around with performative statements instead of getting the work done.

Alberta’s New Democrats believe in market access for oil and natural gas. We believe in focusing our efforts on win-win solutions for other governments, local communities, and Indigenous people, for Albertans. That’s why we support a new pipeline to the south coast of British Columbia following the TMX route as well as the immediate optimization of Trans Mountain to increase capacity by over 300,000 barrels per day. That’s why we believe in fixing the

mess the UCP made of our electricity system by bringing back a thriving renewable sector and building electricity pipelines between us and our neighbours. All of these plans will reduce everyone’s costs and dramatically reduce emissions. That’s why we believe in value-added products, ensuring that we’re doing more than just shipping bitumen, and that’s why we believe in expanding a critical-mineral sector that will provide the world what it needs.

The world needs Canadian energy, Mr. Speaker. Conservatives, with all their talk, have built zero miles of pipeline to tidewater. Alberta’s New Democrats know how to do this. We know how to get it done.

The Speaker: I will remind all members that during Members’ Statements we let that happen without interruption. The next one that won’t be interrupted is the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Alberta-India Economic Corridors

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For six years I’ve been clear about the need to formalize economic corridors. I’ve raised it in this House, across the country, internationally through the Council of State Governments, NCSL, Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, the Ports to Plains Alliance, and the Energy Council. My first motion in this House was actually on economic corridors five years ago. Naturally, the NDP all voted against it.

In the spring of 2025 our Premier gave the green light to start up the Alberta India Advisory Committee. Its purpose was straightforward: connect Alberta and Indian states and create economic corridors. This January we launched our first trade mission to India. Energy Week was one of our core stops, and 74,000 other people from around the world joined us there. The U.A.E. advised that they do \$100 billion a year in trade with India, and they’re looking to double that. Alberta, all industries in: \$700 million. Obviously, we’ve got lots of room to grow, Mr. Speaker. Our federal energy minister was there to help us open our Alberta trade booth. He delivered a speech. It was clear, the need for pipelines to the west coast for increased oil and gas exports. Even the new PM is onside, our Canadian PM.

Let’s be clear. India’s Prime Minister said that they’ll buy everything that we can get to him, Mr. Speaker. A sincere thank you to BPCL, Texmaco, Titagarh, the port of Paradip, and partners in energy, rail, infrastructure, and the east coast export for us, for that coast. The port authority didn’t just host us, Mr. Speaker; they wanted to collaborate with us. I shared Travel Alberta’s *To Be an Albertan*. As soon as we saw that, we moved quickly from talking about business to long-term trade relationships.

That’s why it’s deeply frustrating to watch the reckless rhetoric coming from the opposition and the Tory party of one, not to mention the mainstream media coverage that keeps amplifying it. Enough is enough. The people I met abroad don’t know what the NDP is like. They don’t know the fear-and-smear storybook that they follow. The opposition’s irresponsible political games threaten billions of dollars in current and future trade, not just for Alberta but for all of Canada. It’s time for the undermining of our province and their minor political points to stop. Put Alberta and Canada forward first, not their short-sighted, petty politics.

International Transgender Day of Visibility

Member Ellingson: Trans Day of Visibility is a pretty straightforward moment for the community. It’s a day to simply be an authentic, genuine, and real version of themselves. For trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse people in every corner of our province and this country, the Trans Day of Visibility is a showcase of how ordinary and extraordinary trans people are.

But this year's Trans Day of Visibility comes on the back of a difficult time for trans people, a time where some politicians exploit fear and ignorance to weaponize hate that should have no place in our province. Take trans athletes in sport, for instance. Girls in our province who just want to get involved on teams are told they must prove their sex – just the girls; not the boys – to participate in sport. It's discriminatory, and it's wrong. Girls, including trans girls, just want to be part of a team. Instead of encouraging team sports that have been shown time and time again to benefit the mental health and social cohesion of youth, this government and others like it practice transphobia instead of practising inclusion.

On this Trans Day of Visibility parents and loved ones of trans kids want this government to know that attacking their children is not okay, making them feel unsafe in our province is not okay, and weaponizing the Charter's notwithstanding clause is not okay. Our freedoms will not be taken for granted. Our rights will not be trampled on. This Trans Day of Visibility we stand with every trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse person in this province, especially our youth, and say: you are loved, and you are welcome here in this place. This is your Assembly.

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

National Engineering and Geoscience Month

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March is National Engineering and Geoscience Month in Canada, a time to recognize and celebrate the professionals whose work quite literally builds and sustains our province. Engineers and geoscientists are at the heart of Alberta's success, designing critical infrastructure, supporting responsible resource development, and driving innovation across our economy. From the roads and bridges that connect our communities to the energy systems that power our homes and industries to the technologies shaping our future, these professionals play a vital role in improving the quality of life for all Albertans. Their expertise ensures that our province remains strong, competitive, and ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Alberta is home to some of the most highly skilled engineers and geoscientists in the world. Through organizations like APEGA we continue to uphold rigorous standards of professionalism, safety, and accountability. These standards not only protect the public but also reinforce confidence in the work being done across our province every day. Engineering and geoscience are also central to addressing some of the most pressing challenges we face, from advancing energy innovation and environmental stewardship to building resilient communities and modern infrastructure.

The work being done today is helping to shape a more sustainable and prosperous future for Alberta. As we look ahead, it is essential that we continue to support strong education and training pathways that prepare the next generation of professionals. By investing in skills, innovation, and opportunity, we are ensuring that Alberta remains a leader in this field for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, during National Engineering and Geoscience Month, I invite all the members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing the contributions of engineers and geoscientists across Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Policies and Cost of Living

Ms Hoffman: Every Albertan did something really expensive this weekend. For some in the UCP cabinet it might have been a trip on a private jet, box seats to a major sporting event, or rides in a chauffeured Rolls-Royce, but for most of us in everyday Alberta

the expensive thing we did was get gas or groceries on the way to the kids' game.

Gas has jumped 40 cents a litre in just over a month. The UCP could reduce this price by 13 cents with a simple rule change. Instead, they set up a website called affordable advice for life. And what's their advice on gas, you ask? Go easy on the gas pedal, use a lighter touch, and avoid hard braking. End quote. The UCP could give us a little break by capping vehicle insurance and scrap their plan to punish victims with no-fault insurance, downloading more costs onto good drivers, but they didn't do that.

Over the past seven years while the cost of living has skyrocketed, the UCP left the lowest income workers struggling with the lowest minimum wage in Canada. But we have a minister of affordability. He's making \$180,000 a year, with an office budget of almost a million dollars. That office got an 11 per cent increase.

1:50

The government website has another hot tip: save loose change in a jar or piggy bank. Albertans need meaningful solutions, Mr. Speaker, like capped insurance, grocery competition, relief at the pumps, and an increased minimum wage. They deserve a government that's led by people who care, but the current Premier is more focused on spending time with The Donald and Saudi royalty than standing up with workers, the working people of this province who are seeing their costs run out of control.

To the voters who chose the UCP three years ago because you thought they would do something on affordability, this isn't your fault. They promised they would. They broke that promise. You know that a promise made is a debt unpaid. Well, that debt is certainly growing under the UCP because they blew a boom during the boom, and they're leaving everyday Albertans to pay that price.

Oral Question Period

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

Citizen-Initiated Referendums

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Forever Canadian petition was tabled – and remember that that's the only petition that has achieved the signatures to be verified – the Premier said that she would meet with cabinet and very quickly figure out their options. That was in December, and we've only just learned that they managed to schedule a one-hour meeting on April 21. Meanwhile this Premier this weekend told separatists that she would fast-track the separatist referendum and get it on the ballot this fall. Why the double standard? Why did it take five months to set a one-hour meeting?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a process that we go through when a citizen-initiated referendum is successful in getting the number of signatures. That process was to establish an all-party committee, which has been done. I'm glad that they'll be meeting in April. The complexity with this issue, as the member well knows, is that the petition advocate, even though the letter of the petition said that it would go to a referendum, since changed his mind. That's one of the things that has to be put to the committee, whether it will come to this forum in the Legislature or whether it will go to a vote of the people in October.

Mr. Nenshi: Well, as the Premier points out, the committee actually has a decision to make. It's a do-work committee. It could have met in December, yet we've waited five months for it to meet. Nearly half

a million Albertans signed that petition. They followed all the rules. They were much harder than the rules the Premier set for her separatist friends. They deserve to not be ignored. Is this because her own caucus supports separatism? She cares about a pressure release valve for separatists but not pressure relief for proud Canadians. Why is she brazenly risking our economic future just to placate the separatists in her party?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish it were that simple. I think part of the reason why the proponent of Forever Canadian has had cold feet about whether he wants it to be put to a referendum is because when you put forward a yes or no question to “Do you want to remain in Canada; yes or no?” what are the consequences of a “no” vote? I don’t know that we know the answer to that, and I’m hoping that the committee will shed some light on it. But I suspect that that’s part of the reason why he initially said yes to a referendum and has since changed his mind. I’m looking forward to seeing how the committee will grapple with those issues.

Mr. Nenshi: It’s clear that what this government is doing is delaying in the hopes that their separatist friends get their signatures and this thing goes away. This is shoddy legislation. It always has been, and now the government is seeing the consequences of their actions. But the Premier still won’t denounce separatism. She still won’t speak out in favour of Canada, but she welcomes separatists in her caucus and in her cabinet. Albertans are worried about their CPP. They’re worried about the RCMP. They’re worried about protecting the future of our country and our economy. Why won’t the Premier just let the Assembly have the vote on the Forever Canadian petition and put this to bed?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ve made my position very clear, that I support a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada. That means Alberta stays a province in Canada and we address the very real grievances that people have about the way we’ve been treated by the federal government, backed by their NDP allies in the federal government. What we’ve seen is that the member opposite had members from his party who were celebrating the vote this weekend of a new leader of the national NDP, Avi Lewis, who wants to keep infrastructure from being built, keep oil and gas in the ground. These are the reasons why Albertans feel disenfranchised, and he could do something about that.

The Speaker: The second set of questions belongs to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: I’m impressed it took her three questions to get to that answer.

Alberta Separatism and Government Caucus

Mr. Nenshi: Here’s the thing. The Premier is obsessed with who people’s bosses are because she has so many bosses: President Trump, Kristi Noem, Jeffrey Rath, David Parker, the Heritage Foundation, Saudi princes, and, of course, the boss of this entire government, Sam Mraiche. It must be hard having all those people in her ear all the time. Why doesn’t this Premier think that Albertans are her boss?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I know the member opposite doesn’t care much about constitutions, but he should read his own constitution because it does say that the NDP Party’s federal constitution means that the principles have to be aligned with the federal party. His own constitution says that “in any matter not dealt with . . . the Constitution of the New Democratic Party of Canada shall prevail.” With the stakes so high – he had 73,000 people vote in the Alberta leadership election; there were only 71,000 people who voted in the federal leadership election – why didn’t he rally his people? Why didn’t he ask Albertans to make sure that we didn’t get somebody anti-Alberta who was going to be his boss?

Mr. Nenshi: Well, I thank the Premier for two things. The first thing I thank her for was posting this weekend the actual constitution. The first three lines, which she may not have read, said that provincial parties are fully autonomous. I thank her for reminding everyone that far more people voted in our leadership and for me than ever voted for her.

Here’s the thing. She can’t have it both ways on this, Mr. Speaker. Number one, she tries to be Miss Canada, but number two, she panders to . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Let’s hear it.

Mr. Nenshi: I’ll take five more seconds, if that’s all right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is she Miss Canada or is she pandering to the separatists?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let’s just put on the record: “Each province of Canada shall have a fully autonomous provincial Party, provided its constitution and principles are not in conflict with . . . the Federal Party.” We know what the federal party stands for. They want government-run grocery stores. They want government-run energy. They want to keep oil and gas in the ground. They want to stop building pipelines. They want to, I guess, take over the construction industry. I’m wondering what the plan is to start rationing all those things once the Communist Party takes over, and I’m wondering if the member opposite would explain to us just how far he differentiates from what his federal leader is proposing.

Mr. Nenshi: Well, I’m glad she’s asking me questions. It’s good practice for the future for her.

The Premier is so concerned about other people’s bosses, but she’s not concerned about being a good boss herself. Look at her caucus. I look at them every day questioning their life choices. Her minister of service Alberta was found in contravention of Elections Alberta law. Her chief adviser on the Constitution is now a full-throated separatist, in writing, yet she’s doing nothing about it. When will the Premier learn how to be a boss herself?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Elections Alberta offered some advice, and we will take that advice. There was no penalty, but it is good guidance for us.

I guess the member opposite still needs to answer: 62,746 NDP voters voted for him in his leadership; 39,734 voted to make Avi Lewis his boss. Why wasn’t he able to rally any of his support to defeat Avi Lewis, unless, of course, they wanted to have Avi Lewis in there? Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this party stands for. They’re anti fossil-fuel development, and they’re anti-Alberta.

The Speaker: The third set of questions belongs to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: I mean, it is fun that she continually reminds people that twice as many Albertans voted for me as voted for her.

That said, Mr. Speaker, this is not actually fun and games. This is about the future of the greatest nation in the history of this world. Last summer the Premier admitted openly on her radio show that the only reason she's pandering to separatists is because if she doesn't, she might lose the next election. So let me put it plainly to the Premier: what's more important to the Premier, power or the future of this country?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I am shocked that the member opposite and his caucus members who were attending the NDP convention this past weekend will not take responsibility for the division in this country. The reason this country is divided, the reason that some Albertans have given up hope is because of the antics of this party, with their federal counterparts victimizing Alberta for the last 10 years, trying to keep our oil and gas in the ground, preventing us from being able to develop our resources, and violating our personal rights and freedoms. That's the reason that he should take responsibility.

2:00

Mr. Nenshi: The Premier's been preparing this line of answers for months, and this is the best she can do; calling us divisive when she told a radio audience: the separatists are my people because they vote for me. There is no one dividing Canada more than this Premier and this government every single day.

Now, the Premier this weekend said that she welcomes the diversity of views in her caucus, but she kicked out the Member for Lesser Slave Lake for advocating for his community. She kicked out the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane. Who's she going to kick out next? Certainly not the separatists.

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we're talking about members, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, who was proudly at the NDP convention this weekend celebrating the election of Avi Lewis, also advocated to have Extinction Rebellion in classrooms. That's a group that wants to end fossil fuel development. We also have the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who opposed the Coastal GasLink. We have the Member for Edmonton-West Henday, who opposed TMX. We also have the Member for Edmonton-McClung, who thought Alberta should show leadership in transitioning away from fossil fuels. Here's the fact. They're not upset about Avi Lewis winning. They have always been antipipeline development, and they will continue to be.

Mr. Nenshi: Desperation and deflection to go around with deficits, debt, and dumb decisions on the part of this government.

Let's be clear here. As I said, I look at my colleagues every day, supposedly fiscal conservatives, yet running one of the largest deficits in Alberta history despite massive resource revenues; supposedly libertarians, taking away rights from citizens every single day; supposedly proud Canadians, who've been forbidden by their Premier for saying that they're proud Canadians. Why does the Premier let the separatists run amok but not let the conservatives in her caucus be, you know, conservative?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I said that we support a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada, that is how our country is supposed to work. We are a province within Canada with areas of exclusive jurisdiction. What it means is that every single time the federal government tries to violate our constitutional rights, we're

going to step in. That is a very different pathway, and that is one that we are demonstrating to Albertans every single day, that Canada can work. It's part of the reason why I signed a historic MOU with the Prime Minister, and we are working through issue by issue to address the real grievances. I wish he would do the same with his federal counterpart.

Ms Pancholi: Quote: none of my MLAs have indicated to me that they have signed. End quote. That was the Premier just two weeks ago when asked if any of her UCP MLAs have signed the separatist petition. But on Friday the MLA for Red Deer-South, the UCP's parliamentary secretary for constitutional affairs – sorry; it still makes me laugh to say that – defied his leader and came out as a separatist. Looks like even he wasn't buying the sovereign Alberta in a united Canada nonsense. It's proof there are separatists in the UCP caucus. Will the Premier admit that by not removing that MLA from her caucus, the UCP is officially a separatist party?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, the UCP is officially a pro-Canada party in our founding constitution. As a front-bench minister, I love my country; I love my home. I am Canadian, and we will continue to fight for a united Canada with an Alberta that continues to remain sovereign and strong. Members opposite cannot say that they are proud to be Albertans the way we can say that we're proud to be Canadians. I challenge members opposite to somehow defy their leader and defy Avi Lewis and defend Alberta and our energy industry the way I and my colleagues defend Canada.

