



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning and afternoon, April 2, 2026

Day 43

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)
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Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
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Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Thursday, April 2, 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 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, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by Kalyna Brytan. I would invite all to participate.

Hon. Members:

God save our gracious King,
Long live our noble King,
God save the King!
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the King!

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: We have the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you the students, staff, and parents from A. L. Horton school in Vegreville. They are joining us in the gallery today, and we're pleased to have them observe the proceedings. Could you all please rise and receive the warm greetings of the Assembly?

The Speaker: The Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is not often we get guests from Lethbridge, but I am happy to ask those from Lethbridge today to rise: Catherine Furakawa, the constituency manager for our federal MP in Lethbridge, and her daughters Ainsley and McKenna as well as Rick Dempsey, her father, and Karen Stewart. I would ask that they would all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ms Hoffman: It's my honour to introduce Joudy and Lina Farag. They are both students at Ross Sheppard high school and active in the Muslim Student Association and just really talented, awesome women. I'm excited that they're here today. Please join me in welcoming them.

Members' Statements

Easter

Ms Hayter: This weekend is Easter. For millions of Canadians with Christian beliefs and traditions, Easter is an important time. It's a time for sitting with feelings of loss and sadness, represented by the crucifix and the sorrows of Good Friday, but it's also a time of brilliant joy and happiness at the profound wonder and the mystery of rebirth and the promise of a better future on Easter Sunday. With the resurrection of Jesus Christ on that third day, the rock is rolled back, light shines in, and the darkness is gone. Hope is reborn.

While not every Albertan celebrates Easter, this weekend is an important time for families to all come together to share our joys, our sorrows, and, most importantly, our hopes for the year ahead, whether it's around the dinner table, getting out in nature, or spending quiet time at church or in prayer.

The Easter story is timeless. No matter the forces of persecution, fear, hatred, and division, hope will always remain and better is always possible, a better future where we take care of each other and work together to build a better world. At a time where we see forces of division that seem stronger and even more empowered than ever, Easter reminds us that even if we're still in the depths of what feels like an endless Alberta winter, spring is coming, hope never dies, and we will always enjoy our green and pleasant land.

The Speaker: Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Bill 26

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has taken an important first step in securing more control over immigration. What the Official Opposition refuse to acknowledge is that immigration is a shared responsibility laid out clearly in section 95 of the Constitution Act. For too long we have allowed the federal government to mismanage immigration, leaving provinces in the dark and suffering the consequences of their bad policy.

Immigration has always been and will continue to be a part of our success, but it must be sustainable, balanced, and economically focused. That is why our government introduced Bill 26, the Immigration Oversight Act. This piece of legislation will protect newcomers, strengthen trust in our immigration system, and provide important data on how much our workforce depends on foreign labour.

When it comes to protecting newcomers, this means employers who hire temporary foreign workers must register with the province. Further to this, immigration consultants and foreign recruiters must be licensed. Even in Alberta we have seen very real examples of employers and immigration consultants who abuse, exploit, and commit fraud against newcomers. This is often done through misrepresented or fraudulent job postings, paid-for job offers, or collection of unauthorized fees. These are examples of bad actors that Bill 26 aims to weed out of our system, keeping confidence in Alberta's reputation as a great place to work and call home.

The truth is that these are issues that the federal government has failed to prevent with their mismanagement of immigration. On this side of the Assembly, we will not sit back while other people face abuse or exploitation. On top of this, we will not stand by while the federal government keeps on making bad decisions for immigration that impact our labour market, housing, affordability, health care, or education. It is time for Alberta to use its constitutional authority and take more control over immigration and ensure it aligns with our economic needs.

Electoral Boundaries

Mr. Shepherd: Gerrymandering: an American term for when a government deliberately redraws electoral district boundaries to give themselves an unfair advantage in an election; in other words, stacking the deck, deliberately manipulating the vote. Unfortunately, as they have with so much of the worst of American politics, it seems the UCP are looking to bring it here.

Last week the Electoral Boundaries Commission presented their final report, part of the standard eight-year review and adjustment of provincial voting boundaries. They're supposed to be independent, with two members chosen by opposition and two by government. But

like so many other public bodies under the UCP, it seems that independence was tainted. In the final report, three of the five members issued an election map very similar to the draft map they released in October, a map that had unanimous support. But the two UCP-appointed members of that commission surprised everyone by submitting their own radically different map that looks like it came straight out of UCP campaign headquarters, a map that carves up mid-sized cities like a pizza, attaching them to huge chunks of rural areas, a map designed to hand the next election to the UCP.

Now, the majority of the commission, including the UCP's appointed chair, called that map an "extreme change of approach," "a clear infringement of the basic rules of fairness and due process" that includes "highly unusual boundaries" and gives more power to rural areas at the cost of Albertans and cities. They object in the strongest terms, call it unconstitutional, and warn the Legislature to reject it.

But when the Justice minister was asked about whether he'd consider adopting it, he said, "all options are on the table," all options including blatant cheating, I guess, including forcing through an unconstitutional map that would rob Albertans of their vote, of fair and democratic representation in this House, a height of arrogance, entitlement, and corruption unreached by any government before them.

Alberta, you need to watch this closely. You deserve a better government. We're ready to bring it, and you can't let the UCP take your choice away.

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

The Speaker: The Member for Red Deer-South.

Easter

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Easter celebrates the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Prior to doing the hardest thing that ever was done Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Jesus felt all that was sad, wicked, or bad, all the pain we would ever know. While his friends were asleep, He fought to keep his promise made long ago. The hardest thing that ever was done, the greatest pain that ever was known, the biggest battle that ever was won, this was done by Jesus.

10:10

Whatever the questions or problems, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Many ask: what is truth? Jesus said He is "the way and the truth and the life." We can trust in Christ without reservation. Mr. Speaker, we see tribulation all around us. We hurt and are hurt. Jesus can heal them all. There is always hope in Christ. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Where can [we] turn for peace? Where is [our] solace . . . Who, who can understand? He, only One."

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution . . . or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, . . . neither death, nor life, . . . Nor height, nor depth . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May the spirit of Christ, the love of God, rest in our minds forever. Happy Easter.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Bill 25

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans put welcome mats in front of their doors. It means come on in, we're glad you're here, and welcome to our house. But now the UCP is pulling up the welcome mat from our public schools. Gone are the days when schools were welcoming and inclusive places for all students, celebrating diversity and uniqueness.

That's because the latest amendments to the Education Act would strip the words "welcoming" and "diversity" from it. This government combed through that bill and pulled the word "welcoming" out eight times. Not satisfied with making our public schools less inviting even as they function as important community hubs for many of our communities, then they went through and chopped the word "diversity" out five times.

Diversity is a strength. It used to say so in government policy and legislation, but I guess not anymore. Words are important, Mr. Speaker, and that's because they set the tone. And when those in charge are threatened by words like "diversity," "welcome," and "sense of belonging," there's a problem because this is then about ideology and politics outside the classroom, not within.

Instead of focusing on reducing class sizes, hiring teachers, and ensuring supports are there for all kids who need them, we get this distraction of a bill and a government intent on narrowing the frame so much that there's room for only one world view, the UCP's. And that's the point, straight out of the authoritarian playbook, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, our kids deserve that welcome mat back, and I for one am extremely happy to let them know that they can expect it come the next election, when it's the NDP in government and the UCP, not our kids, who will find themselves unwelcome.

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 10:09 a.m.

Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Birinder Singh, a 22-year-old full of life, hope, and dreams chose Alberta because Alberta opened its arms with a welcoming smile and a future full of opportunity. He worked hard, completed his studies, and was saving for his visit to his family later this year. He had not had a chance to visit his family since he left home three years ago. Imagine your child leaving home to never come back.

March 14 was his day off. He was en route to Banff with his friends, excited to see the Rockies for the first time. A bullet came from a passing vehicle and hit his neck. Birinder's blood drenched his seat, his eyes shut forever. He did not deserve to die. No one deserves to die like this. We might not know the details of the investigation, but what we know and feel every day is that anti-immigrant hate is rising. While his family is grieving, some racists are celebrating his death online.

How can we let the monster of hate wander our streets, our communities, and in our cities? How can we let hate tear apart the place we call home? How can we let hate take innocent lives while we continue to be bystanders? I can't be a bystander, nor should any member of this House.

Let us join hands and stand against hate. Let us counter hate with compassion, kindness, and empathy. No Birinder ever should come to Canada with hope and leave in a coffin.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Williams: I rise to give oral notice of Bill 29, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, sponsored by the Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 28 Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

Oral Question Period

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

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a happy and blessed Easter to all.

Canada-Alberta MOU on Energy Collaboration

Mr. Nenshi: Now, the Premier's much vaunted MOU blew a big deadline yesterday. When she first signed it, the Premier didn't talk a lot about how she had agreed to the largest carbon tax in Alberta's history and billions of dollars in subsidies to highly profitable oil companies, but that seems to be where she's stuck. For once, the federal government appears to have kept up its end of the bargain, but the Premier and this government have not. What is the Premier willing to give up to get a deal signed?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has always had industrial pricing on carbon going back to 2007. In fact, part of our agreement with the federal government was that it would escalate. When we realized that \$170 by 2030 was unachievable, we put in the MOU that we would obtain an effective price of \$130. That's been very open and very public. It's actually lower than what the NDP were advocating for when they were supporting the former Prime Minister. We've managed to get a moderation, and we're just working on what the time frame will be and what the benchmarking will be.