Ms Pancholi: Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier knows quite a bit about disagreeing with federal party positions. After all, Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre said that he's a federalist and no one in his caucus supports separatism. But the Premier can't say the same about herself or her caucus. According to the MLA for Red Deer-South, Canada never will be a free and prosperous country, and Canada's Constitution will "never change." Cue the unhinged and generous use of all caps there. It appears that MLA doesn't believe in Canada or the Constitution, so how is he still fit to be a member of the UCP caucus, unless this government doesn't believe in it either?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, it's rich to have them questioning the patriotism when we just recently sang the national anthem in this Chamber together. It's rich to have members opposite accuse us of no patriotism when during COVID they said that the Canadian flag was somehow a hate symbol. This isn't fair-weather patriotism. On this side of the House we love our country, and we will not be a part of the destroying of our country in the way of decades past, where the Liberal-NDP coalition have attacked Albertans and Canadians. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. I heard the question just fine; I'd like to hear the answer, too.

Mr. Williams: The Liberal-NDP coalition have attacked Canadians from a Conservative or Alberta position and have said: you're not welcome in this country; not that brand of patriotism. Mr. Speaker, at some point those Canadians took them at their word, unfortunately. We are here to show that Canada can still work.

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 2:06.

In case there's any doubt, your 35 seconds start now.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Come to think of it, maybe the Premier isn't even a member of the federal Conservative Party anymore. After all, her sad attempts to cozy up to Donald Trump last

year single-handedly tanked the Conservatives in the last federal election. Maybe the Liberals have made her an honorary lifetime member to thank her.

If the Premier won't remove the MLA for Red Deer-South from her caucus for declaring himself a separatist, what's keeping the rest of them quiet? How many more UCP MLAs will be honest with their constituents and admit that they would rather leave Canada than lead Canada?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, this government has been clear. We've answered over and over again that we are for a united Canada. We continue to support Canada and a strong Alberta within that Canada. I support my home, my province, and my country. I will continue to support my home, my province, and my country. Members opposite can fearmonger all they like. The truth is that we are proud to be Canadian on this side of the House. Can the members opposite say that they are also proud to be Albertans in the same way? I think not.

Alberta Separatism and French Language Rights

Ms Renaud: Alberta's economy relies heavily on interprovincial trade and investor confidence, and still this Premier flirts with separatists. Many of the 261,000 francophones in Alberta recall how threats of Quebec separatism repelled investment and continues to harm the Quebec economy today. The ACFA, or the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, publicly align themselves with the forever Canada campaign, also rejecting separatism. How will the UCP protect the constitutional language rights of francophones while they continue to keep the door to separatism wide open?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, it's the position of this government that we support a strong and sovereign Alberta within a united Canada. I love my country and my home. J'aime bien mon pays ici au Canada. Je suis un fier Canadien. We are proud Canadians on this side of the House. I hope members opposite can take yes for an answer and join together, instead of spreading more fear about separatism, and instead argue together for a strong Canada. Can members also say that they're for a strong Alberta? I don't think so. When you look at the history of members opposite and what they've said, how they've attacked our economy and our culture year over year with an alliance with the Trudeau Liberals, the question is on them. Do they love our province?

Ms Renaud: Ça ne fait pas de sens, M. le Président.

Given that French is the second-most spoken language internationally and in Canada, it's a major job-creating sector, opening gateways to national and international markets, with the francophone share of Alberta's GDP at \$23 billion. To the minister: is the UCP government concerned that the Premier's hand-picked parliamentary secretary for separation, the MLA for Red Deer-South, says that Alberta does not need French to artificially sustain bilingualism and it should be a personal choice, end quote?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I'll say it again. I am a proud Canadian. I love my home, I love my country, and I will continue on behalf of the government to defend this country and this province within our Confederation. Members opposite need to take yes for an answer, that we love our country and our home. Did they love their home in the province of Alberta? Are they ashamed as embarrassing cousins for the rest of Confederation because we continue to develop responsibly oil and gas and the energy industry within this province? I expect not, hence why they have not publicly said that they didn't vote for Avi Lewis. Members opposite over and over again continue to advocate for the end of oil sands. We on the other side defend it.

2:10

The Speaker: Order. Minister, you've got to stop when the time is up.

Ms Renaud: Il n'y a pas de réponse encore, M. le Président.

Given we're already witnessing the economic harm and palpable division this government's enabling of a separation referendum is having in Alberta and given the Member for Red Deer-South sends harmful messages about Alberta's francophone community, tens of thousands of people whose language rights are protected and recognized across our country, will the Premier toss this reckless MLA from her caucus, or does she too think that Franco-Albertans should have their rights trampled on? Le séparatisme isole l'Alberta. L'unité lui ouvre les portes.

Merci.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, again, for clarity – and to the member opposite, this isn't the gotcha you thought – in both languages: we are proud Canadians; nous sommes les fiers Canadiens de ce côté de la maison. Nous sommes fiers de notre deux langues officielles. We will continue to support them in every single aspect we can. That's why we have had an incredible politique francophone ici, where we continue to advance francophone policy in this government ever since we got in in 2019.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the Member for Airdrie-East.

Transgender Youth Participation in Sports

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We on this side of the House believe that biological men do not belong in women's sports. Period. I know this might bring a cramp to the members of the opposition, but we believe that women and girls deserve a level playing field. Period. That's why Alberta's government under the leadership of our Premier stood up for Canada's female athletes like powerlifter April Hutchinson. It was great to see the International Olympic Committee follow Alberta's lead and ensure that only biological females can compete in women's sports competitions. Period. Trans rights do not get to trump women's rights.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Thirty-five seconds are up.

The hon. Minister of Tourism and Sport.

Mr. Boitchenko: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for a great question. The IOC's new policy reinforces and protects the integrity of female athletic competitions, ensuring that women and girls can compete for gold on a level playing field. This policy also vindicates female athletes like April Hutchinson, who were wrongfully punished for speaking out against unfair and unsafe athletic competitions.

Ms Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that the Alberta NDP's leader has made it clear that he believes that biological men should be able to compete in women's sports and given that his new boss, eco socialist Avi Lewis, has made it clear that he is proud of the Alberta NDP for advocating for biological men to compete in women's sports categories, further given that the NDP is ignoring internationally recognized scientific evidence, can the minister please explain how the NDP's policies are harmful to Canada's female athletes?

The Speaker: Hon. member, the questions are required to be on government policy, not on the opposition policy. But if the minister wants to answer, he can.

Mr. Boitchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The president of the IOC said, “It is absolutely clear that it would not be fair for biological males to compete in the female category. In addition, in some sports it would simply not be safe.” By ignoring scientific evidence, the NDP wants to put our amazing female athletes at risk of harm. Shame on them.

The Speaker: Airdrie-East.

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that women and girls often face barriers to sport and given that the NDP advocates for biological men to compete in women’s sports, actively silencing and discouraging women and girls from participating in sports, not to mention running roughshod over hard-earned human rights and further given that the IOC and Alberta’s government believe in protecting the integrity of female athletic competitions, period, can the minister please share how Alberta’s government is encouraging and expanding opportunities for women and girls to train and compete?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Boitchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through our every kid can play program, Podium Alberta, and sport participation support, our government has invested over \$1 million in programs such as women’s flag football, more girls on bikes, Gloves Not Guns, and over 50 female athletes through Podium Alberta. We will continue to encourage participation and removal of all barriers to sport for women and girls.

Education Funding

Ms Chapman: The UCP spends money like fiscal conservatism is going out of style, and what exactly are Albertans getting from this big-spending government? Do we have the best funded schools in the country? No. Even with their huge property tax increases this government still can’t manage to meet the national average for per-student funding. To the minister of education: does this UCP government ever plan to prioritize investment in our schools, or is the plan to forever lag behind the rest of the country?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, Budget ’26 puts significant focus on our education system. In fact, this year alone we’ll be investing \$722 million. That’s an increase from last year. That’s a 7 per cent increase. That puts our overall funding per student above British Columbia and helps ensure that we’re able to distribute more complexity teams to classrooms that are needed the most. We’re moving forward with an \$8.6 billion initiative to build and modernize over 130 schools across the province, and we’ll continue to work on these important priorities.

Ms Chapman: Given that this government prioritized inking juicy contracts with their pal Sam Mraiche to the tune of tens of millions of dollars for overpriced, unusable children’s pain medication just to make it look like they were listening to parents and given that at the same time they refused real action to address classroom complexity, to the minister: exactly how many complexity teams could be funded with the \$49 million spent on this bad contract for Sam Mraiche’s Turkish Tyleneol?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, I’m very proud of the fact that we’ve dispatched these complexity teams to help address some of the growing concerns that we’ve heard in our classrooms. We’ve heard concerns from parents and teachers alike that our classrooms are more dynamic today than ever before. That’s indeed the reality, and

that’s precisely why we’ve invested over \$143 million to help create 476 complexity teams that are being dispatched to our highest need classrooms to help ensure that students have the targeted and individualized supports that they need so that they are able to succeed.

Ms Chapman: Given that this government has only scrounged up the funding for 476 complexity teams when nearly 68,000 Alberta classrooms have complexity ratings of medium or higher, given that there wasn’t a single penny to be found to help teachers and administrators who are dealing with enormous complexity for students in grades 7 to 12, to the minister: is the plan to keep shortchanging Alberta students in favour of lining the pockets of this government’s buddies?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, of course the member opposite can continue to provide rhetoric; I’m happy to provide answers and solutions. As I’ve mentioned, 476 complexity teams are being dispatched to our most needed classrooms. We’re investing \$8.6 billion to build and modernize over 130 classrooms. We’re investing over 7 per cent in Budget ’26 in comparison to last year. That’s one of the largest annual increases ever provided to our education system. So while the NDP continues with talking points and rhetoric, we’re going to deliver solutions that Albertans expect.

Support for Transgender Albertans

Member Irwin: Trans Day of Visibility is a moment where trans folks, those who can, get to show pride in simply existing. They’ve always existed, just like our two-spirit, nonbinary, and gender-diverse friends and family, but the UCP have done all they can to fan the flames of discrimination against the community. Just a simple question to the Premier: does she believe that trans youth exist?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government supports the 2SLGBTQIA-plus community. Since 2021 we’ve invested over \$27 million in programs and services that support 2SLGBTQIA-plus Albertans, including nearly \$2 million in grants for community organizations and projects. Last year our government was the single-largest funder of the Edmonton Pride Festival, investing \$75,000 to support their event.

2:20

Member Irwin: Given that attacking the queer and trans community is a strange way to show your support and given that parents of trans youths, our constituents, have joined the Legislative Assembly today with a message to this Premier. These family members want the Premier to know that trans children do exist, do have rights, and deserve nothing less than full support from their government, just like any other children. So will the Premier – the Premier – meet with these parents and these advocates today and explain to their faces why she took away their rights?

The Speaker: The minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further supports from our government include launching various initiatives dedicated to championing the community, including launching the 2SLGBTQIA-plus online resource hub to provide information on government services and supports available to 2SLGBTQIA-plus Albertans and celebrating 2SLGBTQIA-plus Albertan champions by advocating for inclusion through our Stars of Alberta volunteer awards program.

Member Irwin: Given that faith communities, parents, youth, and allies all support raising up the visibility of trans folks in our province and given that this government's policy decisions have attacked the very rights of trans children to safely be themselves, yet this government would rather weaponize the Constitution than use it to protect the rights of all Albertans, once more to that Premier – that Premier – will she clear a few moments from her afternoon today and meet with these parents and these incredible advocates so that they can hear directly from those folks?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further supports for the community include \$50,000 for Fyrefly Institute's 2SLGBTQ-plus community development project and nearly \$53,000 to the Centre for Sexuality Society. Also, in our 10-year strategy to end gender-based violence we engaged with numerous 2SLGBTQQA-plus representatives and leaders from across Alberta to inform our strategy and ensure that actions were meaningful and reflected those communities.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Funding for Prosthetic Services

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across our province Albertans need prosthetics due to accidents, diseases, or congenital birth impairments. However, rising costs can sometimes leave Albertans with financial burdens. Our system needs to keep up with the technological advances in prosthetics to limit the gap between what amputees need and what the government can afford. To the Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services: can you explain to the Assembly how Alberta's current prosthetic funding system meets the needs of amputees, particularly those requiring advanced devices like microprocessor knees?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the excellent question. Alberta's prosthetic funding system helps amputees get the devices they need by covering most medically necessary prosthetics through the Alberta aids to daily living program. Certified prosthetists work with Albertans in need of a device to ensure that the right prosthetic is chosen and that funding is available throughout the person's whole lifetime, because that's the right thing to do. This approach provides stability, equity, and access to modern prosthetic technology for people right across our province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. Given that prosthetic programs in Alberta can have different criteria for eligibility, especially for seniors and low-income Albertans, and further given that complex eligibility requirements means sometimes Albertans have to choose no service at all, which puts them at further risk for health complications down the road, to the same minister: how is the government making it easier for Albertans to access prosthetics and other assistive devices?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the Alberta aids to daily living program seniors and many low-income Albertans do not have to pay cost shares, and others have their costs capped so that expenses are manageable. Certified professionals can guide clients through assessments and eligibility, helping them understand what

benefits they actually qualify for. With long-standing partnerships across the province, we're ensuring Albertans can get the right supports for prosthetics without navigating the system on their own. It's the right thing to do. Our people deserve that access.

The Speaker: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Again thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. Given that where you live, whether urban or rural, can have a direct impact on how easily or quickly you can access prosthetic services and further given that Albertans want to be ensured timely access to the Alberta aids to daily living program when they need it the most, to the same minister: how does the government's AADL program provide timely support and care to Albertans in need of a prosthetic no matter where they live?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you. Alberta's aids to daily living supports timely prosthetic care by partnering with about 19 certified prosthetic vendors across the province, helping Albertans with assessments and fittings, whether they live in a large city or in a small rural community. Because AADL is a long-standing legislated program, Albertans can rely on consistent, co-ordinated support throughout their whole recovery. This ensures that they get the mobility aids and support they need quickly, reducing the risk for further health complications, Mr. Speaker.

Alberta Separatism and Government Caucus

(continued)

Member Tejada: The Premier stood in this House and told Albertans that every single one of her MLAs supported Canada and that none of her caucus had signed the separatist referendum petition, but her parliamentary secretary for constitutional affairs says that a separatism referendum is good. He disparages Canada and tells voters to help him tear apart our country, and the Premier said: that's just a diversity of views. Why would the Premier's parliamentary secretary want Alberta to separate from Canada?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, the government is abundantly clear. We're for a united Canada and a strong and sovereign Alberta within that. I love my home, I love my country, and I'm a proud Canadian. I will continue to fight for my country over and over again. We've seen a decade of Liberal-NDP alliance telling Albertans and Conservatives across the country, "Your brand of patriotism isn't welcome here," and unfortunately, some folks have taken them at their word. We're here today to say that Canada can still work, there's a strong place for Alberta in this Confederation, and that we are proud Canadians to boot.

Member Tejada: Given that the parliamentary secretary took an oath when he became an MLA but given that he's written that Canada is in decline and offensively wrote that we are a "first-world country moving towards a third-world country" and given that this column is titled A Referendum on Independence is Good for Alberta, why hasn't the Premier denounced her parliamentary secretary's blatant separatist rhetoric? Is it because she welcomes separatism?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, this government is not a separatist government. This is not a separatist party. We are a proud Canadian party. In our founding constitution we believe in one Canada united, and Alberta should be strong within that. Members opposite are trying to hide from the fact that they've been embarrassed by Alberta

and Albertans for a decade. They have not denounced Avi Lewis and the policies that they have of the federal Ottawa policy for the mother ship telling Albertans and the NDP here that they should be embarrassed about who we are and the kind of work that we do, the hard work that blue-collar Albertans have done for generations. The members opposite used to defend blue collar. Now they're all woke.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Member Tejada: Given that that's quite a tune change and given that the Premier has said that none of her caucus members signed the referendum petition to separate but given that her parliamentary secretary calls for everyone in Alberta to sign it and given that the same member and every UCP member refuses to pledge their support for Canada, which was actually very easy for my colleagues and myself, why has the Premier not kicked her parliamentary secretary out of the caucus?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, every Monday we rise together towards the flag and sing the national anthem as a Legislature, and we sing *God Save the King* at the end of the week. We are proud Canadians. We're proud of our institutions, and we're proud to be Albertans within a united Canada. We will continue to make that fight.

Can members opposite say the same when they've been embarrassed like the Member for Edmonton-McClung, who said that we should transition away from fossil fuels? Are they proud Albertans when they say, like the Member for Edmonton-West Henday, that we should be opposed to TMX? Will they denounce Avi Lewis and the crazy policies that are destroying this country's economic unity? Will they denounce the anti-Canadian rhetoric coming out of Ottawa every single week?

The Speaker: Order. When the time's up, we need to stop.

Medicine Hat College Centre for Community Wellness

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker, it's been proven that students who train in rural and mid-sized Alberta will choose to set their roots in those communities. Rural institutions play a critical role in training professionals where we need them most. They become our doctors, nurses, lawyers, and trades workers. Can the Minister of Advanced Education please explain how this government is investing in rural postsecondary education and how it will impact our rural and mid-sized communities?