Mr. Nenshi: If everything is agreed to, why is there no deal? You know, this MOU has been called a pipe dream not just by me but by Pierre Poilievre. So where are we today, months later? The government has no proponent, no financing, no Indigenous participation, and, critically, there is no route, and now there is no deal on carbon pricing or sequestration subsidies. What exactly is the Premier planning on presenting to the major projects office given that there's nothing there, and what private proponent and Indigenous group will want to build this thing?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish the member opposite would stop being so disingenuous. Story today: B.C. NDP Orders Secret Campaign to Kill Alberta's Planned New Northern Oil Pipeline. At the conference last weekend we had the federal NDP saying exactly the same thing: no more pipeline being built; keep oil and gas in the ground. On this side of the Chamber we have been

talking about doubling oil and gas production. We intend to double oil and gas production. There are multiple projects that are working their way to final investment decision. We will have a deal in place with the federal government as well as a pipeline proposal in June.

Mr. Nenshi: It's certainly true that this government has been talking a lot. What they haven't been doing is doing. Six years and not a single pipeline even gets to the beginning of the starting line. No preliminary work, nothing actually begun. Years later we are now exactly where Rachel Notley left us, and at least she got a pipeline built. Last week, after much consultation with industry and Indigenous groups, we presented our plan. We showed pipelines that could get built and could get built quickly instead of just talking. What is the Premier's preferred route?

10:20

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When you say, "We will do everything the UCP does," you're now a UCP voter, not an NDP voter, so welcome to the club.

Mr. Speaker, I think the member should read the business section of the newspapers, and he will see that Enbridge is proposing a 400,000 expansion of their mainline. We are just waiting on approvals from the U.S. Energy and Interior secretaries. You will see that the federal government has agreed to expand 360,000 barrels on the Trans Mountain pipeline. You will also see that the South Bow and Bridger project are well under way on an open season, and we'll put our pipeline proposal in in June. It's a lot of progress.

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

Mr. Nenshi: It's an interesting definition of progress: talk a lot but get nothing actually built and nothing done.

Bill 25

Mr. Nenshi: Now, the Premier has for many years called herself a libertarian, but now she's banning books like the comic book version of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *1984*. She's banning pride flags in schools, though she won't admit that's what she's doing, and she's banning discussion of current affairs in classrooms. Her education minister actually said that teachers will be banned from talking about separatism even while there's a referendum going on. How does a teacher teach social studies if they can't talk about current events?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Polling has shown that 56 per cent of respondents believe that schools should get back to the basics, use traditional methods to teach, focus on literacy and numeracy. We know that parents do not want their children to be educated to be woke social justice warriors, and that is exactly what the members opposite are advocating for. We have to get back to the basics and teach kids so that they are able to do critical thinking on their own rather than the ideological thinking that, sadly, we have heard too often from parents when they do their complaints. I hope that the members opposite are receiving those same complaints. We're going in the right direction.

Mr. Nenshi: As an educator I can tell you that critical thinking is precisely what we need to teach and precisely what this government doesn't want. Sometimes students need to address the complexities of the world. They need to understand there are different points of view and different opinions and engage with those. But sometimes there are things that are just true. If you're teaching about Stalin or

Pol Pot or the Rwandan genocide or residential schools or slavery, how exactly is a teacher expected to stay neutral? What is the other side of these issues the Premier wants teachers to teach?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We saw exactly what we do not want in our schools at the NDP convention last weekend, people showing their equity cards so that they could determine what intersectional definition they have to be able to bump the line so they could bump somebody else and misnaming on pronouns. That is what has been obsessing the schools for the last 10 years. Parents want to get back to the basics. They want their kids to read. They want their kids to be able to do math. They want them to be able to do coding. They want them to be able to do critical thinking, not critical theory, which is what they've been advocating for the last 10 years.

Mr. Nenshi: Sometimes I wonder if the Premier listens to herself, because she just admitted that she wants to ban certain speech that she doesn't like from schools. Period. That's not back to basics; that is censorship.

Yesterday the Premier gave a particularly incoherent answer even for her. When she was asked why she wants to make schools less welcoming and less diverse, she talked about violence. There are only two conclusions to draw. She either believes that gay kids and immigrant kids and kids with disabilities are violent or that other kids are triggered by them and their names. Which is it?

Ms Smith: The member opposite is, of course, mischaracterizing the bill. It's very clear what the bill is trying to do. It's addressing the issues that we hear from our complexity committee, from teachers who are frustrated that whether it's the principal or their superintendent or their trustees, no one has acted on the violence happening in the classroom. OH and S requires us to act. That's what we're going to do.

I thought the members opposite would be happy that we want the Canadian flag to be displayed in schools, the Alberta flag to be displayed in schools, the Canadian anthem to be sung every week. We want our kids to be patriotic, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, when someone shows you who they are, believe them. Her separatist pals are not happy about that flag.

Electoral Boundaries

Mr. Nenshi: Now, the Premier claims that there is no political interference in her supposedly independent boundary commission report. By pure coincidence a bunch of her MLAs and a bunch of regular citizens showed maps the same as the minority report that were exactly the same. But, oopsy, they have an Alberta government identifier on them. They were created by the government. So who created these maps and how much taxpayer money was spent in interfering with the independent commission?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry I have to keep on educating the member opposite about how this process works, but Members of the Legislative Assembly are the ones who will debate and consider the motion and make the decision. This is not a decision of the government. It is not a decision of the Justice minister. The commission has put forward those recommendations. Everybody is digesting them, and in due course we'll have it come before the Assembly for debate.

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, what we're talking about here is interference with the commission, and the Premier didn't address that in her answer, but all of her answers on this have been at best confusing. She's correct; MLAs have to vote yes or no on the committee's recommendation. Through the entire modern era, every single government has adopted the independent committee's recommendation, but she's implying something else yesterday and in that answer. She's implying that MLAs will consider the recommendations – there is only one – and draw their own maps. Can she clarify what she really means?

Ms Smith: I said the same thing the multiple times I've been asked this question, Mr. Speaker. This is a decision of members of this Assembly. It will be debated by members of this Assembly. It is not a government decision. It is not a Justice minister decision. We've all seen the report. We have an opportunity to be able to digest it over the course of the coming constituency break, and I look forward to coming back to see how members of this Assembly will deal with it. [interjections]

The Speaker: I know people are excited, but as long as I can hear the question and the answer, just tone it down some.

Mr. Nenshi: You know, Mr. Speaker, sometimes you can just answer a question. You don't have to be so cloak-and-dagger about the whole thing. Let's be very clear. There is only one recommendation from this committee. There are not multiple recommendations. The minority report has no standing, and that letter from the judge at the very end, he admits, was a Hail Mary because he thought the government was going to interfere with the independent commission's recommendation, because he was worried that the government was going to cheat and rig. The Premier can put this to bed, and I promise to never ask again if she simply says: will the one recommendation come before this House?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly will decide the path forward. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Government Policies and Cost of Living

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, yesterday Calgary's mayor said, "The UCP has hiked property taxes by 57% in four years. Their latest 21% increase represents about \$339 more per household. Chestermere and Airdrie will pay even more than that." When people in Calgary, Chestermere, Airdrie, and many other communities are struggling with the cost of living, why is the government hiking their share of property taxes by hundreds of dollars a year?

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, Mr. Speaker, a significant component of property taxes is, of course, the education property tax. As it's clearly named, the education property tax goes toward supporting our education system. In fact, education property taxes pay for approximately 33 per cent of the totality of our education expenses. Of course, we've had a significant influx of students in our province. We've added 80,000 students in three years, so that's put demand to build more schools and hire more teachers.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, costs are increasing on Albertans in many ways. Besides the UCP property tax hike, there's also the high cost of gasoline. This government has the tools to make the difference but chooses to let Albertans' wallets take the hit. Drivers know the price at the pump has ballooned by more than 40 cents in just one month, so why won't the UCP use their legislation right now to cut the gas tax? Why keep it so expensive to live and work in Alberta?

10:30

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, proud of the fact that this government legislated our fuel tax relief program. This isn't something that we need to be reactive to; this is something that we need to be consistent about. There's a strong rationale for our program. As the price of oil goes up and more royalties are brought in by the province, we give relief to Albertans. There's a long monitoring period within the quarter because the tax can only be taken off at the quarter. You know, I think this is something that other jurisdictions may want to look at, including the federal government. I would just remind everybody that 17 cents a litre was the carbon tax that you legitimized in this House.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, I just heard the Finance minister speak on their policy on affordability, "This isn't something that we need to be reactive to." That's what we've been seeing with no reaction at all, with multiple cost increases across the board.

Yesterday MLAs got an automatic annual pay hike. This is something that will help MLAs afford Alberta, but it's something the UCP brought in. Their changes are the reason it's happening. Meanwhile Alberta's minimum wage has been frozen the entire time the UCP has been in power. Why the double standard?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, listen to the way they formulate these questions, and think about what we've heard in this House over the last month: "Oh, we don't like the deficit. Oh, you're spending too much. Oh, you're also not spending enough." Think about what you are saying in this place. What we have done is brought consistency to the spending line in this province, keeping it below population plus inflation. Every province in this country has tabled a deficit. Think about what you're asking us to do. Are we going to borrow money on behalf of Albertans, or are we going to have thoughtful programs?

The Speaker: Okay. We're at the point with no preambles on the supplementaries.

The next question belongs to Edmonton-North West.

Citizen-initiated Referendums

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta separatists, with a leg up from the UCP, claim that they have the signatures needed to hold a referendum taking Alberta out of Canada, but hundreds of thousands of Albertans have already signed a petition calling for Alberta to forever be part of Canada. The UCP will drape themselves in the Canadian flag when it's politically convenient, but it's all talk and no action. Why is this Premier always on speed dial for the rules whenever the separatists want a bailout but for the majority of Albertans who want to stay in Canada, it's radio silence?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I would argue that this is the most receptive and responsive Premier in the history of this province, who has made a specific point of creating a process by which Albertans can put forth a petition on issues that matter most to them. One, of course, that's very important is where we are seen in Confederation and getting a fair deal for Alberta. Our Premier has led the charge, making sure that Alberta is a fair partner in this province. We believe that Canada can work, and we're going to continue to fight for this province within Confederation.

The Speaker: I heard the question last time. The answer was a little more difficult. Let's hear both this time.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that the UCP claims to love Canada but won't kick out the separatist MLA for Red Deer-South and given that the government rewrote the law not once, not twice, but three times to remove obstacles for a separation referendum, given that this Premier is leaving hundreds of thousands of Albertans who signed the forever Canada petition on read, why won't the Premier just admit that this is a separatist party and a separatist government?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, the opposition just sounds ridiculous at this point in time. They're screaming into the wind, and it's a strong Alberta wind here, but I can tell you that they are so off base. We have said multiple times that we believe that Canada can work. We believe in a united Canada with Alberta being respected within Confederation, making sure that our sovereignty is understood as one that's going to fight for our investment, to get our products to international markets, and to make sure that we'll continue to attract new jobs in this province, 85,000 of them over the last year. Alberta is winning. Why won't they get on board?

The Speaker: Well, I heard the question and the answer last time. Good work, folks. Let's keep that up.

Go ahead.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given this Premier was booed by her own party members for not being quite separatist enough and given that the Premier's parliamentary secretary for constitutional affairs has expressed his own public support for the separation referendum, given that the separatist Alberta Prosperity Project is led by a UCP constituency president, will the Premier finally admit that the separatist tail is wagging the dog, or will she really divide Canada just to keep her caucus together?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I can understand the frustration of the members opposite. It is the party opposite that just had to endure a weekend where there was a complete circus in Winnipeg, which is their leadership race, where you saw people showing equity cards to determine if they were valuable enough to get to the microphone. That . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: You asked the question; you might want to hear the answer. Go ahead, Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The truth hurts. That is the absurdity of the national, provincial NDP parties. They are one and the same. Avi Lewis is the member opposite's new boss, and he better get used to it.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Bill 26

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's government has introduced Bill 26, the Immigration Oversight Act. This much-needed legislation comes following years of mismanagement by the federal government resulting in unstable population growth, abuse, and Canadians losing trust in our immigration system. As we know, the immigration system is meant to strengthen our country and province and to address issues such as labour shortages. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration: how does Bill 26 increase Alberta's control over immigration, support immigrants, and grow our economy?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has always been and will always continue to be a place that welcomes newcomers.

Immigration is an important part of the fabric of our province, but we also introduced Bill 26, the Immigration Oversight Act, to make sure that we have more provincial control over immigration. It's in my mandate letter. The pressures put on our province by poor management from the federal government have made things like finding physicians, health care, and education very difficult. That's why we're taking real, concrete action to defend Alberta's best interests, create jobs, and address the labour market shortages.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the federal government continues to fail in protecting newcomers from bad actors such as fraudulent employers and immigration consultants who take advantage of temporary foreign workers, sometimes charging fraudulent fees or demanding payment for job postings, as brought forward by constituents in my riding, and given that this degrades trust in our system and damages Alberta's reputation as a great place to work and call home, to the same minister: how does the Immigration Oversight Act protect newcomers and restore trust in our immigration system?

The Speaker: The hon. immigration minister.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right here in Alberta we have seen several very real cases of exploitation of temporary foreign workers, and it's abhorrent. That is why Bill 26 protects workers by weeding out the bad actors, and brings the temporary foreign worker program back in line with the spirit of its intent. Provincial oversight will create a framework for the province to crack down on fraud and exploitation, enable faster enforcement through stronger penalties and compliance tools, and of course increase transparency in the hiring process, making sure it's done properly.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in recent years we've seen the federal government massively expand immigration without consulting provinces and given that this unchecked level of immigration has hurt provinces, increasing pressure on social services and labour markets, and given that the temporary foreign worker program is supposed to fill legitimate gaps in our labour market instead of taking away from entry-level jobs for Alberta's youth, to the same minister: how does Bill 26 help our immigration system become more economically focused while supporting youth and newcomers to Canada?

The Speaker: The immigration minister.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is booming; 85,000 jobs over the last year. We're leading the charge, but we also understand that some of the employees we need right now are not here, and that's why we must go out of country to find those. That means we have to create a process to ensure that it's done transparently and fair. We're doing this by licensing and registering organizations and businesses involved in the immigration system, and we'll have more access to real-time data industries who rely on immigration. This is about restoring trust, protecting workers, and making sure that we know what's going on in Alberta.

Access to Diagnostic Health Services

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, in October last year the Premier said, and I quote: the UCP's public health guarantee means, one, when your family doctor asks you to get any kind of medical tests and, two, if someone goes to a private clinic and that test identifies a life-threatening condition that had not been previously known by the

same individual. This leaves out all preventative self-referral services, including cancer screening. To the minister: are self-referral preventative services such as cancer screening guaranteed under the UCP's public health guarantee, yes or no?

10:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we will continue to do cancer screening. In fact, we're going to be expanding our cancer screening because we want more people in Alberta to have that preventative measure being done. When we talk about dual practice, it's really looking at making sure that people who currently go out of province and out of country can actually stay here in our province and get those services done. I'm looking forward to bringing more information on that as we go through the process of developing the regulations for it.

Mr. Haji: Given that the minister said in October last year, "If there is a preventative test that you wish to purchase, you will be able to entirely do that in Alberta, and supplemental health benefit plans will be able to ensure that," and given that most Albertans do not have such luxurious private coverage, why can't the minister make it clear that Albertans will not have to pay out of pocket for self-referral cancer screening?

Member LaGrange: No one has to pay out of pocket for self-referral cancer screening. Period.

Mr. Haji: The minister said last October: this allows the private sector to acquire and build billions of dollars' worth of diagnostic equipment and infrastructure right here. Given that this government has a record costly lab privatization, why wouldn't this government be transparent about this privatization plan that they keep hiding from Albertans?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one is hiding anything. In fact, I'll be bringing forward legislation to talk about diagnostics and self-referral. We have not had that legislation brought forward yet because we have been doing the engagement. We're going to bring that forward. I'm not sure why the members opposite don't want the best for Albertans. We look at other jurisdictions around the world that have this ability for self-referral and for preventative health measures to be taken into a person's account. I'm not sure why they don't want the best for Albertans.

Electoral Boundaries

(continued)

Member Tejada: The Electoral Boundaries Commission was mandated to develop an electoral map that's fair through well-defined criteria and public input. That's one set of maps unanimously supported by the commission in the fall and now by the majority of that commission. Anything short of accepting the majority report's maps is gerrymandering and will strip Albertans of their constitutional right to effective representation. Will the minister introduce the majority maps as required by the act, or will he take a page out of the Republican playbook and draw his own?

Mr. Amery: The NDP never cease to amaze anybody in this Chamber, with their theatrics and their constant allegations. We've all received the report, Mr. Speaker, by you. Members of the Legislative Assembly will have the opportunity to review the report. There are 361 pages in that report. We're going to take the time to

review it as an Assembly. We're going to have the opportunity to debate it, discuss it, and move from there. That is not something that the government nor the minister nor the Premier do. It's a decision of the Legislative Assembly.

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

Member Tejada: Given that it was this minister . . .

The Speaker: Sorry. You get to start over. I'm just pointing out that a point of order was noted at 10:44.

You got your full 35 seconds coming up here.

Member Tejada: Given that it is this minister who gets to decide which map comes to the House for MLAs to vote on, and given that politicians should never get to choose their voters – it should be the other way around – and given that this government only loves so-called direct democracy when it's to prop up separatism and spread toxic rhetoric, will this government show Albertans the respect they deserve and implement the commission's majority maps unaltered?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, the NDP continues to operate on a misunderstanding of how the process works. The reality is that the report was tabled by you, Mr. Speaker, for all members to review. That continues to be the process. We've all received the report. The task of this Assembly, not the government, not the minister, not the Premier but the Assembly, is to debate, to make decisions on how things go forward. Once again, we're not going to presuppose how the Members of the Legislative Assembly will move forward.

Member Tejada: Given that not presenting the majority report would be unprecedented, that gerrymandering after months of public feedback and thorough analysis is an insult to Albertans and an attack on democracy and given that Albertans will see through any attempt to override this independent process as a desperate power grab and given that the Electoral Boundaries Commission is independent to prevent political interference, serve communities and not partisan agendas, can this government do the right thing and accept the majority report's recommended map as is? Yes or no?

The Speaker: Well, I'll just point out, hopefully, as politely as I can that you're asking the minister to assume what the Assembly is going to do. That, of course, would be a point of privilege. Nonetheless, the Justice minister can answer the question.

Mr. Amery: Well, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House – and you, in fact, do actually understand how this process works. This is an independent process. This is a task for the Members of the Legislative Assembly to make decisions on. The member's question repeatedly is asking whether the minister would make decisions. That's not my job. That's not my role. That is the role of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. Let's have some respect for this Assembly and for the people of Alberta and give them the opportunity to debate this and give an opportunity for Albertans to hear that debate. What they're asking is ridiculous. They don't understand the process.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, according to this government's budget taxpayer-supported debt will rise from \$82 billion to \$137 billion in just three years, a \$55 billion increase, or 67 per cent. At the same time debt-servicing costs will jump by \$2 billion to \$4.9 billion annually, more than is spent on 21 of 26 government ministries. To the Minister of Finance: how does this government justify borrowing at this level, and does it include leveraging taxpayer dollars for your so-called heritage fund?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I think if you have a plan as ambitious as ours regarding the heritage fund, you need to understand a couple of things. Albertans need very carefully to follow the net position of the province. Just like, for example, the four deficits the members opposite ran: they ran those while taking the retained earnings out of the heritage fund, leaving it at a measly \$16 billion situation, like we'd seen for many decades. We're leaving that in the fund to grow. Yes, debt servicing will increase, but we'll have to also watch the increases on the other side of the ledger. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guthrie: Given that the only thing growing faster than spending is the size of government and given that employee compensation rose by nearly \$7 billion since 2022 and given that government employment has increased by more than 40,000 positions, with much of that growth in administration, not front-line services, and given that the entire \$9.4 billion deficit can be attributed to bureaucratic growth and overhead costs, to the minister: why is this government growing bureaucracy faster than the population it serves?