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Our government knows that when students train in rural and mid-sized communities, they have a higher probability that they will stay in those communities. They become the doctors, nurses, and tradespeople our towns depend on. That's why we're investing directly in rural colleges across Alberta, including the Medicine Hat College centre for community wellness; more seats, more programs, and better facilities so students don't have to leave home to get a great education. We're building local talent for local communities, and that's how we keep rural Alberta strong.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that the Medicine Hat College's centre for community wellness will expand training of practical nurses, health care aides, social workers, and addictions counselling and given that it will bring students' wellness services together under one roof as opposed to isolated rooms and off-site locations, can the same minister please explain how this investment will create stronger health care training

and wellness services for students of Medicine Hat College to service rural Alberta?

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, the centre for community wellness at Medicine Hat College is going to be a game changer. Budget 2026 backs that up with \$2 million in planning funding for the college's number one capital priority. Right now student counselling services are sitting in temporary space. This centre fixes that, putting wellness supports, modern classrooms, simulation labs, and hands-on training all under one roof. It will also include a medical clinic and daycare on-site, giving students in nursing, social work, and addictions counselling real practical experience right on campus.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Wright: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Medicine Hat College plays a key role in rural postsecondary education, serving students from across southeastern Alberta and nearby communities and as far away as Saskatchewan who train and work close to home, and given that philanthropists have come together to make the centre for community wellness a reality, can the same minister please explain how this government will partner with community leaders to ensure that the centre for community wellness delivers meaningful benefits to as many students as possible?

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, Medicine Hat College serves students from across southeastern Alberta who want to train and work close to home. This centre brings key programs like pharmacy technician, currently in leased space off campus, social work, and additional counselling into one modern facility. It'll also have student gathering spaces and wellness services that build a real sense of community on campus. Our government is proud to partner with Medicine Hat College and community leaders who helped make this happen. Together we're making sure this centre delivers for students and for rural Alberta.

Alberta Separatism and Government Caucus

(continued)

Member Gurinder Brar: The UCP MLA for Red Deer-South is publicly advocating for Alberta's separatism while continuing to draw a taxpayer-funded parliamentary salary. This Premier actually increased his salary to let him spew separatist rhetoric. Will the Premier explain why Albertans should be paying a member who is actively threatening national unity? Will she take decisive action to remove this member from her caucus today?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure the member is doing what he thinks he's doing. If somebody is not a member of caucus, they still get a salary as an elected member of this Chamber.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Government House Leader I'm incredibly proud to be a Canadian, and I will continue to fight for Alberta and a united Canada. I will continue to defend Alberta, and I will continue to defend our country, where we have inherited the wonderful institutions that members opposite have spent a decade attacking and tearing down over and over again. We're proud Canadians on this side of the House. Can members opposite say that they're proud Albertans? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member Gurinder Brar: Given that the MLA for Red Deer-South is promoting a referendum on separatism, a move that would jeopardize jobs, pensions, and economic stability, and given that the member had a big salary top-up gifted to him by this Premier, does

the Premier believe it is appropriate for a member of her government, paid for by Albertans, to advance such divisive and destabilizing ideas? Before this minister goes on with his rhetoric of the UCP constitution or singing of the Canadian national anthem, will this Premier show leadership for once and remove the MLA for Red Deer-South from her caucus?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the problem. Members opposite think our national anthem is just rhetoric, that it's empty, and when it's useful to condemn it during, say, COVID protests, then all of a sudden it's shameful to be Canadian and use the Canadian national flag as an emblem. When it's convenient as a political attack and wedge to drive separatism further into public discourse, then they push farther into that door and shove it all the way through. We're not fair-weather patriots on this side of the House. We believe deeply in our national anthem, in our national institutions, and the icons that members opposite have spent a decade attacking and tearing down. That will not be found on this side of the House. We are proud . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Member Gurinder Brar: Given that Albertans expect their elected representatives to strengthen our province and not weaken it, given that everyone on this side of the House opposes separatism and believes Alberta is at its best working towards solutions for all Canadians, why is the Premier allowing a taxpayer-funded MLA to praise separatism while families face rising costs and uncertainty? Will she finally draw a clear line by rejecting separatism and removing that member from her caucus?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, this government has been clear over and over again. We believe in Canada, a united Canada. I'm a proud Canadian. I love my home, and I love my province; so does this government. It's members opposite that continue to try and drive separatism into this House. We continue to advocate for Canada, and members opposite continue to try and drive Canada apart, as they have for a decade, with an attack on true patriotism, one where we believe in our institutions, where we continue to defend our country. They are fair-weather patriots that continue to, only at moments of political convenience, pretend to wrap themselves in the flag, when in reality it's . . .

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Municipal Property Taxes

Member Miyashiro: Mr. Speaker, according to its business plan Municipal Affairs plays a vital role in supporting municipalities to deliver well-managed, fiscally responsible, and accountable local government, yet Rural Municipalities of Alberta have identified well over \$250 million of municipal property taxes that have gone unpaid by oil and gas companies. Will the minister tell Albertans: when will the property tax accountability strategy recommendations actually enable municipalities to receive back taxes, you know, like real dollars?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, it's a terrific question to have. We just made an announcement with RMA and the president where we together, working on the PTAS group, have come to a conclusion, where we're going to give real teeth to the AER and give it a mandate so it can continue to enforce, starting immediately – we're working on a number of different recommendations. It can

immediately enforce those companies that are not paying. Every single citizen, corporate or individual, has an obligation to pay its taxes. That's how the system works. That's why we're partnering with RMA and the AER and energy to make sure this goes forward.

Member Miyashiro: Hmm. Hmm. Hmm.

Given that this government's excessive increases to the education property tax effectively limits the ability of municipalities to increase property taxes as necessary, because property owners mainly look at the bottom line of their tax invoice and will blame the municipality for large increases in the education tax . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hmm.

Member Miyashiro: . . . and given that Municipal Affairs' goal is to explore ways to limit excessive property tax increases, when it comes to property tax increases, does the minister hold municipalities to a different standard than their own provincial government?

The Speaker: We don't need the music.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to take the question. I just worked with RMA and ABmunis over the last two weeks to come to an understanding in terms of the path forward. We agree that we need to make sure we continue to fund over \$10 billion of operating for education across this province, and we're investing over \$8.6 billion in the new school accelerator program. We're continuing to fund those so that every single community across this province has schools. There are 161 schools that are currently being built by the province and are under way in the capital plan. We're very proud to be supporting the world's best education system, and we'll continue to do so with our municipalities.

Member Miyashiro: Given that in just one year municipalities lost out on an estimated \$84 million in potential revenue from cancelled renewable energy projects and given that uncollected linear property tax from the oil and gas sector, which includes assessments on abandoned oil, has created a double whammy to municipalities, lost revenue from renewable projects and uncollected taxes from oil and gas, when is this government going to support the development of renewable energy to enable a substantial and sustainable revenue stream for rural . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is proud to support energy generation of every type. That is why we are fixing the messes left behind by the NDP, where they got us off coal . . .

Member Miyashiro: Ask Cardston county how much they lost.

Mr. Neudorf: That cost Albertans a hundred million . . .

Member Miyashiro: Ask Cardston county.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Lethbridge-West, it's your question; you might want to hear the answer.

Go ahead.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP policies cost Albertans \$100 million a year because of their mismanagement. We're setting the market straight. We're putting Albertans first to make sure that they have jobs, to make sure that they have investment, to make sure that we're dealing with the affordability issues they face every day because we care about Albertans.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Grand Prairie-Wapiti.

2:40 Rural High-speed Internet

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In today's Internet-driven world reliable high-speed Internet access is no longer a luxury but an essential service. For too long Alberta's urban centres have benefited from strong connectivity while many rural communities, like those in the constituency of Grande Prairie-Wapiti, have been left behind. To the Minister of Technology and Innovation: can you please explain how our government will ensure reliable, affordable, and high-speed Internet access for all Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of the work that we've done to launch the Alberta broadband strategy and to secure a partnership with the federal government for over \$700 million. This is a credible plan to ensure that every Albertan, regardless of where they live, has access to reliable high-speed Internet. I'm pleased to report that 95 per cent of Albertans now have access to this Internet or live in a region that has a connectivity project funded by our plan under way. We're on track for our goal of universal connectivity. That means better Internet for the member's constituents in Grande Prairie-Wapiti and all across Alberta. Our message to rural Albertans is that we've got your back.

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta's government is actively investing into rural broadband projects and our major investments in northern Alberta and further given that to achieve maximum benefit for residents, the government of Alberta is committed to working with federal and private partners, to the Minister of Technology and Innovation: how does this collaborative approach deliver the best value for taxpayers while ensuring more Albertans in the north get reliable, affordable high-speed Internet?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're proud to be working with the federal government to partner on this 50-50 cost-share deal to ensure that Albertans in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities all across this province can access reliable high-speed Internet. By partnering together, we can avoid duplication of critical infrastructure and co-ordinate to optimize our collective investments to maximize results for rural Albertans.

I don't know why the NDP didn't try this when they were in government, but I can tell you that rural Albertans were crying out for help and connectivity back then. Unfortunately, the NDP didn't spend a dime, Mr. Speaker. Thankfully, we are making real investments to benefit rural Albertans.

The Speaker: Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his response. Given that northern Alberta's environment causes significant barriers to reliable high-speed Internet because of factors like distance, rugged terrain, and severe weather and further given that the people in these ridings like Grand Prairie-Wapiti depend on consistent connectivity to live, work, and learn, to the same minister: what technologies are being pursued to overcome these challenges and finally provide northern Alberta with reliable Internet?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member. What a great question. Northern Alberta does indeed have challenging terrain, and that's why we've always said that our strategy is open to a combination of connectivity options. In some cases fibre to the home will make great sense, and in other cases fixed wireless will be a better option, and in the truly remote cases low earth orbit satellite technologies will be the best option. Our strategy supports all of the above. It supports the best technology option for the region. Most importantly, I'm confident that we're on track to achieve universal connectivity by the end of 2027. We're laser focused on closing the digital divide.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with the daily Routine.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 25, an Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act, 2026, sponsored by the hon. Minister of Education and Childcare.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Bill 22

Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026.

If passed, Bill 22 will expand protections for animals, modernize inspection authorities, expand compliance and enforcement tools, and increase penalties for offenders. It is my hope that if Bill 22 passes, all animals will be safer for years to come.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I now move first reading of Bill 22.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Bill 23

Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move first reading for Bill 23, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, this bill would prohibit the creation and distribution of deepfakes intended to mislead voters here in this province.

With amendments to the Citizen Initiative Act and the Recall Act we're going to continue to define our democratic process legislation to improve clarity, consistency, and, above all else, democratic accountability.

Bill 23 would also update the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act to maintain transparency, reduce red tape, and ensure that the legislation continues to reflect its original purpose, which is to ensure that Albertans know how their tax dollars are being spent.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 23.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of the cover letter of a highway 3 resident and landowner coalition petition package outlining urgent concerns regarding the proposed interim access management plan for the highway 3 twinning project, signed by 104 upset rural Albertans.

The Speaker: Hon. member, that particular tabling belongs in Tablings to the Clerk, but we're going to accept it just the same.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of hon. Minister LaGrange, Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services: Alberta Health Services 2024-25 annual report.

The Speaker: Now I need to apologize to the Member for Edmonton-McClung. You did that at the right time. That was my mistake, sir.

You're laughing. Well, you should laugh. It's funny.

Tabling Returns and Reports

(continued)

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings? I seem to have skipped over that lately. The hon. member.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the Leap Manifesto leaflet, an overview of the Leap Manifesto project supported by the NDP members, with their newly elected leader, Avi Lewis, being a missionary signature, calling to keep our oil in the ground and other radical ...

The Speaker: Okay. Any other tablings? Seeing none.

Now we are at the part of the day that we like to call points of order. At about 2:06 p.m. it seems somebody from – the Government Deputy House Leader.

Mr. Williams: Well, I'm just going to make your day, Mr. Speaker, and withdraw the only point of order we have.

The Speaker: Isn't this a happy occasion? All witness: one day without accidents.

2:50

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 207

Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 207, Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about the industries that don't just support Alberta's economy; they are Alberta's economy. This bill reflects something very powerful but simple. The Alberta strength comes from the people who build, who grow, who harvest, and power

this province every single day, and our youth, our kids, deserve to understand the industries that are growing and making Alberta unique and competitive across the world. Understanding the financial impact and the impact that these industries have across the province is incredibly key for every single student in Alberta. Today I just want to spend a few minutes outlining all these industries here, too, as well because, as I said, these aren't just another industry; these are our economy.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

First, I want to speak about the energy industry. Our energy industry contributes roughly 21 per cent of Alberta's GDP, making it the single-largest driver of economic industry and activity in our province. In 2024 alone the value of Alberta's energy production reached \$139 billion, the second highest on record, Mr. Speaker, and this isn't by accident. These are the results of hard-working Albertans, strong investment, and a government that understands where prosperity comes from. The industry directly employs 135,000 people and supports another 400,000 jobs. These are mortgages. These are jobs. These are families. These are communities being built upon this. These are people in my community. They're of Grande Prairie, right across northern Alberta, southern Alberta: all the way from the bottom of Alberta to the north and east and west. It is every single area of our province.

Mr. Speaker, it's responsible for us to be able to speak about the industries that are building up Albertans so our kids can understand that they have a future and understand that we are building up and expanding this industry here. While we see other areas and other jurisdictions creating uncertainty, we are creating this opportunity for young people and youth to be able to recognize and jump in. Bill 207 recognizes that opportunity and this reality, and it reinforces the idea and the importance of educating the next generation to understand our energy industry, the implication of it financially, both for themselves and for a pathway into work as well. Our energy industry is being built by men and women across this province, and we need to remember that. I'm proud to stand beside them on this.

Now, another area on this bill is agriculture. I do want to speak about this because this is a significant industry. Alberta is home to tens of thousands of family farms. Roughly 97 per cent of farms across Canada are family farms, Mr. Speaker. What's interesting is that Alberta has, I believe, just over 30 per cent of Canada's farmland. This is a significant industry. Not only that; we do \$17 billion in agrifoods, and we send our products to over 145 different countries. Let's just let that sink in a moment. Alberta farmers are feeding the world.

This is an important aspect because there are actually only a small number of countries that are producing more than what they consume, and Alberta is part of that conversation here in Canada. We are the largest producer of beef and barley in Canada. We are the second largest for wheat and canola. These aren't just small accomplishments; these are cornerstones of feeding the world as well. These are global leadership positions earned through the innovation of farmers, hard work, and a commitment to excellence from right here in Alberta. Bill 207 is about ensuring that youth and young people understand that, too, as well. Agriculture is a cornerstone, and we have significant agriculture here across the province.

I would also like to talk about forestry here, too, as well. Alberta is home to nearly 29 million hectares of forest. When we talk about forest, it's predominantly on Crown land. Crown land makes up roughly 60 per cent of our province. This isn't quite that 60 per cent. It is not a small, niche market; it is a significant land that we do. Mr. Speaker, Albertans see opportunity when they see forestry. We see jobs, we see families building communities, as I've said before, and their lives wrap around this excellent industry. Forestry

employs more than 40,000 Albertans directly and indirectly, and in my area there are thousands of jobs being directly employed. This is something where culture is built upon, but also this is an area if – as we responsibly develop our forests, it is also an opportunity for young people to understand that this is a renewable industry, and it's an area where we can continue, because this government has done responsible forest management, to be able to keep down and utilize our forests while also helping prevent forest fires.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 207 builds upon this idea of both jobs and also a significant land base. As I mentioned, most of our forests are on Crown land, and this means that this belongs to the people of Alberta. People in Alberta deserve to understand where their money is coming from and what opportunities that lie, so let's be clear. This is about supporting the forest industry. It is also supporting jobs and allowing kids an opportunity to understand that forestry is also – depending on which list you use, our forestry land base is the 20th to 25th, somewhere in there, largest forests across the world. That's just in Alberta, so we have an opportunity. We do this responsibly. We have a forest industry that's larger than many European countries combined.

I also want to just quickly touch on construction. I've run a few construction companies, owned a couple of construction companies, too, as well. I greatly enjoy this industry. I think it's really important. When you look at this, when you see construction growing, you don't just look at the data points, but you look at what people are saying and what is being built. On this side of the aisle we see the importance of that, and we've seen this specifically in housing and also our investments across the province as well. The construction sector employs just over 246,000 Albertans. Roughly 1 in 10 workers in our province are in the construction industry. This doesn't happen by accident. This happens because of policy, and it happens because of a growing industry and because of investment and because people want to move here.