Mr. Horner: I would like to see where the member is getting that takeaway from the statistics because what I see is that we are growing the front line. This is about nurses. This is about teachers. Everybody can remember the last year, you know, the conversations that we've had in this House, trying to keep up to some pretty sustained population waves of 4.4, 3.5, 2.7 per cent. That's what I've seen. When you look at public servants per thousand residents, we're slightly above Ontario, far below everyone else in the country.

Mr. Guthrie: Given that spending is up 30 per cent in just four years, revenue flat and given that bureaucracy grew by 30 per cent and given that this has driven a \$14 billion deficit swing and given that this government broke its own fiscal rules and then rewrote the baseline to make it look compliant and given that this is not about the price of oil – it's about choices – to the minister. This administration has zero discipline. If you rewrite the fiscal rules after every budget, what value do they have?

10:50

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I kind of appreciate that question. Not really the tone, but I kind of like the question. When fiscal rules fail in other jurisdictions, they're usually repealed completely. There is no jurisdiction that I'm aware of that has as volatile a revenue situation as Alberta. Ours are more complicated. We created these rules. I'm the last person that wanted to break them. We will move to amend them in the fall, specifically the size of the deficit rule, which we are breaking now. I would remind everyone: no province in the country has the upside potential of Alberta.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the Member for . . . [interjections] Order. Order. I'm trying to introduce Edmonton-Manning here, and I can't hear myself.

Go ahead, Member.

Government Policies and Youth

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the way this government is attempting to offer support to Albertans during this affordability crisis is disrespectful. Last week the UCP unveiled a website, affordable advice for life, featuring resources for students in postsecondary education. Some of those brilliant tips included: find affordable apartments, look at the price of food, buy things on sale, and empower yourself with online resources. Does this government really think that young people in Alberta don't know

how to use the Internet? Why not offer something useful like – I don't know – an increase to the minimum wage?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The affordable advice for life website is not meant for people making over \$125,000, like many of the members if not all of the members in this Chamber. It is meant for people who are struggling with affordability, people with disabilities, people who are transitioning from foster care into adulthood, and newcomers to our communities. You know who writes all those pieces of advice? It's not the government, it's not my department, and it's certainly not me. We asked Alberta-based nonprofits what they would do to help those who are struggling with affordability. The disrespect by the NDP to those who need it most is . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member for – I'm having a brain cramp here. The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many young people in this province are feeling sidelined by this government's distraction towards anything but improving the cost of living, given that Albertans cannot offer young adults the same chance to own a home like their parents and their grandparents had and given that young Albertans are not rolling in dough to pay for private jets or fancy carpets but are instead struggling just to pay rent, buy groceries, gas, and student loans, why is this government failing to take any meaningful action on affordability, and will the minister admit that his youth employment strategy just isn't working?

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would probably think the member is mischaracterizing 8,700 young Albertans gaining employment, the hiring incentive, as not creating jobs. We're helping businesses to derisk hiring youth and making real investments. That's why budget '26-27 is investing another \$20 million into making sure we're investing in youth so they can get the first work experience that is so crucial along their employment path.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that youth unemployment rate remains at 14 per cent, higher than when the NDP was in government, and tens of thousands of young people are discouraged in this job market, given that many young people are being told to work harder and be patient while they struggle to gain a foothold in an economy that is leaving them behind and given that we've asked this government to increase minimum wage, pause the gas tax, and cut costs of car insurance with zero response, is this government really surprised when young people tell us that that job-creation strategy just isn't working for them?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, youth unemployment higher than the NDP: that's because when they were in government, they tried to kick everybody out of the province and tell them to go somewhere else. No plan across the aisle. That's why we have the youth hiring incentive. We're adding another \$20 million to supporting youth. We've attracted and created 85,000 new jobs over the last year. The second place on that list is Saskatchewan at 9,000. Those numbers speak for themselves. Alberta is winning. The members opposite only know what it takes to lose. That's why they're on that side of the House, the losing caucus. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The next question belongs to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Energy Resource Industry in Alberta

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fossil fuels have played a crucial role in the development and sustenance of modern society for over a century. The energy provided by these resources supports Alberta communities, families, and industry reliably and efficiently. Oil, natural gas, and coal have played a key role in the prosperity of our province. To the Minister of Energy and Minerals: how can the government better highlight the historical contributions of fossil fuels in Alberta's successful energy sector?

Mr. Jean: Well, first of all, by making sure the NDP never form government in Alberta again, Mr. Speaker. We have what the world wants and needs. We have oil, we have lithium, we have natural gas, some of the world's largest quantities, and right now the global conflicts put Alberta's secure energy on the map. We have what they need. They need it now. We need to provide it, and we would just ask the NDP to quit the blocking, quit the stopping, join Alberta and Alberta's UCP, and get our energy to market. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that countless hard-working Albertans are dependent on the jobs created by the fossil fuel industry and given that engineers, tradespeople, geologists, and energy sector workers dedicate their expertise to keep our province running smoothly and further given that their work keeps our homes warm, our power grid stable, and hospitals operational, to the same minister: what opportunities currently exist to bring attention to the valuable role of energy sector workers in maintaining essential services?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, while the No Development Party continues to say no to pipelines, we know that 161 new schools in Alberta are being developed because of oil and gas. We know that 5.8 per cent increase in health care spending for beds, spending for doctors, and spending for nurses wouldn't happen without our great natural resources, an 8.3 per cent increase in assisted living and continuing care while the rest of Canada's population is declining. People are fleeing because of other governments like the NDP. Ours is growing. Public support for coastlines: majority of people in B.C. and majority of people in Quebec. Why won't the NDP join Alberta and join us developing our natural resources?

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, given the importance of contributions of fossil fuels and the important work of people in the energy sector and further given that there is value in understanding how energy systems work and using that understanding to inform future energy planning, could the minister please inform the House how a day such as a fossil fuel appreciation day could be a great opportunity to draw attention to the value of these resources to Albertans and to the province?

Mr. Jean: I'd like to thank this hard-working member, Mr. Speaker. Every day should be fossil fuel appreciation day. Fossil fuels employ hundreds of thousands of Canadians and Albertans and make people's lives better. It pays tens of thousands of dollars in royalties plus over \$1.7 billion in municipal taxes. Our kids need to know this story, and this kind of day would make the difference so that we can bring kids up right to understand the truth, not what the NDP try to sell them.

Alberta Separatism

Member Gurinder Brar: Mr. Speaker, Alberta separatists are already claiming to have collected the signatures they needed to hold a referendum on pulling Alberta out of Canada, and this UCP government helped them every step of the way. Not once, not twice, but three times the UCP changed the rules of our democracy to help the separatists. Every time the separatists ask for help, the UCP answers. What's next for the separatist wish list, Minister, and when should they expect their next UCP handout?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I feel like I've heard this question before. The only thing this government is focused on is helping Alberta get ahead, which means attracting new investment in the province. We have ministers on the front bench who are out actively courting investment in this province. The minister of agriculture is spending a lot of his time with that. I have done. The Premier is building these relationships, and as a result we have seen real wins; for example, P&H with a new \$241 million flour-milling facility right here in Alberta. It's one of many investments here. Billions are coming to Alberta.

Member Gurinder Brar: Given that my constituency of Calgary-North East is one of the most diverse in Alberta and given that thousands of my constituents have fulfilled their dreams by moving to Canada to live here in Alberta and given that the separatist Alberta Prosperity Project is calling for an independent Alberta to deport thousands of people who came here legally since 2015, will the minister denounce separatism and reject the separatist agenda to deport thousands of hard-working Albertans?

11:00

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, what I will denounce is the way the NDP continues to characterize the government's approach to direct consultation with Albertans.

What I can also say is that we are continually engaged with the federal government on matters of great importance for the province, like getting our products to international markets with the new MOU the Premier has signed with the federal government or myself, who's working with the feds on attracting more defence spending, Mr. Speaker, in places like Cold Lake in Alberta. The member from that area has done tremendous work attracting and promoting that area, and we're going to keep working to get that investment right here in the province.

Member Gurinder Brar: Given that the Alberta Prosperity Project is led by Mitch Sylvestre, a UCP constituency president in good standing – he's calling for the deportation of more than 60,000 people after a separatist referendum – and given that the UCP continues to stand by the separatist opinions from the Member for Red Deer-South, how can my constituents and their families in Calgary-North East trust that they are welcome here in Alberta if the UCP refuses to just denounce separatism?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, the path the members opposite are on is just completely absurd. It's backwards. On this side of the House we are continuing to attract investment here in Canada, making sure that the federal government understands that we are an attractive place to set up shop and facilitate, for example, the 4 Wing Cold Lake base that's going to be the house of the new F-35s. I thank the member from that area for all his tireless work attracting and promoting that area as a great place for investment. The members opposite should get onside. We're on Team Canada. Why won't they be on Team Canada and Team Alberta, just like us? [interjections]

The Speaker: Let's hear the question and the answer.