You can see this in housing, Mr. Speaker. In 2024 Alberta builders built just over 26,000 homes. That's a pretty significant increase of 32 per cent from the year before. Then in 2025 we're looking at approximately 53,000 homes. These are significant numbers, significant growth across our province for our young people and youth and kids to be able to understand there's an opportunity here to see growth, be able to build a business, be able to build a life in construction. It's not just a statistic, but it's a good thing for them to be able to understand that this contributes to our GDP. It also contributes to their livelihoods, and there are job opportunities there, too, as well. This is also why Bill 207 matters. It's because of these jobs, because of these opportunities and homes being built – not just homes but also various other industrial and commercial applications.

Now, just to close out here, when we look at these all together, Mr. Speaker, these work really well together. These sectors aren't separate. These are connected. They support one another, they create jobs, they drive investment, and build communities across our province, not just in regions like Grande Prairie but – we're seeing them work together – across our province. We see this every single day. This is what Bill 207 is about: supporting these industries, encouraging young people to learn about these industries, see the financial impact both upon the province and upon their own lives, and see that there's a pathway to work in these, too, as well. It's about recognizing these industries and the significant opportunities they give to youth and to people throughout their careers.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe that we should be proud of these. This is about building pride in what Alberta has and what Alberta can continue to become in the future, because when you invest in the economy, you also invest in people. This is about building into our

young people and seeing that investment. This is a great story. This is a great story for Albertans. Alberta has a strong story to tell. I'm happy to be part of it, and I would encourage every single member here in this Chamber to support Bill 207.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. I will recognize the Member for Calgary-Beddington.

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today just to offer a few comments on Bill 207, Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. That's quite the mouthful. I do think this is a really well-intentioned piece of legislation that has been put forward by the member opposite. I do have a level of discomfort, of course, when politicians look to insert themselves into the creation of curriculum.

3:00

Certainly, I know that members opposite, maybe not this one in particular but other members across the aisle in the Chamber, have offered a lot of criticisms in the past when they viewed that politicians were trying to insert themselves into that curriculum development role, a role I think that we would all agree is probably best left to the experts, to teachers, to curriculum development experts who have the greater understanding, knowledge, and skill base to know what it is that is going to be the most relevant curriculum pieces for our children.

But this is the bill that we have before us. I'm happy to of course talk a little bit more about the areas in which the member opposite suggests we need to kind of shore up or bulk up Alberta's existing curriculum.

I'm always happy to talk about oil and gas, of course. You know, it's easy to be happy to talk about oil and gas when you're a member of the only provincial party that's managed to actually get a pipeline built to tidewater, a huge success, enormous success of the Rachel Notley government, certainly something no Conservative government has ever been able to manage. That pipeline, TMX, created thousands of jobs – thousands of jobs – over 14,000 construction jobs, over 13,000 pipeline operations jobs. Over 400,000 was the estimate, Mr. Speaker, for jobs created in the broader industry, ancillary supportive connecting services to the pipeline that the NDP got built.

That pipeline has added \$5.4 billion of revenue and is still not making quite enough money to satisfy the spending appetites of the current government. They could probably cut down a little bit on some of the pet projects. It would maybe help if we just focus that revenue that the Notley government is gifting to us now. If we could get that focus into health care and education, I think that would be a lot better for Albertans, Mr. Speaker. When we're looking at energy projects today, you know, of course, we, the Alberta NDP, support TMX optimization and a new pipeline.

Let's talk about some energy sectors that I didn't see reflected in this bill. It's not just oil and gas. When I talk to Albertans, particularly folks in my riding, we talk a lot about how Alberta has always been, is currently, and will in the future be an energy superpower in this country. That is the great strength of Alberta, and we know that that doesn't come from just one sector. There are multiple ways to generate energy in Alberta. I mean, I was a little bit disappointed, I guess, to see in here that we weren't going to talk about the other industries that are doing some great work to contribute to the energy mix in Alberta. That's okay. Single track. I get it. Maybe, you know, stay focused.

When it comes to talking about curriculum, Mr. Speaker, I think that the piece that's missing for me here, too, is that, again, we talk a lot about priorities, about the misaligned priorities of this

government, the mismanagement of this government on the issues that are priorities to Albertans.

I love that we're here and we're having this opportunity to talk about education. Education is something that matters a lot to me. It matters a lot to the residents of Calgary-Beddington and to so many Albertans, Mr. Speaker. We have a lot of issues in our classrooms right now. This government knows this. We hear them finally admitting to it, that there is a complexity crisis that's happening in our classroom. I do wish that perhaps we had been bringing forth some legislation that was going to address some of those more critical, more pressing issues.

When we look at complexity, just to give a bit of an idea on scale, I had mentioned this earlier today, that we have just over 68,000 classrooms in Alberta that have been identified with medium or higher complexity. If we look at a couple of school districts – this government has provided some funding for complexity teams – just for a couple of examples, Rocky View school district has 45 schools that are reporting complex classrooms but only 12 complexity teams that have actually been allocated for that school division. It's quite a heavy lift for those 12 teams. If you look at CBE, of course our largest school division in the province, 234 schools have reportable classrooms with complexity. It's just a bit over 13,000 reportable classrooms; 88 per cent of those classrooms are reporting at medium or high complexity. That means five or more complex students.

Then a number of schools within that division such as Terry Fox school or Dr. Gladys McKelvie Egbert – now, unfortunately, these are junior highs. Even though they have over 50 reportable classrooms with 11 or more students who are rated as high complexity, there are no complexity teams for these schools because they are junior high and high schools. We know, of course, that there wasn't any funding made available to those higher grade schools.

The complexity issue in our classrooms is something that I hear about every day from Albertans, both from residents in Calgary-Beddington and then just more broadly, of course, from the many parents I have the pleasure of interacting with. I don't hear as many concerns around the lack of information in the curriculum about oil and gas or agriculture construction. You know, it could just be that those parents, like me, are having conversations with their kids at home about what makes a go in Alberta. Where are the jobs? What kind of jobs should our kids be preparing for? Those are definitely conversations that we're happy to have around the table.

When I'm thinking about priorities, too, we're really missing an opportunity. We don't get many opportunities, Mr. Speaker, to table legislation in this Chamber and certainly not as a private member. You know, it's a draw that comes up. You might be lucky to get one piece of legislation. There are members on this side of the Chamber that have never had the opportunity to bring a private member's bill in front of this Chamber. So it's something that I would hope that members do with a lot of thought towards: what are the biggest priorities for Albertans right now? What are the biggest concerns?

When we're talking about amending the Education Act, I wonder why we aren't addressing some of the other big curriculum concerns that we have. If you look at the grade 6 math PAT grades, Mr. Speaker, there is a huge problem in this government's math curriculum. That is something that is affecting not just students today, but it's going to trickle forward for many years. It's going to put the precious PISA scores at risk if we don't do something to address the grave errors that have occurred in this government's approach to the math curriculum.

I see the hand coming down, and I know many members will want to offer comments.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Rowsell: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise today and speak to Bill 207, Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, and I will speak to the bill. Like many of the members in this room, I grew up knowing people who worked with their hands, people who got up before the sun and came home tired but always proud. They were farmers, rig workers, truck drivers, construction workers, welders, and forest workers. Their jobs weren't always easy. In fact, they rarely were. Sometimes the work was cold or dangerous and often invisible to those who didn't live in it. But those tough jobs built this province, and they continue to. These industries didn't just create jobs; they created communities and opportunities. They and the hard-working people who have rolled up their sleeves and got to work are responsible for the Alberta we know today.

3:10

Bill 207 is all about highlighting what we in this Chamber already know. These industries are the backbone of our province: energy, agriculture, construction, and forestry. We want to ensure that the next generation understands the profound impact that these sectors have had on Alberta's success over the century. Alberta's industries are what we're known for. Being hard-working people is what we're known for. Mr. Speaker, that is something to be proud of. Yet many students finish school without a clear picture of what these industries do and what career opportunities they offer. They don't always learn how energy powers our economy or how agriculture feeds millions at home and abroad. They don't understand how forestry and construction supports nearly every other sector in the economy.

It's time we changed that. We want to open the door for education that tells the full story of Alberta's primary industries because they are not only central to our past; they're also essential to our present and future. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are supported by them. They generate billions in economic activity, which directly translates into funding for hospitals, schools, infrastructure, and social services. On top of this, they provide stable, well-paying careers for families across our province.

Energy, especially oil and natural gas, have been central to Alberta's growth and identity. Without it the province would look vastly different today. The discovery of natural gas in Turner Valley in 1914 or oil in Leduc in 1947 marked the beginning of the new and prosperous era for Alberta. Those discoveries led to sustained economic growth, and we still benefit generations later. Oil and gas revenues have helped build core infrastructure, supported public investments, and made Alberta a destination for families and workers seeking opportunity. Communities all over the province exist because energy development was made available. Given the recent national NDP convention and their choice for the party's new leader I think it is important – more important than ever – to highlight how important oil and gas are for Albertans. In fact, it is important to highlight how significant oil and gas are to the entire country, Mr. Speaker.

These sectors are key economic drivers across the province, from big cities to small towns. They have long been described as central to Canada's emergence as an energy leader on a world stage. Without them Alberta and Canada would not be the places they are today. Mr. Speaker, it is also important to recognize the people behind all of this success. Our energy sector has been built by workers who put in long hours, work in tough conditions, and develop world-class expertise. These are geologists, engineers, tradespeople, operators, technicians,

and countless others whose work has directly contributed to Alberta's prosperity.

Bill 207 will ensure that these contributions receive the acknowledgement they deserve. By establishing instruction on Alberta's primary industries, students will be better able to understand why these sectors are so important and what careers they offer. Mr. Speaker, this is about awareness and education, not promotion and politics. It's very important to consider this bill right now because our hands-on industries are facing labour shortages. Trades and technical roles are in demand across energy, agriculture, construction, and forestry. These careers are essential to maintaining Alberta's prosperity, yet too often they are overlooked in favour of more traditional academic paths. This is not to say that every student should pursue a career in these industries. It is simply about ensuring they are informed. We have an opportunity to rebalance the narrative and show students that skilled trades and hands-on work are respected, rewarding, and vital to Alberta. We cannot stress enough to the youth of this province that careers in these sectors are what keep Alberta competitive and economically strong.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of an annual fossil fuel recognition day would contribute to this awareness. The day would be about acknowledging reality. Fossil fuels have played a critical role in the development of Alberta and its economic success for well over a century. Recognizing that history does not dismiss innovation like many eco activists would have you think. This isn't about being stagnant. In fact, it's already shown that economic development and resource management go hand in hand.

I've been proud to advocate for the annual fossil fuel recognition day because I believe it is important for all Albertans, especially students, to learn about the origins of our energy industry, its lasting impact, and its role in shaping Alberta's identity as a province of prosperity and opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, our modern economy didn't appear overnight. It has been built deliberately through expertise, investment, and a heavy dose of elbow grease. Bill 207 is about giving recognition where it's due, and educating the younger generation reflects a lived experience of thousands of Albertans who know first-hand that oil and gas, forestry, construction, and agriculture have and will continue to be significant. For a province that is built on energy and hard work, that recognition is appropriate and, quite frankly, long overdue. That is why I continue to stand in favour of a fossil fuel recognition day and Bill 207, introduced by my colleague from Grande Prairie.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 207, the Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. Let me begin here. As an Alberta New Democrat I support the energy sector. On this side of the House we support the people who work in oil and gas and agriculture, in forestry and construction, and in the many related sectors that have helped build this province. We understand the importance of these industries to Alberta's economy, to family incomes, to public services, and to the identity of communities across this province. That has always been true, and it remains true today.

This is why this bill is so frustrating in so many ways, Mr. Speaker, because it's not serious legislation at a time when Albertans are dealing with an affordability crisis, a health care crisis, and our youth employment rate has never been higher, food insecurity has never been higher. Rather than addressing the priorities of Albertans, we are debating a bill that is largely performative. It doesn't create more jobs. It doesn't help energy workers. What it does, instead, is that it creates a holy cow for political theatre, and it doesn't help everyday

Albertans because beneath the symbolism there is no serious economic plan. There isn't even a serious education plan that will support the skilled trades sector.

I'd like to take a few moments to talk about the limitations of this bill, and then I'd like to share with you, Mr. Speaker, what we plan to do on this side of the House to actually support the energy sector. What does this bill do? What Bill 207 actually does is fairly limited. It amends the Education Act to require age-appropriate instruction of what it calls primary provincial industries, defined as fossil fuel resource development, forestry, agriculture, and construction. It says that this instruction is to include the role that these industries play in Alberta's prosperity, the public revenues they generate, potential career opportunities, and fossil fuel recognition day. The bill also amends the Special Days Act to designate February 13 as fossil fuel recognition day, and it would come into force on January 1, 2027.

Now, on the surface one might say: what is wrong with teaching students about Alberta's major industries? It all sounds reasonable, right? But here's the problem, Mr. Speaker. The government can already do this. Aside from the fact that they have a dismal record when it comes to curriculum development, it's totally inappropriate for government to insert themselves into education for political purposes. The education minister already has broad authority over curriculum. The government already has the power to shape what students learn, and in fact many school divisions across the province already incorporate learning about the energy sector along with other skilled trades in their various career pathways, trades, and CTS initiatives. I recall as a school board trustee with our career pathways initiatives that certainly the energy sector was part of it. Now, keep in mind that Bill 207 doesn't fix a structural problem in our education system. Let's call it for what it is. It's a performative political gesture that does nothing for everyday Albertans.

3:20

Let's also not forget that this is the same government that bungled the curriculum redraft. They did away with a highly respected version, one that was supported by different administrations, across different political stripes, and education experts. They replaced it with something much inferior. The UCP's draft K to 12 curriculum did not align with Alberta education's own vision and has outcomes that educators described as developmentally inappropriate. The UCP draft curriculum expected very young children to memorize a long list of names, landmarks, and events, including famous artists. We saw grade 1 social studies pushed into ancient Mesopotamia and lessons on BCE and CE. Experts pointed out that children at that age should be learning about their own communities and lived experiences. Educators said that the draft was not logically sequenced, was developmentally inappropriate, and had twice as many learning outcomes as the existing curriculum. Even educators and teachers that the government invited into the process later said that their input was largely ignored and warned that the draft would not help students develop critical thinking skills. Indigenous organizations raised serious concerns as well, with the Métis Nation of Alberta calling for a redraft. As if all of this were not enough, parts of the curriculum were even accused of plagiarism.

Mr. Speaker, that is this government's record on curriculum. They took what was once a world-class curriculum and made it into one that is sorely lacking in real skills that will help prepare students for the world of tomorrow. Again, Bill 207 is not a serious effort to improve student learning and really just another attempt to politicize what happens in classrooms.

Now, our agriculture industry is one of the economic foundations of this province. Primary agriculture employs nearly 45,000 Albertans while another 39,000 work in the broader agrifood industry. Alberta's agrifood exports were nearly \$18 billion in 2023,

and total farm cash receipts were \$23.3 billion. Alberta leads Canada in beef production. Canola and wheat remain among our most valuable crops. The same is true of forestry. Alberta's forest industry directly employs over 18,000 people, supports another 27,000 jobs in related industries, contributes more than \$8 billion to the provincial economy, and plays a central role in many rural communities. Similarly, the construction industry employs about a quarter of a million Albertans. It builds homes, the schools, the roads, the hospitals, and the public infrastructure that make this province function. Yes, the same is true of oil and gas. No one is arguing with the importance of these sectors that form part of Alberta's bench strengths when it comes to the economy. Let's also be clear. This bill does nothing to help any of the sectors that I just mentioned.

I want to take a moment to actually talk about our record on this side of the House. It was the Alberta New Democrats that actually got a pipeline built to tidewater. It was the Alberta New Democrats that moved the Trans Mountain expansion forward, the first pipeline to tidewater our province has seen in decades, and because of that work thousands of Albertans have been employed to build, maintain, and operate that project and the broader industry that it supports. Because of what an Alberta New Democrat government has accomplished, Alberta has reaped the benefits and scale of that impact: 14,600 construction jobs, 13,300 pipeline operations jobs, and hundreds of thousands of jobs connected to the broader industry, all thanks to what an Alberta New Democrat government was able to accomplish.

Let us reject the lazy suggestion that supporting workers in oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, and construction belongs to the UCP. It does not. Alberta's New Democrats support these sectors because we support Alberta's economy, but supporting these industries should mean more than proposing performative legislation. It should actually mean making decisions that strengthen investor confidence, expand market access, and create long-term opportunities, and this is where this government's record falls short.

I want to talk a little bit about what we plan to do as the Alberta New Democrats. On this side of the House we have a concrete energy plan built around market access, export capacity, grid reliability, and new industrial growth. Our plan proposes optimizing the Trans Mountain expansion to add more than 300,000 barrels per day of additional capacity. It also supports working with Indigenous communities and other governments on a new west coast pipeline option, exploring new export routes in multiple directions, revisiting projects such as Energy East, and increasing natural gas capacity. Let's have serious legislation.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today and speak in strong support of Bill 207, the Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. This bill is an important and practical step towards strengthening Alberta's workforce, supporting our economy, and helping young Albertans understand the many career opportunities available to them right here in Alberta. Bill 207 is about giving students better information, real choices, and a clearer picture of how they can build a good future in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's primary industries are the foundation of our province. Energy, agriculture, forestry, transportation, and construction are not only key drivers of our economy; they are also deeply tied to who we are as Albertans. These industries employ thousands of people across urban and rural communities. They support families, keep towns and cities thriving, and generate the

revenue that helps fund our schools, hospitals, roads, and other public services Albertans rely on.