The question comes from the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Government Policies

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, thank you. This UCP government loves nothing more than flooding the zone to distract from their everyday grift and corruption. It's a trick they learned from the Premier's boss, President Donald Trump. Instead of working to make life more affordable, they waste time tampering with the judicial process, fighting endless culture wars, and trying to gerrymander electoral boundaries. Their hope, of course, is that Albertans won't notice. Once again, when will the Premier stop protecting her government's number one business partner, Sam Mraiche, and finally call a public inquiry into corruption in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and keeper of the Great Seal.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As everybody in this Assembly knows, there are many independent offices looking at this. We know that an RCMP investigation is ongoing. We know that Judge Wyant's report was comprehensive and provided us with insight as to what needs to be done better. We know that this is a procurement issue with AHS, and the Premier has taken immediate steps to rectify those by implementing the 18 recommendations in Judge Wyant's report. We think that we are continuing to move forward in a productive and positive way. We'll continue to address the issues as they come.

Member Ceci: Given that this government just dropped a budget with no path to balance that blows a boom in a boom and given they're raising taxes on homeowners and cutting benefits for seniors and those with disabilities and given that the health care system remains a mess despite the government's 1,200-plus days of rearranging an org chart, to anyone on the government side: aside from the \$280,000 the Premier spent on a fancy new red carpet, when will this pretense that this budget actually helps average Albertans be dropped?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, we have a \$16.9 billion tax advantage in this province. There are many things that make Alberta the place to come raise your family, set up a business. The minister talked about the job creation. We need to manage this province in a disciplined way. [interjection]

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Horner: So we need to manage our spending in the good years and bad by staying under population growth plus inflation, by doing the right thing in the surplus years, investing in the heritage fund, and managing the deficits. That's how we'll get through this.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 11:04. a.m.

Member Ceci: Given the Premier's taste for jet-setting with Saudi princes on private planes, staying in seven-star luxury hotels, and receiving lavish gifts and given the free hockey tickets, the doling out of government jobs to relatives, multiple RCMP investigations, and the overwhelming stench of corruption attached to this government and their friend and associate Sam Mraiche, how can members of this government even go on pretending that they care about the needs of Albertans? [interjections]

The Speaker: Only the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, insulting other governments is not a really good form of foreign policy.

What I can tell you is that what the member didn't talk about was the Leader of the Opposition's five-day, all-expenses-paid trip to China by the World Economic Forum. How about another trip by the World Economic Forum to Davos in 2013, '14, and '16, or how about an all-expenses-paid trip to Bellagio, Italy, paid for by the Rockefeller Foundation? Talk about lavish trips, some of the most economic wealthy organizations in the world. What are they talking about? They don't know . . .

The Speaker: Government House Leader, you of all people know when the 35 seconds are up.

Leduc-Beaumont.

Regulation of Nicotine Pouches

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are raising concerns about the federal government's restrictions on nicotine pouches and how it's changing where and how these products are being sold across the province. It's important to know whether these changes are having unintended consequences when it comes to access, oversight, and exposure. Can the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction please explain what impacts he has seen and what that means for protecting our youth? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. I know. Both sides. I get it. Both sides. A private member is trying to ask their question. That's when they get to do stuff here, and they need to be respected a little bit and be able to do that.

Go ahead, hon. minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. NDP best friend and spiritual adviser Justin Trudeau thought it would be appropriate to take a smoking cessation product and lock it up behind a counter in pharmacies. This has been detrimental to our youth. There's no longer a healthy, accessible, regulated market. There is now a fast-growing black market . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: I know we're getting close to a week away from here, but we need to finish this with a little bit of class and decorum. Minister, finish your answer there.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no longer a healthy, accessible, regulated market. There is now a fast-growing black market selling nicotine pouches without any ID checks. Our youth can find nicotine pouches online in a matter of seconds, and they have it shipped to their door the next day.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Alberta has a well-regulated retail system where age verification is enforced and responsible retailers follow the rules and given that these federal restrictions are changing how these products are accessed and further given that fewer legal options can push buyers elsewhere, can the same minister please explain how this inconsistency is affecting efforts to keep nicotine products out of the hands of young and vulnerable Albertans?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Only the NDP and the progressive left would make something more difficult for adults to buy and easier for kids to get their hands on, but that's exactly what they've done. Any store that sells nicotine pouches is held to the

highest standards, and they must check IDs. We have inspectors that go store to store, and they check to see if the retailers are playing by the rules. [interjection] This is the age-gating that we've had in place for decades. Nobody has control over the black market, and we need to shut it down.

The Speaker: Lethbridge-West, sometimes I can hear one voice more than all the others.

The hon. member.

Mr. Lundy: Oh, well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Albertans expect common-sense rules that protect kids while keeping products in accountable, regulated environments and given the concerns that current federal policies are creating an illegal black market that is more difficult to control and monitor, will the same minister please tell this Assembly his one message to the federal government when it comes to fixing this approach and better protecting our youth? [interjection]

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: No. I would actually just . . .

Ms Hoffman: Sorry. Sorry I spoke out of turn.

The Speaker: Thank you for recognizing that.

11:10

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, what the federal government must do to stamp out the black market is simple. They need to free the Zonnic, they need to free the Zyn, and they need to free the Velo. Let an expansive, accountable, regulated market exist in convenience stores, gas stations, and much more. We have sales channels that are age-gated that have worked for decades. Let's put them to use. Let's protect our young people.

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

Okay. That takes us to points of order. The first point of order was at 10:09 a.m., roughly, and I think it was called by somebody on the government side. The Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. At the time noted, a member's statement was being given by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, and the lines of my unofficial records say: when the Justice minister was asked if he'd consider adopting it, he said that all options on the table, all options including blatant cheating. This is a ridiculous assertion from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Is it, though?

Mr. Schow: I just heard the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford say: is it, though? Now, I know you can't triple stamp a double stamp and you can't do a point of order on a point of order, but that member needs to show some better decorum. That member needs to better understand how this Chamber works. That member needs to understand that there's respect for this Chamber, respect for members in this Chamber. It is ridiculous that this is happening while I'm up here talking about a member in good standing in this Chamber being accused of cheating and then reaffirmed by another member. It's ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous.

The member needs to apologize. It's not the Member for Edmonton-City Centre's first day in this Chamber. Under 23(h), (i),

and (j) this has clearly caused disruption in this Chamber. It's out of order, it's language that is abusive, and it definitely infers false motives. We're talking about the hon. Minister of Justice and the keeper of the Great Seal. To accuse him of being a cheater is totally unparliamentary and beyond the pale, Mr. Speaker. I believe it's a point of order, but I'll leave it in your hands.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. I disagree with the Government House Leader, and I think that the only out-of-order behaviour that we have here is the Government House Leader's inability to emotionally regulate himself and trying to chastise my members and continue debate and make accusations every time he rises on a point of order. It is frustrating.

I will now speak to the point of order because he's wrong in his facts, Mr. Speaker. I believe that he raised a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j). He is worried about an individual member being questioned in their integrity. I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but what I have from the member's member statement – what I believe he said was: they object in the strongest terms, call it unconstitutional, and warn the Legislature against its adoption, but when the Justice minister was asked if he'd consider adopting it, he said all options are on the table, all options including blatant cheating, I guess. We are talking about government policy and decisions to be made and what a government will do. As well, he says: I guess. He says: maybe. He adds in a bit of a qualifier, something that has been very important in this House as recently as yesterday as you were ruling on points of order, so I think that this is important.

Now the words “cheat” and “cheating” the government is obviously very sensitive to. I would say that it's very similar to gerrymandering, something that the government has been accused of doing. I checked our records, Mr. Speaker, as to whether the words “cheat” or “cheating” have been ruled unparliamentary in the past. On March 24, 2022, it was ruled out because it was a remark that questioned a member's integrity. I will argue to you that that's not the situation here because we are talking about a government policy and decisions being on the table, not an individual member. On May 28, 2019, the Speaker did not find a point of order when “cheat” and “cheating” were used; did refer to it as being unparliamentary in certain circumstances and issued a caution. Again, not found a point of order because it was speaking about a collective. Finally, *Beauchesne's* section 64, which uses the word “cheat” in that language, is very specifically talking about attacks on individual members.

Mr. Speaker, my case that this is not a point of order rules on the fact that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre at no time accused the Minister of Justice. We were talking about government policy and decisions the government will make. To be very clear, the government chooses what legislation they bring forward into this House, and that choice has many implications for Albertans and for the decisions of this Legislature. The minister talking about the government having all options on the table leaves a lot of questions for Albertans and for the Official Opposition.

I appreciate that the Government House Leader was very enthusiastic in calling this a point of order, but I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is not. Just because the Government House Leader hits the roof, that should not be the measure of how we behave in this place. This is not a point of order. We were not accusing an individual member of anything. The words “cheat” and “cheating” have been used in this House last in 2022, in 2019, when it was not found to be a point of order. I don't believe it's a point of order, and I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: Well, for those watching at home, there was an example of two over-the-top points of order arguments. Yeah, both sides.

Let me read what's in the Blues here. This is what the Member for Edmonton-City Centre said. “When the Justice minister was asked about whether he'd consider adopting it, he'd say that all options are on the table.” Not “they'd say,” not “the government would say,” not “the other side would say,” but it says “he'd say that all options are on the table, all options including blatant cheating, I guess.” Yes, the use of the phrase “I guess” was intended to soften it, which is something. It doesn't change the fact that this was not an accusation about cheating against the other side; rather, against an individual member according to what's here in the Blues, essentially suggesting that the Justice minister, or “he'd say,” would consider including cheating. I don't think “I guess” makes it enough better. That's a clear point of order, which does require an apology and a withdrawal.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize and withdraw for any implication that the minister as opposed to the government would be considering an option . . .

The Speaker: Just the apology. You know, qualifying the apology and withdrawal isn't what we do here. Just apologize and withdraw, please.

Mr. Shepherd: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Okay. A second . . . [interjections] Order. You know what? During this time is not the part I enjoy, and it's because of bad behaviour in the House. More bad behaviour while sorting out the previous bad behaviour from either side is not appreciated, and it's not helpful.

The second point of order was called at about 10:44 from the opposition side.

Ms Gray: I will withdraw that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: That makes this matter dealt with and concluded.

Point of order at 11:04 or thereabouts from the government side.

Mr. Schow: I have no idea what it is, so I'll just withdraw.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

That actually disposes of the points of order.

11:20

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 24 Alberta Whisky Act

The Speaker: The hon. minister of red tape reduction.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill 24, the Alberta Whisky Act.

This bill reflects the strength, creativity, and success of Alberta's whisky sector. More importantly, it speaks to something bigger. This is about Alberta farmers. Now, I would be remiss if I didn't remind everyone in this Chamber of when the NDP were in government and they wanted to help out the agricultural industry. Do you remember what they wanted to do? They tried to unionize the family farm, Mr. Speaker. It didn't go very well. It's probably why they'll never win another seat in rural Alberta.

That's not what we're doing with the Alberta Whisky Act. We're promoting the world-class grains that our farmers produce. We are finding additional markets for our farmers who produce these incredible grains, but in addition to helping the farmers, this is about Alberta producers. It's about Alberta workers. It's about taking

something that we grow here, something we make here, and making sure that it's recognized for what it is, world class.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta whisky is not new. For years our distillers have been building something special. They've been innovating, winning awards, and producing whisky that reflects the very best of this province, from our grains to our water to the people behind the bottle. Despite that success, we've heard clearly from industry that there is a gap. Right now there is no clear provincial definition for what makes Alberta whisky distinct, and that matters because without that clarity, it becomes harder for our producers to stand apart. It's harder for them to tell their story. It's harder to compete not just here at home but in markets around the world. This bill is about closing the gap. It's about making sure that when something is called Alberta whisky, it actually means something real, something consistent, something Albertans can take pride in.

Before I get into the details of what Alberta whisky is, I want to be clear about what this legislation is not. At its core, this bill, if passed, would establish a clear legislated definition of Alberta whisky. It sets a high standard, one that reflects the quality Albertans expect when they buy a bottle of whisky and the pride that our producers already bring to their work every day. More importantly, it does so in a way that gives the industry flexibility. Participation is voluntary. Distillers can choose whether the designation aligns with their business goals. Those who opt in gain a protected, meaningful label. Those who do not can continue operating as they do today. That balance is intentional, and it reflects exactly what we heard from industry.

Mr. Speaker, I've also had the opportunity to look at how other jurisdictions have built globally recognized spirits industries. In the summer of 2025 I had the opportunity to join Spirits Canada and the Alberta Craft Distillers Association on a mission to Kentucky. While we were there, we travelled along the Kentucky Bourbon Trail from distillery to distillery, meeting the amazing people that built this industry from the ground up. These are family-run operations, multigenerational businesses, and local entrepreneurs who take immense pride in what they produce. You can see it in how they talk about their craft, how they welcome visitors, and how deeply connected they are to their communities.

What stood out just as much as the product was the impact. The Bourbon Trail has become a major economic driver. It brings in visitors from around the world, supports local businesses, and has helped revitalize entire communities. Restaurants, hotels, shops, and tour operators have all grown alongside that industry. What started as distilling has grown into something much bigger. It is a true success story built on clear standards, strong identity, and pride in a local market.

What that reinforced is this: when you define your product clearly and you stand behind it, people notice. Mr. Speaker, this bill is not just about labels; it's about opportunity. Alberta already produces some of the best barley, rye, and wheat in the world. What this legislation does is help ensure more of that value stays right here at home. From the field to the distillery to the bottle on the shelf, it supports value-added production. It supports local jobs, and it supports growth in an industry that is already gaining momentum.

It also opens the door to broader opportunities around the world. Spirits industries have become anchors for tourism, whether it's in Scotland or in Kentucky. While that is beyond the scope of this bill, this legislation lays the groundwork. It gives Alberta whisky a clear identity, something people can recognize, seek out, and build opportunities around. Over time this creates the potential for something more, the potential for an industry-led Alberta whisky trail that brings visitors into our communities, showcases our producers, and highlights the full journey from grain to glass. That kind of opportunity does not happen overnight. It starts with defining who we are and standing behind it.

Mr. Speaker, what does Alberta whisky actually mean under this legislation? It means it's made right here in Alberta from start to finish: mashed, fermented, aged, proofed, and, of course, bottled in this province. It means it's made with 100 per cent Alberta water before distillation and at least two-thirds Alberta-grown grains. It means high-quality standards on top of existing federal requirements. Yes, all Alberta whisky would still be Canadian whisky, but not all Canadian whisky would meet the Alberta standard. That distinction matters because it gives consumers confidence that when they see Alberta whisky on a label, it stands for something else: quality, integrity, and a clear connection to this province. Proudly Albertan.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, this bill is about recognition of the farmers growing the grain, recognition for the distillers perfecting their craft, and recognition for a product that deserves to stand on its own. It's about protecting authenticity, setting a high standard, and backing an industry that is already doing incredible work. When Alberta puts its name on something, it should mean something. This bill makes sure that that happens. I look forward to continuing to work with industry as this legislation moves forward, and I'm excited about what the future holds for Alberta whisky.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 24, the Alberta Whisky Act. Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-North East.

Member Gurinder Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I went to a new fabric store named Punjab fabric, started by my friend in my home city. After climbing 27 stairs and two floors, we reached the third floor. This third floor had some of the finest fabrics from all over the world: Redal, Albini, Calozzo, you name it. That store is truly one of its kind in our region. He began to show me the fabric for my blazer, and he showed me one of the fabrics that really impressed me. He kept on showing one after the other, and I ran my hand over the fabric that really touched me. Its feel was really good. It was really amazing. Before he could show me another one, I stopped him and asked what made this fabric so special. He showed me a tag hanging around that cloth, and the tag said Harris Tweed Authority, established under the Harris Tweed Act 1993.

The Harris Tweed Act of parliament in 1993 brought forward a bill and established the Harris Tweed Authority. In accordance with the act Harris tweed cloth must be "handwoven by the islanders at their homes in the Outer Hebrides, finished in the Outer Hebrides, and made from pure virgin wool dyed and spun" in their homes. The act ensures that all clothes certified with the Harris tweed symbol comply with that definition. That legislation alongside the work of the Harris Tweed Authority allows the safeguarding of the Harris tweed name, quality, and reputation. Now, I was not just buying the cloth. I was buying the authenticity. I was buying the quality. I was buying the originality of the hard-working hands of Scotland.

The then U.K. government stood behind the quality, authenticity, and labour of the workers who crafted that special cloth. Many other governments have done the exact same thing. They preserved the story. They preserved the history. They preserved the tradition of their people. That was the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker. That was a step in the right direction. That was governance done in the right way.

Today with this bill I'm glad to see this government heading in the right direction. I support this bill because I believe that Alberta should not just produce but define, distinguish, and elevate its own products. I say that not just as a legislator but as a proud Albertan. There is something powerful about a place that believes in what it creates. Mr. Speaker, for too long Alberta has been known for what lies beneath our feet – oil, gas, resources – but this bill reminds us

that Alberta is also about what we craft, what we build, and what we export to the world with pride. Whisky made from Alberta grain, with Alberta water, aged in Alberta barrels is not just a product; it is a story. A story of farmers, distillers, and workers coming together to create something uniquely Albertan, uniquely ours.

11:30

Mr. Speaker, this bill sets clear standards. It tells the world that if you see Alberta whisky on a bottle, it means something. It means the grain was grown in Alberta. It means the water came from Alberta. It means the process happened in Alberta. In today's global economy that kind of identity matters because consumers are not just buying products anymore; they are buying authenticity.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this story before. Kentucky bourbon, Scottish whisky, French champagne: these are not just industries. These are economic engines. Kentucky's bourbon industry alone is worth over \$10 billion. Scotland attracts millions of visitors each year through whisky tourism.

When we were in government my colleague the best Finance minister Alberta has ever had and MLA for Calgary-Buffalo gave tax rebates to Alberta brewers. That was not just a tax rebate, Mr. Speaker. That was a clear message that the government of Alberta will support Alberta brewers every step of the way, that the government of Alberta will be the air beneath the wings of Alberta brewers, and today with the Alberta Whisky Act, 2026, Alberta is once again doing the right thing.

I'm proud to support it because we already have the foundation: 450 distilleries across the province, \$740 million contributed to GDP, more than 1,000 jobs supported. This bill doesn't just stand with the industry; it strengthens it, Mr. Speaker. It protects it. It gives it a name the world can recognize.

Mr. Speaker, there is also something deeply local about this. When we talk about Alberta whisky, we are talking about Alberta farmers growing grain, Alberta workers refining the products, Alberta businesses building brands, and, if done right, we are talking about tourism as well. People visiting our communities, walking into distilleries, spending money in our local communities and economy, and that matters, especially at a time when global whisky markets are facing uncertainty and downturns.

Now, support doesn't mean silence. If we are serious about building an economy, we must also be honest about what threatens it. This is where I want to raise a concern, not about this bill but about the broader conversation happening in our province. We are hearing more voices talking about separatism, talking about walking away, talking about cutting the ties. Mr. Speaker, I understand where some of that frustration comes from. Albertans are proud. Albertans want fairness. Albertans want respect. Those are not wrong demands, but there is the truth that we must face. Economies do not grow in isolation, markets do not reward uncertainty, and investment does not flow towards instability. If we want Alberta whisky to compete with Kentucky, Scotland, and Ireland whiskies, then we must offer something they all have: stability, certainty, and confidence.