Despite how important these industries are, many young Albertans have only limited understanding of what they actually do or the kinds of careers they offer. Too often students move through the education system without learning how closely these industries are connected to everyday life in Alberta. Bill 207 takes direct actions to address that gap. This legislation ensures that students are taught about the role primary industries play in our economy and the wide range of jobs they create. These are not just one type of career. They include engineers, technologists, operators, and many other skilled trades. These are good-paying, hands-on jobs that offer stability, pride, and long-term career growth.

Mr. Speaker, for too long many young people have been made to feel like success only comes from following a narrow path. As a result, some students finish high school unsure of what they want to do or unaware of the careers that might suit them better. Bill 207 helps change that by giving students clear and accurate information earlier so that they can make informed choices about their future.

This bill also responds to very real challenges facing Alberta today. Primary industries across our province are experiencing workforce shortages. Many experienced workers are retiring. Projects are expanding, and employers are struggling to find enough new workers to meet the demand. This is happening in energy, farming, forestry, transportation, construction, and skilled trades across Alberta. If these shortages continue, they could have serious long-term impacts. They could slow down projects, increase costs, and weaken industries that Albertans rely on every day.

3:30

Bill 207 is a forward-looking, common-sense way to help address this issue by encouraging more young people to see these industries as real, viable career options. Mr. Speaker, by raising awareness in the classrooms, this bill helps students explore paths they might never have considered before. It shows them that primary industries are not outdated or declining fields but modern sectors that use advanced technology, innovation, and problem-solving skills. For students who enjoy working with their hands, learning on the job, or seeing the results of their work in the real world, these careers can be a perfect fit.

Trades and hands-on careers are absolutely essential in Alberta. They are people who build our homes, schools, and hospitals. They maintain our roads, bridges, and infrastructure. They grow our food, manage our forests, and help produce the energy that powers our province. These jobs keep Alberta moving forward. Mr. Speaker, these careers are not backup plans or second-best options. They require skill, training, and dedication, and they deserve respect and recognition. Bill 207 helps ensure that our education system reflects that reality by presenting students with a full picture of the opportunities available to them.

It is also important to be clear that this bill does not push students in any one career path. No one is being forced into a trade or an industry. Instead, Bill 207 expands awareness. It gives students knowledge, and knowledge creates choice. When young people understand their options, they are better equipped to choose a path that fits their interests, strengths, and goals.

Mr. Speaker, another key benefit of this legislation is that it helps keep talent in Alberta. When students can clearly see career opportunities close to home, they're more likely to stay, work, and raise their families here. This is especially important for rural communities that rely heavily on primary industries that face challenges attracting young workers. By building strong connections between education and industry, Bill 207 helps ensure that what students learn in school lines up with the real-world needs. This

makes our education system more practical, responsive, and relevant. It benefits students, employers, and the province as a whole.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Bill 207 is built on a simple idea. Informed students make better decisions, and better decisions lead to a stronger Alberta. By teaching young people about primary industries and the careers that they support, we invest in our workforce, our economy, and our long-term future. I urge all members of this Assembly to support Bill 207 and stand with Alberta's workforce, students, and industries. Together we can ensure that the next generation is informed, prepared, and proud to build their future in the industries that have always built this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Member Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand and speak to Bill 207, Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. I want to take a minute, you know – yeah – maybe just to dispel some myths about our side of the House, where we come from, what we're all about. In hearing earlier the Member for Grande Prairie speak, the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti speak, I just want to talk a little bit about the north because I didn't really hear a lot of conversation about the north and what these industries are in the north and kind of what that means.

Maybe I'll just start out a little bit in talking about agriculture because, you know, I do spend a lot of time with agricultural constituents and going to agricultural advocacy days and events and learning about agriculture. I would say, walking into those rooms, Mr. Speaker, that I feel a little bit like the odd man out, having grown up on a farm, but my dad was a beekeeper. Very rarely am I in a room with beekeepers. I'm in a room with people who are producing grain crops, oil crops. Maybe they're cattle or beef producers, but they're probably not beekeepers. Beekeepers: I don't want us to forget. Since we're talking about here, like, not forgetting about these industries that are important for Alberta, I just want to throw out there: let's not forget about beekeepers.

Ms Chapman: Yes to honey.

Member Ellingson: Yes to honey, right? Yes to honey. I have my own particular, you know, like, what kind of honey is the best kind of honey. Maybe we don't need to get into that in the House today.

I do, you know, have some fun sometimes in chatting with people about beekeeping, about honey production, because this is an Alberta story. Alberta produces the majority of Canada's honey, and the large majority of Alberta's production is from the north. It's from the Peace district because the Peace district has the conditions in place for honey production. In the Peace district there are still many farmers that do crop rotations. They grow clover and alfalfa in between their rotations of their grain crops, which, of course, as everybody knows, because clover and alfalfa are nitrogen fixers, this is a natural way to fertilize your fields.

Also in the north, in the Peace River country, we have long days. We have long summer days, which gives the bees a long time to work, to go out there and gather the nectar and the pollen to produce that honey. There are some that say even that, because of those long days – there's, you know, some research around, like, the longer summer day versus the shorter summer day actually changes the nature of the honey itself, the taste and flavour and even the quality of the honey and the health aspects of that honey.

So, yeah, I grew up on a farm. It was just me and my dad. My dad had 400 hives of bees. I also enjoy saying to people, you know – when you say to somebody that you grew up on a farm and your

dad was a beekeeper, everybody is like: oh, that is so cool. It's not as sexy as you think it is. Just let me tell you that when it's 34 degrees and you've got to wear, like, three layers of clothes and the veil, it's stinking hot out there. And those boxes that you're throwing around: they weigh 160 pounds. So you spend 14 hours in 32-degree heat wearing three layers of clothes, throwing around 160-pound boxes, and then you get to go into a house, into a building that you heat so that the honey will flow. It's not as sexy as you think it is. Also, you grow up in a house – when your dad is a beekeeper, there is honey on everything. Every surface in your home is sticky.

I will also say that this gave me a love for both the product, the process, those who are in the industry. We, obviously, knew a lot of other beekeepers when I was growing up. It put us in touch with a lot of other farmers because beekeepers do their work on everybody else's land. Beekeepers don't have 5,000 acres or lease 20,000 acres. They put their hives on everybody else's land and you drive around to everybody else's land, so you get to know a ton of people in your community. So I also understand the value of beekeeping and agriculture in building community. So I get it when we put forward a bill like this.

I hope that maybe more people on the other side of the House, when we talk about agriculture, are going to talk about beekeeping and how important beekeeping is for Alberta and how important it is for the north. It employs a lot of people. It keeps a lot of families on the land. It gives you that knowledge of the land. When you're a beekeeper, you notice the activities of birds and bugs, and you know when a storm is coming. When you're a beekeeper, you become attuned to, again, when the storm is coming. Like those who grew up on a farm, who are used to rural Alberta, the smell before the rain, when the humidity starts to build in the air and it changes the smell, you know that that rainstorm is coming.

3:40

I'm fond of agriculture. I'm down with a bill that is going to talk more about agriculture with schoolkids. I've also talked to teachers and producers about, you know: what are the activities that we have where they're coming together and kids are learning more about agriculture? I also find it's both funny and frustrating when I'm with friends of mine that grew up in the city and I'm driving somewhere. We're, like, driving along, and they're looking out at a field and they're like: what is that?" I look at them, and I'm like, "You're kidding me, right? You don't know what crop this is?" which blows my mind. I, too, believe that when we're growing up in this place, everybody should have the opportunity to know what it is that we grow here, how we manufacture that, and what it means to people. I believe that we should have a stronger connection with our food. I think that if we had stronger connections with our food, where it comes from, how we grow it, how we use it, we would have healthier communities.

This isn't just about youth knowing where job opportunities are. It can also be about us having healthier communities, when people understand more about food and where it comes from and what the nutrient values are of the food and the differences between food that's grown locally and food that is shipped in from somewhere else. I think we should be doing that work.

Since I know I'm getting close to time, I thought I would also just throw out – because I've done a lot of work in economic development and investment attraction, I do just want to be a little bit nitpicky. Construction isn't a primary industry. There are three kinds of industries: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary industries are extractive industries. Construction is a secondary industry. It's more like a manufacturing kind of industry. So, to be nitpicky, if we're going to call it a primary industries act, we shouldn't be including

construction. Maybe you want to change the name to: primary and secondary.

Then I also don't want us to lose sight of – again, I appreciate that what we really want is for youth to understand the really great jobs and careers that they can have in these industries, and I'm down for that. But I also want kids to know, youth in Alberta to know, like, just the incredible diversity of jobs that are open and available to them. I don't want us to ever lose sight that – you know, you can work in tourism, and that also can give you an incredibly valuable career. You can work in tech, and it can allow you to do things that maybe you never imagined. You can work in health and maybe change the world and the lives of Albertans around you.

When we think about the bill, let's again not forget about beekeeping. Also, like, youth in Alberta today should be learning about all of the opportunities that are available to them. Let's not be short sighted. Let's just make sure that we're always talking about the greatness of this province and what's available.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of this bill but, more importantly, speak on behalf of the people who will live and experience the results of the decisions we make in this Chamber, the young people of Alberta. Bill 207 is about education, yes. It's about economic literacy as well. But, most importantly, it's about vision. It's about recognizing that when we place our youth at the centre of our decision-making, when we empower them with knowledge, opportunity, and choice, we're not just shaping careers; we're shaping the future of this province.

This bill will establish age-appropriate instruction in Alberta classrooms on the province's primary economic industries. That means helping students understand the industries that power our province: energy, agriculture, forestry, construction, and the skilled trades. These are not abstract concepts. These are the industries that heat our homes, feed our families, build our infrastructure, and sustain our economy. Too often we assume young people will figure it out. We assume they'll discover these opportunities on their own or that they will naturally follow the paths taken by our parents and grandparents. That assumption leaves far too many of them behind.

Right now too many students graduate without a clear understanding of what these industries actually do, how they support Alberta's economy, or what kind of careers exist within them. Too many of our youth think of these industries as jobs out of their wheelhouse. That is far from the truth. We want our youth directly involved, Mr. Speaker. We want them to recognize that these are not just jobs, but rather meaningful, fulfilling, well-paying careers that offer sustainability, stability, pride, and purpose.

At the same time we're facing a troubling reality. Like many jurisdictions across the country, our youth are being phased out of work opportunities. They're competing not only with their peers for limited entry-level positions but increasingly with older, more experienced individuals entering Alberta's labour market. This is not a criticism. It is a reality, and if we fail to respond to it, the cost will be paid by an entire generation of young Albertans who feel locked out of the workforce. That is where this bill matters, Mr. Speaker. By introducing students early to the breadth of Alberta's economic landscape, we expand the number of doors available to them. We diversify the pathways they can pursue. We ease competition by showing young people that success does not exist in a single lane, in a single industry, or in a single definition handed down by circumstance.

Mr. Speaker, this bill also confronts another challenge we can no longer ignore: the disconnect of where young people come from and where they believe they're allowed to go. Today young people growing up in cities are less likely to pursue careers in agriculture, energy, or forestry, with their aspirations increasingly oriented toward finance, technology, entertainment, or innovation. At the same time many youth growing up in rural areas feel a quiet but persistent pressure to stay on the farm, work in oil and gas, or continue the legacy of earlier generations.

Now, there's nothing wrong with any of these paths, but the problem arises when choice is replaced by expectation and curiosity is replaced by limitation. When our youth, whether urban or rural, feel they're expected to stay in the city or on the farm, we limit their ability to grow, to learn, and to contribute. These barriers are not the result of unwillingness or lack of talent. They're the barriers we have built through silence, through assumptions, and through an education system that too often fails to show young people the full picture.

This bill seeks to tear down these walls. We want city kids working on farms, learning where their food comes from, understanding the innovation and technology that agriculture demands. We want farm kids walking through office towers in our cities, exploring careers in finance, business, entertainment, and beyond. We want young Albertans to feel equally welcome and equally capable wherever opportunity calls them because when young people see possibility everywhere, they grow into adults who contribute everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that there's an urgent need in our labour market for our hands-on sectors. Energy industries that are foundational to our province are struggling to find the next generation of skilled workers, and it's because too few young people are being shown why they matter or how they fit into it. Education is the bridge, information is the bridge, and exposure is the bridge. Like all of us know, increased exposure leads to increased expansion. By requiring classrooms to teach students about how these industries strengthen our province and the diverse career paths they offer, we close the information gap. We ensure that choices made at 18 are not made in the dark but with a clear understanding of opportunity, demand, and potential. When we do that, we do more than fill jobs; we build confidence, independence, and hope.

Alberta has never been blind to the importance of trades and hands-on careers. We did not become the engine of this country by sitting on our hands. We became that engine by lacing up our bootstraps, rolling up our sleeves, and putting in the work. The men and women who built this province did so with grit, skill, and determination. Our responsibility now is to ensure the next generation has the same chance, not by forcing them down a single path but by illuminating every path available to them.

This bill recognizes that youth are not just future voters or future workers. They're future leaders, innovators, builders, and caregivers. When we invest in them, we invest in stronger communities. When we trust them with knowledge, we trust them with responsibility. When we believe in their potential, they rise to meet it. If we want a prosperous Alberta, a resilient Alberta, and a united Alberta, we must continue to centre our youth in the decisions we make today.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, investing in our youth is investing in our future. It's not an option. It's not a decision we get to make based on how we feel. It's mandatory, it's necessary, and it requires action every single day. For those reasons, I urge all members of this House to support Bill 207, not just for the industries it strengthens but for the generation it empowers and the future it secures for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to offer my support for Bill 207, the Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, and to explain why this legislation matters to the future of Alberta. At its heart the bill is about education. It's about opportunity, and it's about ensuring young Albertans understand the industries that built this province and continue to sustain our economy today.

Alberta's primary industries include energy, agriculture, forestry, and construction, and are not abstract concepts. They are the backbone of our communities. They provide stable jobs, attract investment, and support public services that families rely on every single day. Yet too many students graduate without a clear understanding of what these industries do, how they contribute to our prosperity, or the meaningful careers they offer. That is the gap this bill addresses. Bill 207 ensures that Alberta's classrooms include age-appropriate instructions on the province's primary economic industries. This is not about advocacy; it's about awareness. It's about giving young people the information they need to make informed decisions about their futures.

Across Alberta employers in hands-on sectors are struggling to find workers, like in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, the home of the Industrial Heartland. Tradespeople, equipment operators, technicians, and skilled labourers are in high demand, yet students are too often unaware of these paths or incorrectly believe that this success only comes through a narrow route. This disconnect does not serve our students, it does not serve families, and it certainly does not serve the province. By teaching students how primary industries operate and the roles they play in our economy, this bill helps close that information gap. It shows students that rewarding, well-paying careers exist in fields that build our homes, power our industries, produce our food, and manage our natural resources.

Trades and hands-on careers are essential to Alberta. They keep our communities running, they support major projects and small businesses alike, and they deserve the same respect and visibility as any other profession. Mr. Speaker, when students understand the real-world applications of what they learn in school, education becomes more meaningful. A lesson about energy production is no longer theoretical when students understand how it translates to jobs in their community. A discussion about forestry has greater impact when students learn how it supports rural economies and responsible land stewardship. This bill makes education more connected to real life and benefits students from every background.

This legislation also establishes an annual fuel recognition day on February 13. This day acknowledges a reality that is impossible to ignore: without fossil fuels Alberta would not be the province that it is today. From the discovery of natural gas in Turner Valley in 1914 to the oil strike in Leduc in 1947, fossil fuels have played a central role in shaping Alberta's economic story. They have funded schools, hospitals, and infrastructure. They've drawn people from across the country and around the world in search of opportunity. Recognizing that history is not about living in the past; it's about understanding where we came from and how we arrived at the present.

An annual day of recognition does not prevent discussions about innovation, environmental responsibility, or economic diversification. In fact, it strengthens them. You cannot plan for the future without understanding the foundation you're built on. This recognition offers a chance for thoughtful, age-appropriate conversations in classrooms about how these industries have evolved, how they continue to change, and the role young Albertans may play in shaping the next chapter.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 207 is not about telling students what career to choose. It does not limit ambition or dictate direction. It expands horizons. It ensures students know that success can take many

forms, whether that path leads to a construction site, a farm, a processing facility, or a university classroom. It respects families by giving students accurate information rather than assumptions, it respects communities by acknowledging the industries that sustain them, and it respects workers whose skills and labour continue to keep Alberta strong. Importantly, this bill does not impose complex new systems. It builds on existing education frameworks and focuses on learning outcomes that reflect Alberta's economic reality, and it does so in a practical and responsible way.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's strength has always come from people who work with their hands and their minds, people who take pride in building, producing, and providing. When we teach young people about the industries that do this work, we show them that their contributions matter and that their province values their potential.

This is also about long-term sustainability. Worker shortages in primary industries will not solve themselves. If we want these sectors to remain competitive and innovative, we need to ensure a new generation understands the opportunities available and feels welcome to them. Bill 207 supports that goal.

To the students wondering what comes after graduation, this bill says that there are many paths worth exploring. To the family concerned about job prospects close to home, it says that opportunities do exist. To the workers who have spent decades building Alberta, it says that your work is worth recognizing and teaching.

Mr. Speaker, strong provinces are built on knowledge, respect, and opportunity: knowledge of our history and our economy, respect for industries and people who sustain us, and the opportunity for the next generation to build a future they can be proud of. Bill 207 reflects this. For these reasons, I'm proud to support Bill 207, the Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today. I was listening a little bit to the NDP side, and I was wondering the relevance in relation to Bill 207, the Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, which I support. Then I thought: it must be the fossil fuel appreciation day and the similarity in that fossil fuels create hot air and they were creating hot air at the same time. I couldn't see really the relevance in what they were talking about. They did talk about schools, and they're right about schools being relevant because of course fossil fuels in Alberta pay for schools. They pay for hospitals. I heard them talk about health care, too. They pay for all the things. In fact, we wouldn't have a construction industry in this great province if people didn't want to come to this great province. They wouldn't come to this great province if they didn't have fossil fuel jobs.

Mr. Speaker, this province was built on fossil fuels. In fact, not only did we build the province on fossil fuels and the exploitation of that, but we perfected it through technology and innovation, better technology and innovation than anywhere else in the entire planet. We also have the greatest regulator in the province in the world, the Alberta Energy Regulator, which indicates that we should be a place of absolute greatness for fossil fuels, being that we have the fourth largest reserve of oil in the world and, with B.C., the ninth largest reserve of natural gas. Not only that, but recently the Alberta Geological Survey announced that we are actually potentially home to the third largest lithium deposit on the entire planet.

Mr. Wilson: Wow.

Mr. Jean: Wow. That's found in brine in old oil wells. It's all about technology.

The members from the opposition were right about something: it's time to go back to school. When they say that the NDP are responsible for TMX, well, if you do a little history lesson, you find out that TMX, the first one, was actually built in 1952. I don't remember them being in power here in Alberta in 1952. I think most people right now that were in power then would roll over in their graves if they heard that. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you want to know more about it, in 1951 they decided to build it. In 1952 they built it. In 1953 it was in operation.

Mr. Wilson: Wow.

Mr. Jean: Wow.

Doesn't sound like any TMX build to me. Sounds like somebody knew what they were doing back then. I think it was a conservative government, if I'm not mistaken. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, if you go back and you see the history again a little bit more, there was an expansion in 2013. They weren't in power then either. It was a conservative government in Alberta and in Ottawa.

Mr. Wilson: What?

Mr. Jean: What? Yes, Mr. Speaker. Then, of course, we did get the first shipment of TMX in 2024. Well, my gosh, golly gee, it was another conservative government here in Alberta.

So I guess we are right about something, Mr. Speaker. This is a good bill because they should go back to school and learn a little bit more about Alberta's history and how amazing it is to come from a province that is an energy superpower built on fossil fuels, built on the innovation and creativity of amazing Albertans that took something that was basically dirt and parts of dirt and created something amazing out of it today, an energy superpower in oil and gas.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, we have over the years heard a lot of rhetoric about anti oil and gas dogma from, you know, people like Greta Thunberg and David Suzuki, those great educators who don't care about anybody but themselves when they're talking about fossil fuels. Those folks take more jet flights than anybody I know. You see, David Suzuki goes from one part of the world to another, and jets use a lot of fossil fuel. In fact, I think at the Winnipeg convention this week, I wonder how they got there, all those naysayers to fossil fuel. Did they fly? Did they drive? Did they walk? Did they burn sticks outside the convention centre to keep warm?

When I get up in the morning and I take a warm shower, fuelled by natural gas, that fossil fuel, I really appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, especially when my furnace turns on, and I get up and I don't have to worry about the cold, because I live in minus 30 in Fort McMurray most of the time, at least all winter anyways. When I get in my truck, man, I love that thing when it command starts because – guess what? I walk from my front door into my truck, and it's going, and it runs on oil. Then I get in that truck and I can travel anywhere around Canada and Alberta for work, for education, for enjoyment. I live in the greatest place in the world, funded by the incredible people that work in our industry, and I'm very proud of them.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at other jurisdictions, though, that do things a little differently than we do. Let's look at Oklahoma because they've gotten back to the basics. They actually take pride in their trades and instill that pride in the students that go to their schools. This truly needs to be second nature. We need to think more outside the box about how we get people to appreciate what really brought us to this point of being the best place in the world to live, work, and play.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

What the state of Oklahoma does is that they work with industry regulators, Madam Speaker. They've developed curriculum for all grades to ensure that their students are not only aware of the opportunities ahead in oil and gas, by the way, but that the skills they need are developed from an early age. How early you might ask? Kindergarten. Can you believe it, that they go back that far? I have a seven-year-old child right now. I just spent some time with her this weekend, and I will tell you that I can't imagine a better education for her than learning about the things that actually pay for everything that she wants to go through life; fossil fuels in Alberta, for instance, that provide so much not just for Albertans, not just for the First Nations, not just for the environment but for the entire country and a lot of the world.

A lot of people don't know this, but Albertans are the most generous givers on the entire planet. That's right, Madam Speaker. They give a lot of money, and that's because they get a lot of money from fossil fuels. I live in Fort McMurray, and I think it's still the highest household income in the country, over \$200,000 per house. Great jobs, all in the oil and gas industry. I thank them for the opportunities they've given me and all of my family who have all worked in that industry.

But I will tell you that in Oklahoma they teach a hands-on, science-based curriculum designed to help kids learn about energy sources from a very early age. Geology, density, matter, porosity, and sound waves: yes, fossil fuels, Madam Speaker, that's how we get them out of the ground these days. It's not just taking a shovel and digging them out. It's actually scientific, and a lot of work goes into it before we are successful with it. Now, they teach math concepts like measurements, mass, volumes, data organization, decimals, and fractions, all related to the energy industry.

By the time they hit grade 9 through grade 12, the programming is throughout their core subjects, Madam Speaker, encouraging critical thinking. The curriculum is designed by educators recognizing how important fossil fuels are to their economy. For Oklahoma it's about preparing their next generation to make the most of the opportunities they have in their state; in jobs, Madam Speaker, in careers, in the future because they recognize how important that is not just to Oklahoma, not just to energy security for the U.S. but for the free world.

This is the thing. We have a better regulatory system here in Alberta. We have a better industry knowledge base. We have led the world in energy innovation for the last 50 years, with a small population, Madam Speaker. By no means do we have to copy their homework, but what we should do is make sure that when we do this, we do it right.

Let's face it, Madam Speaker, the NDP were in power for a period of time, and, you know, during that period of time, might I mention, the Leader of the Opposition was the mayor of Calgary? Speaking of fossil fuels, do you know that coal makes steel? It's true. You can make water pipes with coal, and you can make steel rings with metallurgical coal. Now, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was mayor between 2019 or, I think, somewhere around four years, 10 years actually, 11 years – in 2019 by the time he was almost finished as mayor, Madam Speaker, Calgary was losing 28 per cent of its treated water to leaks. He didn't decide on using that fossil fuel for the right kind of investment. He used it for a blue ring on the side of the highway, and he should have used it for water pipes for the people of Calgary. Can you imagine 28 per cent of your bill going out the drain, literally? Well, that's the legacy of the NDP leader when he was the mayor of Calgary.

Madam Speaker, we need to look at different opportunities, and in Oklahoma they have, in different jurisdictions around the United States they have, and in different jurisdictions in the world they have. And we need to find the best education for our kids for the future, for the career of the future.

I want to give a lot of hope to the people in Fort McMurray, in Lac La Biche, Grande Prairie, Lloydminster, Cold Lake. It's no secret that rural communities around Alberta have suffered over the past few years because a lot of people are moving into the big cities. We need to find more opportunities for people in small, rural communities, and that means more jobs, more training where they are. The jobs are there, and we can't have them flying in and out. We can't have them driving in and out. We have to have them living there, moving their families there, raising their families there. It's a better quality of life, Madam Speaker.

There was recently a book written by somebody who spent two years in the camps, Madam Speaker, and as an ex recovering divorce and criminal lawyer, I can tell you that there were a lot of people that went through my office that had very, very difficult times.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to take a moment to respond to some of the comments from the minister of energy. It was regrettable that he chose to use his time speaking to a private member's bill to engage in the kind of clownish antics we often see from him during question period and folks in this corner of the House. Disappointing to see that he used that time for cheap politics. I mean, after all, there have been so many times we haven't even had an opportunity to hear from that minister because it seemed the minister of the environment was the minister of energy for quite some time.

That said, I did want to just speak to some of the remarks that the minister brought forward regarding the TMX pipeline. Now, of course, Madam Speaker, the minister is well aware – everyone in this House is well aware – that when we talk about the TMX pipeline that was built thanks to the advocacy and work of our government, we are speaking of the expansion. [interjection] Now the minister laughs, but the fact is that the minister has never been part of a government that built any pipeline to tidewater, either as a federal MP or as an MLA and minister here in Alberta. None of the governments he worked with got a pipeline to tidewater. [interjections]

Now, the minister is talking about six pipelines, and none of those pipelines went to tidewater, Madam Speaker. Despite the fact that he sat with the government, they had many propositions in front of them that they did not advocate for, that they did not move forward, and that they were unsuccessful on because they handled them so badly. They couldn't handle Indigenous relations in consultation. But that is work that we got done. Our government knew how to do consultation to support those workers in the industry because that's the thing. You can put forward a private member's bill that's performative. You can put forward a private member's bill that says that we will talk about things in schools, we'll talk about education, and those are not unreasonable things. But the fact is that if you want to support those workers in oil and gas, you get a pipeline built to tidewater.

That is in fact what happened as a result of the advocacy of our government, the investments from the federal government at the time, and, yes, the advocacy of the Leader of the Official Opposition in his role as the mayor of Calgary. The benefits and the results of that are concrete, they're indisputable: the jobs that were created in that construction, thousands of them, over half of which were held by Albertans; the over 13,000 pipeline operations jobs; the 400,600 jobs in the broader industry; the fact that that pipeline, that expansion, which was built as a result of the advocacy of our government, not a Conservative government, not the minister of energy, who continues to laugh and cackle like a hyena.

The fact is that the \$5.4 billion of revenue that has been added, which his government has squandered, taking some of the highest resource revenue we've seen in quite some time and returning a \$9.4 billion deficit: that is what they have done with the gift that was given to them, Madam Speaker. That is concrete evidence of the work that was done not by this government, not by any Conservative government in Ottawa. Those are the facts.

4:10

When we speak about wanting to encourage students to work in the trades – and indeed that's something I fully agree on – that's long been a point of advocacy, I think, amongst folks in the union movement, in the labour movement. That's something that our government, when we were in government, invested in and moved forward on. I will note that this government in their budget, with the \$9.4 billion deficit despite near-record resource revenue, are in fact increasing costs for people to get certified in the trades. It's well and good to talk about this in schools and encourage people to go and do the trades, but then the government is turning around and making it more expensive and more difficult for students to actually do so.

The fact is that during our time in government we, in fact, made investments. In just three years we brought in \$13 billion of new investment in the energy sector, we promoted diversification of the economy, we put forward programs for alternate uses of petroleum, that this government indeed continued and built on, that has led to great investments here. I know that Dow petrochemical, just outside of Sherwood Park: some great facilities and work being done there.

You know, we can sit here and take partisan shots across the aisle. I recognize that everyone is pretty energized after the weekend. A lot of things have happened. The government has their opinions, and, of course, we have our opinions about separatists in their midst. We can toss that stuff back and forth. But the fact is, Madam Speaker, that both sides of this House support the energy industry. We have a track record of having done so in extremely concrete ways, which the government can choose to try to mock and deride, but the facts are the facts. The realities are the realities.

We don't have a problem supporting Bill 207. Now, certainly we'd love to see more concrete work being done. We'd love to see a government that isn't increasing costs on going into the trades. We'd love to see a government that is respecting Indigenous and treaty rights, which would help an awful lot in the sort of consultations that are going on about future pipelines to the coast, instead of pursuing things like separatism and advancing that and doing everything in their power to roll out the red carpet, with great disrespect to Indigenous and First Nations.

We will continue to have those debates in this House. We'll continue to have those opportunities. I look forward to the further debate on Bill 207.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, first of all, I like Mondays. It's private members' Mondays. Like, this is kind of a big deal. The gentleman to my left here, I don't know if he's going to show up on camera, but I just want to thank this young gentleman, a first-time MLA, coming out of that Grande Prairie country. He could have picked anything in the entire world when he got pulled here, and he chose to go back to the basics, to get back to the roots, to get back to our kids, to let them know who they are, where they come from, what industries we have in our province, and that they should be proud of them. I think this young man here deserves a big round of applause from everybody here for taking

the time to do that, so let me be the first. Thank you for doing that, Member. [some applause]

Bill 207 – I know that Madam Speaker is going to reel me in here pretty quick – is the Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. Now, one of the challenges – actually, I want to give some credit, too, to the Member for Calgary-Foothills. He had a great speech talking about that north country up there, where he grew up, the insightfulness of coming from that. I think we need more of that on both sides, you guys, especially on Mondays. Talk a little bit about your lived experiences in doing that. And the reason why he did that – one of them was to talk about agriculture but, moreover, the bees. The birds and the bees. I guess we can talk about those a little bit differently. But talking about the bees, actually raising and growing honey here, and the fact that Alberta does the most of that. Right outside Spruce Grove we've got the big group that pulls all that together. Even one of our own ministers is an avid, you know, beekeeper as well. There's the point. Right now in our education system – first time in western history, I think, that most people now live in an urban environment. They're not just one generation; they are a couple of generations removed from the agriculture side of it. With that urbanization we get a lot of benefits, but we also miss where our stuff comes from and what we are as a province and where we came from.

One of the other items we talked about on here was also fossil fuels, resource development. I mean, Leduc No. 1 is just out that way. You know, 1945 I think is when that came in, and that changed Alberta's trajectory from being one of those provinces that was agrarian based, for the most part – a little challenge with some of the transportation side of it because we didn't have the cash to do it to build up: that actually sparked it. A little company called Leducor started out there. Bill Lede was the first guy running that dozer out on that line, Leduc Construction, and all of a sudden that entire history of that little company grew into something that has headquarters in Vancouver. They do tons of work all over the place. You can take pool construction, a number of these.

I'm going to say one of the things that we were talking about. The member, actually – I'm going to pay a lot of credit to you because I like what you said there. The Member for Calgary-Foothills was talking about primary, secondary, and tertiary industries, but I would propose this to you, sir, through you, Madam Speaker, to him, that before construction there was nothing. You can't have the facilities unless you have the construction, chicken and egg. Construction is one of those big industries where, yeah, you have to pull everything together, and it's the hands that are out there on the equipment. It's the hands in the ditches, the labourers. It's the engineers that are pulling it together. It's the business development side of it. There are a ton of things that go on within those industries.

Forestry. My gosh, 62 per cent of our province is forested. The biggest polluter that we have is forest fires every year. When I had . . .

Member Ellingson: It's all up north.

Mr. Getson: Well, it's not all up north. You've got trees down south, too, but you won't let us touch them. I've got to take you around Calgary and show you around, brother.

The point of the matter is that when we're out on the road and we're talking about these things, a lot of us grew up understanding this but our kids may not have. When I'm out on the road through the economic corridor development side of it – three years ago I'm over in Germany speaking to the leader of the Green Party, basically telling her that we're twice the size of Germany. We only have 5.5 million people. It was 4.8 million at the time. We're 62 per cent forested, sitting on the sixth-largest known deposit on the planet

when it comes to gas, ninth maybe, depending on how you look at it, third largest for lithium – we heard that – and oil. Again, we're twice the size of Germany. They have 85 million people. Again, taking these messages across there.

We worked pretty hard on parity of esteem. I think we've done a pretty good job on that, but the fact that these kids don't necessarily get a chance to know how we keep the lights on, where it goes.

There was a councillor, Lorne Olsvik. Lorne, I'm going to give you a plug out there. He had kind of brought this up to me when I was first running. He says: once you get back in there, you're going to have to make sure that people understand that the money is made in rural Alberta, so outside of the cities; it's counted in the cities. That's what part of this will do. It'll show that these industries are absolutely integrated, but you can't have one without the other.