Imagine this. A global buyer looks at Alberta whisky. They see a product, strong standards, skilled workers. But then they ask one question. Is this place stable? Is this market predictable? Is this jurisdiction secure? Mr. Speaker, economic growth and political uncertainty do not walk in the same direction. I say this not to criticize Albertans but to protect Alberta. Being pro Alberta is not about shouting the loudest. It is about building the strongest, a strong Alberta that attracts investment, builds partnerships, and competes globally.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a step in the right direction. This bill says that we believe in our product, we believe in our people, and we believe in an Alberta that can compete. I agree with that, but belief alone is not enough. We must also create the conditions that belief

can succeed. Yes, let us support our distillers. Let us grow our tourism. Let us build a globally recognized Alberta whisky brand. But at the same time let us be careful not to undermine our own success by creating uncertainty around our own future. Alberta's strength has never been in walking away. It has always been in standing tall: standing tall in our industries, standing tall in our communities, standing tall in Canada and in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of this province. I'm proud of what we produce, and I'm proud to support this bill. If we stay focused, if we stay stable, if we stay united in this purpose, then Alberta whisky will not just be a label; it will be a legacy. Let us pass this bill so that when someone will go to buy whisky and look at the shelves of the stores, they will see the label "Alberta whisky." That will assure them that they are buying the Alberta story, just like when I bought Harris tweed.

Cheers to the finest craft that we produce here in Alberta. Cheers to the Alberta story that the world eagerly awaits to hear. Cheers to our farmers, distillers, and workers. I request all members to support and pass this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Member Ceci: Thank you to the Member for Calgary-North East for that inspirational speech. It's motivated me, Mr. Speaker, to think about what the Alberta NDP did when we were government. I want to start by saying that the minister's presentation about grain to glass is absolutely important and true. When I was Finance minister and AGLC was under my ministry at the time, it's what I heard from producers all across this province, whether they were in the brewery industry or whether they were in the spirits industry. So I absolutely also will be supporting this act, the Alberta Whisky Act.

I want to say that something the minister omitted when he was recounting why to do this – and I think there's great reason to do it – is talking about the incredible positive developments under the Alberta NDP that occurred in the whole craft beer industry. Let me say that again: craft beer industry, Mr. Speaker. Before we were there in 2015, you could go to the beer store, you could go to any liquor store, and there'd be a lot of international beers on the shelf, and they'd be very expensive. There'd be domestic beers on the shelf from across Canada, and there were three or four from Alberta on the shelf. It wasn't good enough.

What we did as a government: we listened to the industry at the time, and they said, "You know, if you find a way to tweak" – and my colleague from Calgary-North East talked about that – "the markups of beers generally and the ability to get some reductions on the per-litre cost of paying to the government of Alberta the cost of taxation, you can stimulate this industry," and that's what happened. It went from maybe six Alberta beers that really weren't seen in the craft sphere to over 150 different breweries in this province making craft beer, and they were doing it well. They were exporting it although there were some problems with export, of course. Places like Ontario, B.C., and other places. Saskatchewan had . . .

11:40

Mr. Dach: Alberta beer is good.

Member Ceci: Alberta beer is good, but the other provinces would put tasting panels and restrictions for our industry to try and get into those provinces.

I want to say that the benefit to the craft beer industry that occurred as a result of the focus by our government on that industry was very beneficial. Now the minister is talking about doing the same sort of thing for Alberta whisky, and I applaud him for doing that.

I also want to recognize that at the time the Alberta gaming and liquor commission was headed up by the CEO Alain Maisonneuve, and he did tremendous work in support of that for our government. Jason Foster, a beer aficionado, knows beer inside out. He helped guide all that growth for us.

I applaud the minister. I hope he's got some good advisers as well going forward. You know, I just was listening to the minister. He talked about going down to Kentucky, seeing the Bourbon Trail. That's really great. When I was the minister, I never got invited on any of those kind of junkets, but I don't regret the fact that he did go somewhere. I think that's a positive for the industry because he came back fired up to do something.

On my own dime, Mr. Speaker, I went to Scotland with my wife one time. We went through the – I think they call it the distillery valley in Scotland, where a lot of the Scotch producers are in the same place. It's a beautiful smell through the valley because of the peat and all the sort of things they've got in the beautiful liquors. Talking about the whisky trail here in Alberta, I think, makes a lot of sense. I would be interested to know how projections go for GDP growth from – I think it was \$720 million that Spirits Canada came up with in 2020, \$740.2 million annually for GDP in this province as a result of making Alberta whisky, contributing, and 1,000 jobs. I wonder what the projections are for that growth once the act goes through, the whisky trail is set up, and we see benefits as a result of that in the industry.

I certainly know some of the producers in Calgary, Mr. Speaker. Bridgeland Distillery is one that's very close to my riding, and I've been over several times to say hello to them. They're one of the 45 whisky producers or distilleries in this province. I'm hopeful that, along with the example that the craft beer industry provides this province in this example, we'll see significantly more development in the whisky-producing distilleries, a number of them. That would be a good thing, I think, as well as attracting tourists to Alberta to take part in the whisky trail that'll be developed. I think that marketing makes a lot of sense to me. I know they do that in the whole craft beer industry, whether that's in Edmonton or Calgary or other places in the province.

I think I may sit down and just listen to the great speeches coming from this side of the House with regard to the importance of whisky in our province and the benefit we all get from moderation, Mr. Speaker. Moderation: I sound like my doctor, don't I? But moderation is the way to go forward in everything, and I'll just listen to the rest of this speech.

Thank you.

The Speaker: It was once said that we should also have moderation in our moderation.

The Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always a good day in Alberta. Today is no less a great day in Alberta as well, and today we have to talk about something I think many of us enjoy and partake in. We're going to talk about the whisky act here today.

I do think it is something truly special, and the Alberta Whisky Act really tells a story that is an Alberta story, that is really driving home something that really is unique across Canada. This uniqueness really comes down to many aspects of the bill. We're going to get into that, but I think it also builds trust in the industry. For distillers from across Alberta I think we're going to be able to see just incredible marketing, also the opportunity to expand their market share, go from a roughly billion-dollar industry – I think Kentucky is around \$7 billion from what I understand. I'm looking forward to us competing with Kentucky, not just on racehorses here

across Alberta and what they're doing down there but also on whisky. I look forward to seeing that.

As I was saying, Kentucky is known for bourbon. Scotland is known for Scotch. We have many people that have Scotch nights, bourbon nights across the province, and now I think we're going to have some Alberta nights as well, Mr. Speaker, and that's really good. This gives a clear and concise opportunity to really give Alberta producers and distilleries a clear identity. Before it was a little – it wasn't that it was just wishy-washy, but there was no clear identity of what made an Alberta whisky. As I was saying, I think this is an opportunity for pride to be in the product and also credibility on the world stage and across Alberta. So we're kind of setting a trend here, Mr. Speaker, which is, I believe, a really good to place to be.

This legislation does set the standard for what can be called Alberta whisky, including using 100 per cent water. I know as Albertans we are passionate about water across our province. This is also an opportunity for us to utilize Alberta water to be able to say that it's the best in the world, it's the best in Canada, and absolutely I can't think of a better way to utilize some Alberta water here today.

Not only this. It's also talking about locally sourced grains, using grain from Alberta in a certain percentage of the mix. This really helps out our agricultural sector, expanding their opportunities, too, for high-quality grains. We just met with some producers here this last week, and they really gave us the context of: as they're producing, they want to keep scaling up. They want to be able to produce more and also sell more, not just sell to the world but utilize it here. This is an upscaling, too, of those grains here across the province. It's super important, and as they continue to grow their business, this is a great way for us to upscale and utilize these grains right here in Alberta. It really anchors our agriculture sector as a user here, too, and also supporting family farms right across our province, and I'm looking forward to that.

Now, one of the great things about distilleries is that when distilleries succeed, it means our tourism industry is succeeding as well. I imagine that, with Alberta whisky and the brand of that, we're also going to see some more tasting rooms come about, more bottles on shelves, more formal branding coming across, and that also means more economic value and economic activity throughout the province. These are important aspects as we see especially our tourism. We've got some big goals in tourism, and when we look at these goals, this can be part of the solution to expand this, see some Alberta whisky tours across the province, and also be able to compete.

I'm really looking at it, like, an opportunity to see an industry-led Alberta whisky trail. That would be fantastic. I've heard that's in the works. I'm really looking forward to seeing that come about.

This also allows them to compete. We've seen some really amazing whiskies across Alberta compete in the Canadian whisky championships. They've won, over the last several years, multiple different awards. This is also an opportunity for them to brand it as a formal Alberta whisky, be able to go and compete both Canadian and internationally for their whisky, and as I said before I think we've got some good competition coming from Alberta for Kentucky. I can't wait for us to start winning in some of the world's and taking that next step.

11:50

Now, we also do have some commitments here, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue working alongside distilleries and industry partners to showcase Alberta whisky, strengthen its reputation. This is a new bill, so we don't have that reputation quite built yet, but we're going to get there. We're going to keep building it and become a cornerstone brand, not just here in Alberta, not just in Canada but, I

believe, the world and compete against – I think in the next decade we're probably going to see Scotch nights, we're going to see bourbon nights, and we're going to see Alberta whisky nights. We're going to see competition there, too, right across in people's homes as they enjoy Alberta whisky. Because that is a new market, a new opportunity for people to try different flavours.