Forestry. You know, growing up out west I grew up on a mixed farming operation. We had oil and gas leases that were around, so we'd go knock down trees and do that and learned running equipment. My first big job in Edmonton I came in as a young farm kid off the farm at 16 to work for an asphalt company, and I could do that because I could labour, know how to work on a farm, but I could also run equipment. Then the forestry side of it: I've logged in areas where my grandfather did. We reforested and replanted those trees, and there we are. Now, my family growing up: my kids are on an acreage. They didn't grow up on the farm, but we have these connections. I even had a little old sawmill, so showed the kids how we make and do things. The fact that the Member here, again, for Grande Prairie is bringing this forward is going to be very helpful.

The other one thing I want to do, you guys, since it's private member Monday and I'm a private member, is that I do want to address a couple of items that we've been batting back and forth as politicians. I don't believe that there's another politician in here who actually worked on a pipeline project. Y'all are taking compliments. Okay, one person. Yeah, you did. One. Me and this fellow over here: we actually worked in that industry, but the rest of you haven't done a damn thing.

As politicians you're running in, jumping over backwards to take credit for stuff where credit is not due. The people that built those things and that took the risk and threw their capital in it are actually the ones that did something. Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, through you to my colleagues on both sides: you want to do something good? Get your fingers off the political pulse of the pipeline industry. That's why I've been pushing economic corridors, so that we can lock in an area, so that people know what the rule sets are. It's become a political football depending on which way the wind goes.

To build these projects takes a ton of capital and time. Every time we have these types of debates where you think it's going to affect your next four-year electoral cycle, you're hijacking 15, 20, 30, 50 years of prosperity. This is the same message that I take down south of the border, too, you guys. It's with kindness that I'm saying this.

4:20

But, please, if you're looking at TMX as a victory lap, that project went from \$15 billion to over \$40 billion, and it was a cluster because the governments got involved. We have to get back to a point with this bill, hopefully, where people understand our primary industries but we as politicians get our hands off that and we actually put the policies in place to allow our industries to thrive. Sorry. I got a little preachy there, Madam Speaker, but it's very near and dear to my heart, again, working out in those industries and working with folks on that side.

The other one, too, is that when it comes down to our forestry sector, there's all the planning for it. We always think it's just the harvesting. There's a ton of planning that goes into that, too, managing these FMAs.

The other one – and we’ve seen this not only in western Canada but in the States as well – is that our forestry management practices have changed. All of a sudden we went to trying to hug everything to death and make sure that, you know, we didn’t harvest it, and we’re having a dickens of a time dealing with all of the forest fires that we’re having. We have to reconcile with that, too. It’s okay to harvest and manage timber because our stuff is not the redwoods here, folks. It’ll only live to about 80 years. The fuel load will go up, and the bugs will get into it, and all of a sudden we’re having nothing but problems trying to deal with forest fires, getting that type of education back into the system so the next generations understand that you’re actually doing good work by managing and harvesting these materials.

I think it was said in here: abundance. Our ag industry: we’re one of the minority of the jurisdictions in the world that can actually outproduce, outpace, and feed the world, Madam Speaker. We’re blessed with topsoil like nothing – terrible for pipeline and great for growing crops around this Edmonton area. I mean, holy crow. There are not many places on the planet you can go and dig down three feet and you’re still in black dirt. Like, it’s beautiful material. So making sure that we don’t artificially go into some rhetoric about cow farts and everything else that goes along the lines and we get all bent on eating bugs and everything else rather than producing crops, understanding how we can produce our crops and feed the world. One of the things that we can do is no different than that.

We’ve heard it from the opposite side here today with a few of the members that I’ve mentioned that are outstanding that are onside with this. The world needs our energy. Geopolitics. The best thing that we can do is get clean energy to folks. Our kids need to know that they should be proud of being part of that.

When I’m over in India and I’m talking to folks over there – it was a stretch here for the last couple of years and especially in January that they were looking for secure, safe supply, and the only safe supply we should be talking about here in this House and pushing really hard, I believe, is food and energy security for safe supply. They need our stuff.

Now with the geopolitics, you’re seeing how that’s working out. It’s showing how much more of a need there is for that investment. Even the member’s statement I said here today was based on that, Madam Speaker, that we have to be proud and supportive and to let these kids know, which this member is doing here nicely, is on the front end. Cut through the Greta Thunberg sound bites. She’s so done now at this point. Whoever wants to listen to that – probably most people that did listen to it are embarrassed at this point of the how-dare-you stuff that was going on. The grown-ups in the crowd are looking at how we take our industries and deal with things properly.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that would like to join this debate?

Maybe you shouldn’t be wandering when I’m standing, but I can appreciate that you are ready to close debate. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you first and foremost to every single member who spoke here today in support of this bill. I greatly appreciate every single person for this. I think this is important for our young people to be able to understand these industries, understand how these build up Alberta, build up the world, and for us to continue to move this forward.

A couple of key things. I think these really build up and build a proud Alberta and a proud Canada here by talking about this right across our curriculum. I do just want to mention that I think this builds transparency into our education as well when we’re talking about

what our primary industries are. Thank you as well to Member Rowswell for bringing up the idea, or the Member for . . .

Mr. Rowswell: Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Dyck: . . . Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for bringing up the idea of the fossil fuel appreciation day. Brilliant. Thank you so very much. It’s important that we know our history, and it’s important that we know about this industry and just the significance of that, too.

February 13 was the first day that we discovered oil in Leduc No. 1. It’s a key day, and I think it’s key that it should be mentioned here, too, on record. I’m proud of this piece of legislation and looking forward to continue moving this bill forward.

Madam Speaker, I move to end debate on second reading. I believe that’s proper.

The Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr. Dyck: No, I don’t have to do that?

The Deputy Speaker: You just sit down.

Mr. Dyck: I just sit down?

The Deputy Speaker: Yeah.

Mr. Dyck: Well, I’m going to sit down.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will know that the use of proper names in this Chamber is not appropriate. I realize you recognized your error.

[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a second time]

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Christian Heritage Month

509. Mrs. Johnson moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize the month of December as Christian Heritage Month in acknowledgment of

- (a) the foundational role that Christianity has played in shaping Alberta’s institutions, values, and communities,
- (b) the role that Christian organizations, churches, and individuals have played in contributing to Alberta’s social fabric through charitable work, education, health care delivery, and community service, and
- (c) the particular significance that December holds for many Christians around the world as the month in which Christmas is celebrated to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise today to introduce Motion 509, which calls on this Assembly to recognize the month of December as Christian heritage month. At its heart this motion is about recognition: recognition of history, of service, of community, and of the contributions that have helped shape our province. This motion isn’t about elevating one belief over another, and it doesn’t ask anyone to adopt or agree with a particular faith. It is simply about acknowledging the historical and cultural role that Christianity has played in Alberta’s development, institutions, and community life, just as we do with other cultural and religious heritage months throughout the year.

Madam Speaker, Alberta's story has always been shaped by many influences. Among them, Christians have played a foundational role stretching back to Alberta's early development and continuing strong today. From the earliest days of settlement Christian churches and faith-based communities were often among the first to establish hospitals, social services, and schools, frequently in places where no government infrastructure yet existed. These contributions were not symbolic. They were deeply practical, responding to community needs with a firm sense of duty grounded in Christian teachings of compassion and service. Instead of waiting for outside intervention, these communities met challenges head-on, championing the power of community to make a difference.

Health care is a clear example of this legacy. Christian organizations played an instrumental role in Alberta's early health care system, paving the way for the publicly funded system that we rely on today. The Grey Nuns, also known as the Sisters of Charity in Montreal, were a key part of this development. At a time when Alberta was still very much a frontier society, they established some of the province's first hospitals, including the Edmonton General hospital in 1895 and the Holy Cross hospital in Calgary in 1891. Through this work they helped introduce professional nursing, organized hospital care, and a commitment to serving everyone at a time when there was minimal health care infrastructure established by the government. In 1943 this work evolved further with the formation of the Christian Health Association of Alberta, one of Alberta's earliest co-ordinated health care systems. It brought together not-for-profit Catholic hospitals and care providers and helped shape models of organized, publicly accessible care that continues to serve Albertans today. These hospitals were open to all regardless of creed or background, and they demonstrate how Christian faith translates into public-serving institutions that serve the common good.

Social services tell a similar story. Christian organizations and churches have long been at the forefront of caring for those facing hardship and building the sense of connection and belonging that strong communities need. The well-known Salvation Army, which began its work in the province in 1887, has for more than a century provided shelter, food, and emergency supports, becoming one of the largest nongovernmental providers of social services in Alberta. The YMCA and YWCA, both organizations with Christian origins active in Alberta since the early 1900s, support individuals and families across the province. Together they provide vital community services, including recreation, child care, newcomer settlement, housing supports, employment programs, and services for women and families facing violence or instability.

Churches have long served as meeting grounds for activities like charitable events and social gatherings. In underserved rural communities they're more than just places of worship. They fill gaps in service and reinforce community identity and belonging by bringing people from different walks of life together. All of this reflects a long-standing commitment to serving those in need, not for recognition or praise but out of a deep sense of responsibility to care for others, a spirit captured in the words of Mark 10:45, "for . . . the Son of Man [came not] to be served, but to serve."

4:30

Madam Speaker, education has also been an important focus within Christian tradition, seen as an essential not only for individual growth but for the well-being of society more broadly. From early faith-based schools established by immigrant communities to postsecondary institutions like King's University and St. Joseph's College at the University of Alberta, Christian institutions have made meaningful contributions to Alberta's education system, combining the traditional academic curriculum with Christian ethics and theology, showing how faith and learning

can work together. They also provide a model that other faith communities can look to as they establish institutions of their own within Alberta's diverse society.

Madam Speaker, no institution or organization succeeds without people. That is why it's important to recognize the many individual volunteers, often motivated by their faith, who give their time and energy to help others. Across Alberta these volunteers contribute millions of hours every year. They run food banks, mentor young people, help neighbours in crisis, and support communities in quiet but meaningful ways. Their efforts reduce isolation, strengthen connections, and reflect qualities that many Albertans share, regardless of faith, including compassion, generosity, dignity, forgiveness, and a willing to serve. It's this kind of steady, thoughtful work that encourages us all to do better and lead by example.

Beyond the contributions made by the Christian community in Alberta, Christian heritage month should be recognized particularly for the month of December because for the billions of Christians around the world December marks the month of Christmas, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. In Alberta Christmas is one of the most widely observed holidays, influencing everything from community gatherings and cultural traditions to charitable giving and volunteer efforts. Many of our province's most significant fundraising and outreach campaigns take place during the season, reflecting that spirit of generosity that benefits people of all backgrounds.

Recognizing December as Christian heritage month highlights the spiritual roots of a widely celebrated tradition while acknowledging its broader cultural impact. It does not mean an endorsement of one faith over another. It does not minimize the importance of other faiths. Instead, it provides context and understanding for traditions that are already deeply woven into daily life.

Madam Speaker, Alberta already recognizes a range of cultural and religious heritage months. April is recognized as Sikh Heritage Month; August, Hindu Heritage Month; and October, Islamic Heritage Month. These recognitions affirm Alberta's diversity and show respect for the communities that contribute to our rich social fabric. Recognizing Christian heritage month in December is consistent with this balanced approach, and it's in line with the recognition already given by cities across Alberta like Red Deer and provinces like Ontario, which formally recognized December as Christian Heritage Month in 2025 through its Bill 83.

At its core Motion 509 is about recognition, respect, and understanding. It's an opportunity to affirm the role Christianity has played in shaping Alberta's institutions, values, and communities while continuing to uphold a society that respects all beliefs. Madam Speaker, by supporting this motion, we honour the past, we recognize the present, and we deepen our understanding of the communities that have helped to build this province. I encourage all members to consider and support Motion 509 in that spirit.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join this debate? Seeing the hon. Member for Calgary-North East.

Member Gurinder Brar: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this important motion. It's an important motion because it talks about the diversity of our province, and it talks about the important debate that we must have on diversity, equity, inclusion, people from all faiths, people from all traditions, people from all cultures who have called this province their home. Just one second.

Madam Speaker, I come from the Sikh faith, and I want to share a story about my own faith before I come to this motion. The story is

about the early 16th century. The sun was setting over Saidpur. The sky was red, the dust hung in the air, and birds were returning to their nests. In that village there were two homes that stood not far from each other, but those two homes were worlds apart. One was a mansion: tall gates, rich carpets, plates overflowing with food. This was the house of a person named Malik Bhagoa, a man of power, money, and pride. The other was a small, worn-out home, a home with mud walls, a wooden door, the smell of sweat, hard work, hard labour. This was the home of Bhai Lalo. He was a carpenter with rough hands, dirty clothes, but a clean heart.

When the first guru of Sikhs, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, entered Saidpur, he did not walk towards the mansion. He walked towards the small home. He sat on the floor beside Bhai Lalo, and he ate dry roti. No silky carpet, no luxury; just honest, hard-earned food.

Malik Bhagoa came to know about this incident, and his pride burned: how can this holy man reject my feast and sit in that poor man's house? Malik Bhagoa stormed to Bhai Lalo's house barefoot, red faced, and fists folded in anger. He said: how dare you refuse to eat my food and have food at this poor carpenter's house?

Guru Nanak did not argue. He did something powerful. He raised his hands with Bhai Lalo's roti in one hand and Malik Bhagoa's in the right, and then slowly Guru Nanak squeezed. From Malik Bhagoa's food blood dripped, and from Bhai Lalo's roti milk flowed. Guru Nanak said: this is filled with the blood of greed, and this is filled with the milk of honest labour. At that very moment, Madam Speaker, the mansion felt small, and the small house felt infinite. Guru Nanak showed the importance of honest labour. Honest labour is one of the three core pillars of Sikh faith. Earn honestly, worship, and share with all: the three pillars of Sikhism.

When Alberta's NDP government announced April as Sikh Heritage Month, it was not just about recognizing one month; it was about recognizing these values of earning honest labour. People of my faith, the Sikh faith, have followed this value to build their families, to build our communities, and to build our province. They stand behind our first guru, his teachings, and his values, but today the questions are up in the air right in front of our eyes. Does this government care about today's Bhai Lalos, hard-working Albertans earning honest labour, or does this government care about today's Malik Bhagoas like Sam Mraiche? Does this government care about health care, education, and the cost of living of hard-working Albertans? Does this government care about pensions, safety, and minimum wage of these hard-working Albertans? These questions are up in the air, Madam Speaker, and they deserve answers, real answers, right now.

4:40

Similarly, Madam Speaker, let me share another story that comes from Islam. This story is about when the Kaaba in Mecca was being rebuilt. All the tribes were taking part in that work. The walls were almost complete, and then a dispute broke out over who should place that important black stone in that position. Each tribe wanted this honour for itself, and the dispute became pretty serious. It reached a point where there was a risk of fighting between them. To resolve the issue, they agreed that the next person who would walk into the area next would be the one who will decide the matter. The next person to arrive was Muhammad. Back then he was not yet prophet, but he was called Al-Amin, which means the trustworthy. The tribes accepted him as the one who will settle the dispute.

He calmed that moment, listened to all sides, and asked for a piece of cloth. He placed the black stone in the middle of the cloth and asked the representative from each tribe to hold one edge. All the tribes held that edge, and they moved the stone to a perfect position where it was supposed to be placed on the wall. Then Muhammad walked and picked up that stone and placed it on the wall. That was the solution that

allowed all tribes to share the honour and prevented the conflict between them.

This is not just a story about one human. It is the story of leadership that values fairness, leadership that values equality, leadership that resolves conflicts and not ignites conflicts. When the Alberta NDP announced August as Islamic Heritage Month, it was about celebrating these values of fairness, equality, and leadership that cares about everyone.

Today we have these questions in front of us. Do we actually care about fairness? Do we actually care about equality in our society? Do we actually treat everyone equally? Madam Speaker, these are the values that should be close to our heart when we are making policy in government, when we are going out in society and treating others, neighbours, strangers, as equal human beings.

Madam Speaker, let me share another story about Jesus that my friend told me. He told me that it was a night before a major . . .

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

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise, hopefully, on a very short debate and speech to engage with members opposite in what was the speech we just heard from the Member for Calgary-North East, which mentioned Jesus approximately once within the dying seconds of the speech.

This is not a partisan motion. This is private members' time. It's not an executive motion brought forward by Executive Council. This is particularly something that, rightfully so, should precede and supersede a political dispute. To somehow bring in partisan attack lines surrounding contemporary questions of the day, that would normally make their appearance during question period, surrounding allegations of corruption, et cetera and to focus on not any content to do with the religion in question I think is really missing the mark.

We need to as a society be beyond pure political, polemical debate. We need to find some common ground. If it is not a particular religion, let it at least be that religion is good and not something that should be pulled down into the muck and mire of political disputes. What we've seen from the Member for Calgary-North East is a complete dismissal of this precedent that we have in our Chamber, that faith is an important part that forms our province of many different varieties, whether it is the Sikh faith, as the member opposite very eloquently articulated his own experience in, or Islamic faith, that he brought a second story up for many minutes of the limited debate time that we have surrounding motions other than government motions.

I will ask: members, let's find common ground on prepolitical commitment to the importance of faith. If we have substantive debate surrounding the creation of Christian heritage month as an acknowledgement surrounding in particular the charitable works, the education, the health care delivery, and community service that Christians have contributed to this province, let's have that debate instead of having debates particularly about irrelevant topics or politicizing the importance of faith in our society. It's my plea to members opposite during this time, that is a private member's debate time, not government debate time. Bringing in partisan attacks towards government, I think, is missing the mark, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join debate on the motion? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: I appreciate it, Madam Speaker. Again, it's private members' Monday. I want to thank the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka for bringing this forward. I think it's very timely. I think that Motion 509 – again:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government [of Alberta] to recognize the month of December as Christian Heritage Month in acknowledgement of

- (a) the foundational role that Christianity has played in shaping Alberta's institutions, values, and communities,
- (b) the role that Christian organizations, churches, and individuals have played in contributing to Alberta's social fabric through charitable work, education, health care delivery, and community service, and
- (c) the particular significance that December holds for many Christians around the world as the month in which Christmas is celebrated to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Madam Speaker, oftentimes we say that there should be a separation of church and state. Obviously, we all believe in that but also recognizing our roots, recognizing those core faiths and principles. I'm going to bring a story in here since other folks were, too. I was down in Lubbock, Texas, this summer, down at the Ports to Plains conference. There was a congressman down there, Congressman Jodey Arrington. He had about 20 minutes to give a presentation to the group. It was pretty neat to hear that he acknowledged the snow cowboy from up north within his first 20 seconds of his speech, thanking that those common values and principles went back and forth.

One of the things that he did share was that there was a person from France that came over to the United States. They were trying to figure out why that Constitution worked. Like, why did this kind of country come together, and why did it have all these things it was able to accomplish? The interesting part: the observation from this person from France said that it wasn't the Constitution. It wasn't the governments. It wasn't the institutions. It was based on that the Constitution itself and the guiding morals and principles were based in Christianity.

There is the deep foundation of what we have. A lot of our systems that we have in place are based on a guiding principle, and with that principle, it facilitates the conversations that we're having here today. In our province, in our country, both north and south here, we can have these open conversations because of those key principles that allow that, allow different faiths, allow different discussions. I think it's fundamental that we carry on with that. I'm very proud that the member brought this forward to unabashedly be recognizing that Christianity is one of those.

I've had a lot of friends from other faiths that came up over the years when things were getting a little bit contentious and said that they appreciated our faith. They appreciated the fact of what we believe in and that we can have those conversations. They also told me one thing, Madam Speaker, through you to the rest of the group here, for us as Christians not to be ashamed of who we are and the faith that we hold or the contributions that we've made.

With that, I'm very pleased to have this. I very much appreciate the other members' faith and having those conversations and hope that we support this in good conscience, that this motion will go forward. Again, thank you to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka for doing this.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre. 4:50

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise and take the opportunity to speak to Motion 509 and my support for this motion. I grew up in the church, Brethren assemblies here in Edmonton. My parents met at Sharon Gospel Chapel just south of Whyte Avenue. My family attended Northmount Bible church, which later moved north, became Clareview Bible Chapel. Spent my summers at Meadowlodge and Bethel Bible camps near Cooking Lake and Westlock, respectively. So as a kid, yeah, I learned and

studied the Bible. I was right in there for every memorization contest, every sword drill. Sword drill, by the way, is kind of when you have a contest. It's like: how fast can you find the verse that they shout out in the Bible?

Christianity really was a big part of my life for over 30 years. Now, I will say, Madam Speaker, that I no longer consider myself a man of faith. In truth, at this point in my life I'm quite agnostic. You know, hey, the story of that journey, I think, is a good one but more than I've got time for here today. What I will say and, I think, what's important is that I support this Motion 509 on declaring a Christian heritage month because I can absolutely say that my values in my life and certainly in the work that I do as an elected official are deeply informed by what I learned in church, at camp, from a whole wide range of Christian thinkers. I can tell you that I went through a very heavy C.S. Lewis phase in my 20s, read literally everything he wrote and owned most of it.

As I said, you know, the values that I learned in church and from the Bible have had a huge influence on my life. They were a big part of what led me to decide to run for office, are fundamental to the values that inform my work. You know, we look back to some of the commands in the Old Testament like Psalm 82:3 and 4: "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and . . . oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." Proverbs 31:8 and 9: "Speak up for those who [can't] speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." Or, you know, the declaration in Malachi 3:5 that God stands "against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice."

I think of the words in the example of Jesus in the gospels, how he questioned the ruling elite. For me personally, I love his use of story and metaphor, how he used them to turn concepts of power on their heads with his parables, with the Beatitudes, his insistence on mercy and grace over judgment, that people weren't made to serve the law but the law was made to serve people, how he sought out people who were rejected and marginalized by the people who held power, the outsiders in their society, and took the time to sit with them, spend time with them, support them, but, most of all, for myself, in the life of Jesus the understanding that true leadership isn't about power; it's about service.

[The Speaker in the chair]

You know, look at John 13, where it says that Jesus knew that he'd been given power over everything, that he'd been sent by God and would return to God. So what did he do? He got up from dinner, that being the Last Supper. He stripped down, and he washed his disciples' feet, one of the lowliest jobs that anyone could be asked to do. That was his example of what you do with power, Mr. Speaker. Those are values that have shaped my life, core to the Christian faith and values that are worth celebrating.

Now, to be clear, they aren't values that are exclusive to Christianity. They are reflected in many other faiths: you know, Islam and Judaism, the fellow Abrahamic religions; Hinduism; Buddhism; Sikhism. I mean, core to all of those religions are the fundamental values of living humbly, seeking and defending justice for all, living a life of service, being ethical in our conduct, treating others as we want to be treated ourselves.

We recognize that indeed, as other members have acknowledged today, we do have months dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the contributions and influence on our family, friends, and neighbours of those faiths, with Sikh Heritage Month in April, Canadian Jewish Heritage Month in May, Islamic Heritage Month in October, Hindu Heritage Month in November. The motion today is to add a Christian

heritage month in December. That's reasonable. I know during our time in government we worked to have equal representation of all faiths. I know here in this Assembly for the daily prayer we included a wide range of prayers and meditations from a lot of different faiths. This is a similar effort.

You know, to be clear, I am a firm believer in the separation between church and state, any church, any faith and state. Fully onboard with Jesus' advice to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God, but in this case we're not talking about elevating any particular faith, as the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka noted. We're not talking about the politicization of faith that, sadly, we do see happening so much south of the border and in other countries around the world, where faith is used as a tool of oppression, the kind of politicization that has been a destructive force throughout history. That's not what we are talking about or supporting here today. It's simply a discussion about adding one more faith to those we recognize with a heritage month.

You know, I see the good work that Christian churches are doing in my own constituency, Robertson-Wesley United Church, a welcoming and inclusive church that just a couple of years ago celebrated their 110th anniversary. I was proud to join them for that. They are dedicated to championing social justice, protecting the environment, helping connect people in the community that are in need with housing, food, and other supports, a strong supporter of the LGBTQ2S-plus community. As they say on their website, "community is not just a place – it's a promise. That we'll show up for each other, speak up for the silenced, and never stop reaching toward a more just world."

I know that the Christian faith, Mr. Speaker, has been a source of hope, strength, and social change. I think of liberation theology, a movement that grew amongst Catholic theologians in Latin America during the '60s, a belief that, to quote Jesuit Juan Luis Segundo, the Christian faithful are also obliged to promote social justice and be mindful of the precept of the Lord to assist the poor. It garnered some Protestant supporters as well and inspired grassroots communities that worked with marginalized populations in Latin America to advocate for land reform, labour rights, democracy.

Influences were also felt in South Africa with Christian opposition to apartheid. It provided a theological framework for folks like Bishop Desmond Tutu.

Of course, in a similar vein, we know that Christianity did become a source of inspiration for Africans and Caribbeans that were sold into the slave trade. They took what was, admittedly, at that time a tool of oppression because, unfortunately, there were those who used faith to excuse slavery. They took that and they turned it on its head, much as Jesus often did himself. They adopted the stories of the Jewish people's times as slaves in Egypt, their journey to freedom under Moses. They rooted their faith in the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, that he was sent to proclaim that captives will be released and the oppressed will be set free.

You know, it provided a foundation for a lot of their community and culture, culture that's given us so much. Just a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to join the National Black Coalition of Canada, their Edmonton chapter, for their 40th annual Black gospel night. It was powerful, Mr. Speaker. It's good music, and it's rooted in the history and the culture of the Christian faith as it was embraced by the Black community.

Of course, it's gone on to be a source of inspiration for a lot of other things. I know the Christian faith has been there for all kinds of art through history, some of the most epic, I think, in western civilization: Handel's *Messiah*, da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel – I had the privilege of seeing that when I was in Rome – architecture like so many amazing churches we see, the biblical film epics of the '50s. There have even been a

few pretty decent Christian rock albums, Mr. Speaker. I was a bit of an expert on that in junior high and high school.

All that to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think this is something we can agree on across the aisle. Simply, we recognize the power of faith. We recognize how it can be an inspiration for folks during difficult times. We recognize how it has inspired some of the strongest social movements in our history, that though at times faith has been weaponized and misused, sadly, sometimes by political rulers and elite who themselves do not show many aspects of that faith, it has continued to be a powerful force in community, in the grassroots, for individuals, for leaders who have done great things, for people who have created incredible art, and indeed for people who continue to do very good things every day here in our province. I'll be happy to vote in favour of Motion 509.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the member bringing this motion forward. I think it's an important motion for us to acknowledge Christian heritage and our faith. It's interesting. Just yesterday was Palm Sunday. Today is Holy Monday. We're building up to Easter this coming week on Good Friday and then Easter Monday, one of the most significant weeks in the Christian world, so I think this is a timely motion as well.

5:00

I think many people know that I'm a man of faith myself. I'm a Christian. I spent a lot of time in Bible school, and this is something that's close to my heart, so I'm looking forward to speaking on this today, truly honoured, and I think this is timely.

I just want to touch on a few things. The member is bringing this forward in December during Christmastime. While Christmas historically wasn't actually Jesus' birth, it is a great time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the gift giving that God gave the world when Jesus came in.

I just want to pinpoint a couple of things here about the birth of Jesus Christ. His lineage wasn't one of grandeur. There were people of grandeur in his lineage, but he also had some people with pretty messy stories. This is something that the Bible speaks about, that this is an honest lineage. It's an honest and clear way of showcasing just who Jesus was. People from anywhere, from high stature to low: he has that in his history.

Mr. Speaker, he was born in humility. Jesus was born in a manger, born to someone who worked in construction, a dad that worked in construction, and probably to a young mom. In this we also see that he wasn't born in a castle. He wasn't born in the big leagues. He was born to very humble parents. This is where the story of Christianity really begins, a moment of faith where we get to actually make a choice and see whether or not we can see ourselves in that story as well.

This is the very foundation of our faith: starting in humility, growing in grace and also forgiveness. I'm thankful for this. This is really the foundation of our western world. These are the very cornerstones of kindness and being able to give of ourselves of what we are able to give and being able to give to others from what we have. This is important because this also builds our communities, set upon a cornerstone, upon the institutes and values of generosity, of truth, of working hard and excellence but also belief in Jesus Christ. I just want to thank the member as well for bringing this forward.

Now, based on that here and on these values, there are many other organizations that have built this province, and I just want to speak about those for a few minutes. One of these is the Salvation Army, that

I believe has been in Alberta since the late 1800s, 1887, somewhere around there. Since then they've been housing people, been feeding people in my community. They do an excellent job of fundraising and giving food out and taking care of our community, doing it with dignity, doing it with faith, and encouraging the communities around them. Across the province they house hundreds of people as well because of their faith and because of their deep roots. They want to care and be merciful to the widow and the orphan. These are cornerstones of the Christian faith, and I think this is important to mention.

As well, in health care our Christian health organization as well as the Catholic Grey Nuns are our oldest health care in the province. The very first provider of health care was a Catholic or Christian organization wanting to bring healing to people physically and also spiritually at the same time.

These are strong moments, I think, that the very foundation of our province has been built upon. I do want to thank the member for bringing this motion forward. I do encourage everyone for this. We do have other months as well where we celebrate other faiths, but I think December is an appropriate month given just the rich history, the birth of Jesus Christ, as we celebrate the generosity of that.

I just want to thank everyone, and I would encourage everyone in this House to vote for this motion as well. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Wright: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of Motion 509 and recognizing December as Christian heritage month in Alberta. This motion offers us an opportunity not only to acknowledge history but also to reflect thoughtfully on the ideas, values, and institutions that have helped shape our province into what it is today.

From the earliest days of Alberta's development Christian communities were amongst those who laid the groundwork for many of our important institutions. Churches weren't only a place of worship but centres of education, care, and community life. They helped establish schools, hospitals, charities, and social services that support families even today. They supported newcomers and the vulnerable. These contributions were instrumental in building the social fabric of Alberta.

At the heart of this heritage are values that continue to resonate today, such as compassion, justice, service, humility, and respect for the dignity of every individual. These principles are reflected in scriptures such as Micah 6:8. "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly . . . to love mercy, and to walk humbly." This call to justice and mercy aligns closely with the ideas we strive to uphold in public service and governance.

We also see in Matthew 22 the commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart [and bow down not to any idol and to] love your neighbour as [you love] yourself," a principle that has inspired generations of Albertans to care for one another, to volunteer, and to build strong, supportive communities. Similarly, Galatians 5:13 reminds us to "serve one another humbly in love." These teachings have helped shape the culture of generosity and responsibility that continues to benefit our province.

This motion is about acknowledging a significant historical influence, one thread among many that has contributed to our shared story. I appreciate the member opposite bringing forward Jesus' use of parables and stories because one parable that I actually have here is the parable of the talents, which talks about taking the talents that were given to you and multiplying. I really see that in the fabric of Alberta. We've taken a new frontier and turned it into

one of the most prosperous places in all of North America, and I think that that is something that we continue to strive forward to.

In Matthew 5:9 we're told: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they [shall] be called [the] children of God." This message is especially meaningful in today's context. It reminds us that our goal is not division but of unity. Christian heritage month can be an opportunity to foster dialogue, promote mutual respect, and strengthen the bonds that unite us as Albertans.

As I was writing this, I was taken to Jeremiah 29:7, where it also says in the Word: "Also, seek . . . peace and prosperity [for] the city." Now, the city in this context and in this teaching is about city-states, very much what the province we see now is. It's important because as we seek peace and prosperity for our province, it lays the foundation for generations to thrive. Jeremiah 29:11 says: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' [declared] the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" Hope and a future, I think, is something all Albertans from every faith, from every corner of this province can get behind.

What we're doing here today with this motion is we're affirming that Alberta's story is enriched by many influences, and that our understanding for the past helps build a stronger Alberta moving forward. Let us honour the contributions of those who've shaped our province before us so that we can continue to build and uphold those values of respect and service to our fellow man as we push forward into the Alberta of tomorrow.

I encourage all members of this House to support Motion 509. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I don't see any other speakers, so the mover of the motion, the hon. Member from Lacombe-Ponoka: would you care to use up to five minutes to close?

Mrs. Johnson: I would.

The Speaker: Please go ahead.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it is my pleasure to rise and close debate on Motion 509.

I'd like to begin by thanking those who took the time to speak on this motion, my colleagues on this side of the aisle and opposite. Sharing various perspectives enriches discussion and allows for a fair assessment of this motion. As I said at the outset, Mr. Speaker, this motion is one which, at its very core, is about recognition, recognition of the historical and cultural significance of a community that is an important part of Alberta's social fabric. Since early settlement the Christian community has played a pivotal role in Alberta's development, from helping build out the health and social infrastructure that Albertans continue to rely on today to spreading values of compassion, generosity, and service, which resonate broadly with the people of this province. Christians are truly a special community that deserve to be honoured.

5:10

Motion 509, through recognizing December, the holiest month of the year for Christians, as Christian heritage month, seeks to increase awareness of the Christian community in Alberta and shine a light on its contributions. As a diverse society Alberta has always believed in the importance of respecting the many different cultural and religious communities that make up this province. We have a Sikh Heritage Month in April, Hindu Heritage Month in August, and Islamic

Heritage Month in October. We've heard stories about those this afternoon. Having Christian heritage month in December would be a natural addition, affirming Alberta's place as a welcoming province that values faith and people.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I close debate.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 509 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the productive private members' afternoon. I now would like to move that the Assembly be adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:12 p.m.]

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