What I also have found is that there are about 45 different distillers producing whisky in Alberta. The majority of them are smaller distillers, which actually adds to the value and also adds to the uniqueness of the flavours and also the value of what they're offering locally here, too. As someone with a fantastic distillery in the city limits, they're doing a great job. Thankful for them. I can see them expanding that into this and having specific Alberta whisky. I'm hopeful that they can start doing that.

As I've said, Alberta-made whiskies have won multiple national awards in 2024 and 2025 at the Canadian whisky awards. That's really cool. We should be celebrating this market. We should be able to see and be able to also pinpoint that it is because we have a high standard here and also that they can have that brand of Alberta whisky. Now, they've also won some global awards such as the world's best rye at the 2025 world whiskies awards, platinum medal at the 2024 San Francisco World Spirits Competition, and world's best new make and young spirit at the 2024 world whiskies awards.

Now, I do want to say that the Alberta Whisky Act: while we can see that market growing and see the awards happening, this is also not a price conversation. The Alberta Whisky Act shouldn't affect pricing, retail availability, or access to whisky in Alberta. We're not trying to bring the market down. We're trying to expand it and put that stamp on it. This is a quality whisky. It's hit the markings and the approvals, and it really would get some excellent market opportunity there, too.

Okay. I'm hopeful that this legislation passes. There are a couple of details here on what would be required for the Alberta whisky. A little bit of background on this. It would require to be mashed, fermented, aged, proofed, and bottled entirely in Alberta. You can't just be shipping product in and mixing it. It does have to be utilizing all of those things here in Alberta and from Alberta, which, as I mentioned before with grains from across Alberta, also helps these other industries to also build this up instead of just having a single manufacturing spot in Alberta. I'm looking forward to seeing those things come about. As I said before, it's also Alberta ingredients. This is key. We want to continue to see our agriculture flourish. This is an opportunity for agrifood add and expansion. This is a great opportunity here.

Now, as I said, made with 100 per cent Alberta water predistillation: once again, we highly value this. Let's continue using something we highly value and make sure that we're going to continue to use that as well. Then as per the percentage of Alberta-grown grains, at least two-thirds Alberta-grown grains will be required and also aged at least three years in small wood. I think that this is also good for us to be able to say: "Hey, this is something that's coming from Alberta. It's also been stored in Alberta. It's also been built in Alberta." And a minimum of 40 per cent alcohol by volume: there can't be a mix that distills it down lower than 40 per cent.

There's a flavour component here, too. We do want those natural ingredients to come out, so no additive flavours except those expressly permitted under legislation, such as caramel colouring. That's a pretty common thing. As well, other alcohol products blended in for flavouring are limited to no more than 9.09 per cent of total alcohol content and must be aged at least two years. Once again, there's still aging in the blend to make sure that there is a unique Alberta flavour in the Alberta whisky.

Now, I think there's also a conversation we've – I've been chatting a little bit. Is it forced upon people? No. Participation will

be voluntary across the board. Distillers can continue producing other whisky products that do not meet the Alberta whisky standard. If they want to blend from other places, bring in grains from other places as well, they're free to do so. They just can't brand it Alberta whisky. I think that's fair, Mr. Speaker, for them to have different flavour components and be able to build that out from there if that's what they choose. But to actually call it Alberta whisky, that wouldn't qualify. I'm really looking forward to seeing different distillers, what they're going to choose. It's super important for them to do so.

As I was saying, I think Alberta distillers, tourism operators, and also agricultural producers were consulted on the development of the Alberta Whisky Act. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if you noticed the other day, but people were excited during the news announcement. There were multiple distillers there. They were excited over this piece of legislation. They've been asking for it. Alberta has delivered, and once again we're doing the people's work and making sure that we continue to grow and succeed in this area.

Now, just on the legislative side just a little bit, Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis, AGLC, would oversee compliance and enforcement of the Alberta Whisky Act. I don't think there's probably going to need to be a lot of compliance. It is voluntary for them. It's not that every single whisky has to meet a certain standard. You just would call it something else. It just wouldn't be an Alberta whisky. You'd still be able to produce another whisky, and I think the industry will do a good job of making sure that the Alberta whisky standards stay there. I think they're going to do a great job of doing that themselves as well.

I think there's also a conversation here. Why do you need a definition when there's already one for Canada? But without a definition for Alberta whisky itself producers are going to find it really difficult to say, "Well, we're a Canadian whisky," which kind of has a broad term, but we want an Alberta whisky. We're Albertans here, and while I love being an Albertan and I want to be a strong united Canada, we also love our Alberta branding here, Mr. Speaker, building upon that deep heritage here. I'm proud of that, too. We're going to see. We wanted to really tweak that, drive in, and give a definition of what this is.

Canadian whisky, because it's been pretty broad as well, has really struggled to be defined across the world stage. As I said, we've had Scotch from Scotland, we've had bourbon from Kentucky, but Canada whisky hasn't really been defined in such a unique flavour way. This act allows the flavouring and the profiling and also building up of distinct whisky here in Alberta right across the global market and really be competitive then in how we're going to define this.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left on the clock?

The Speaker: Two and a half minutes.

Mr. Dyck: Two and a half minutes. I'm going to use it all.

Also, with proposed higher standards, the Alberta Whisky Act would distinguish Alberta whisky as a more rigorously crafted product than Canadian whisky overall. Once again, world-class grains from Alberta and water sourced within the province make it unique and give it a great opportunity for us to have a product that is both unique and also can continue to build upon the heritage of the current award winners across Alberta.

I think one of the other questions, too, is just about the grains mix. I've heard a couple of questions on this. This was one of my questions. If we're going to have a standard – right now the standard is two-thirds instead of 100 per cent Alberta grains – why is it only two-thirds instead of 100 per cent? This is a great starting point. We want to make sure that there's enough grain to be able to figure out the market, be able to build and also, as they're currently bringing

in some other grains from other places, to not disrupt that market access. But the majority is from Alberta. If we need to change that in the future, we can always see some changes.

The other one is that no other jurisdiction requires geographically bound grain control, so this is a unique aspect of the Alberta Whisky Act, that we are requiring a geographical area to be defined for where our grain is being grown from. It's not just water. It's not just grain. Those are kind of unique things in other areas. Like in Scotland they use water from Scotland for their Scotch. That's a defining factor for them. We've added in another one because we love our farms. We do a great job, so we're going to have a great opportunity there.

12:00

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm guessing I'm pretty close to taking up my entire time here. I thank you for the opportunity to speak here for a few moments. I'm really looking forward to it, and I hope everybody in this Assembly can support this piece of legislation, as I will be doing here today as well.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. – Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: It's important to get it right, Mr. Speaker. The rivalry between Sherwood Park and St. Albert in sports is deep, furious, and angry, and we don't want to be conflated.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to get up and talk about Bill 24, the Alberta Whisky Act. It feels like it's a good opportunity to highlight a website, explore Strathcona county. We have breweries, distilleries, and even a winery in Strathcona county. Part of the act which I'm wondering about is – I'm glad that there's a focus on whisky. There could have been a focus on Alberta beer or Alberta ciders or Alberta mead, other really important parts of the brewery-distillery industry.

We have 70-Acre Brew Company, which is in Sherwood Park in my riding. It's locally crafted, and it's all from local ingredients. They make sure all of the ingredients come from the Strathcona county area. We even have a winery, Barr Estate Winery, with a working sheep and fruit farm. It's fun to visit. It's got a great tasting room. It's an opportunity to just step outside of Sherwood Park a little ways and get into the country on ag food days and visit a farm. [interjection] Yeah. I'm selling it, aren't I?

Doege Company makes small-batch products. They are a distillery, and I think they're going to be excited about this new designation of the Alberta whisky. Elk Island Spirits, handcrafted, are famous for their moose milk. You might see them at a lot of craft sales and small farmers' markets. You can buy some moose milk from Elk Island Spirits. We have a good sense of humour in Sherwood Park.

Fox Hills Cidery is in Ardrossan right in Strathcona county. I mentioned it before, but it's called the kingdom of Ardrossan. Think about it as your destination. It's Alberta-grown apples that go into their cider. Hawke Prohibition Distilleries: they also have a sense of humour. Thick and dirty is their drink you'll find from time to time at the craft sales.

My favourite of all of them is Manual Labour Beer Co. I encourage you to visit Manual Labour Beer Co. It's a fascinating story about an orthopaedic surgeon who, after COVID, decided that his passion was making beer, and we are all benefiting from that although people that need hip and knee replacements aren't benefiting from it as much.

Outside of my riding, though, Mr. Speaker, directly to the House through you, Righand Craft Distillery is a phenomenal place which has also turned into a great destination for events and visiting. What I want to highlight is that in Parliament the Speaker picks a whisky every year

to be the Speaker's whisky, and all the members are invited for a tasting to taste the different whiskies from across Canada. Righand Distillery was chosen as the Speaker's whisky one year, and I wonder if having the Alberta Whisky Act will one day lead to us having a Speaker's whisky in Alberta in our Legislature.

The label starts that conversation about identity, about economic opportunity, and at its core it's about something even fundamentally more important. It's about water. That is one of the most important if not the most important ingredient in whisky.

Mr. Speaker, when I had a chance at a previous time in my life, I was working in the industry. The German government invited us to come on an industry tour of the solar industry of Germany. We paid for it ourselves. Part of the tour involved a tour of the Erdinger Brewery around Munich. What was so interesting is that a big part of the focus of that tour was talking about – and this is about a 150-year-old brewery – how in the 1960s they moved locations to use a different aquifer. They were telling us that water is the most important part of their brewery and that water is a part of the conversation.

You know, whisky is a simple product with grain, yeast, time, but above else, water. It's the foundation of distilling. It determines the flavour character and the quality. It shapes the spirit long before it reaches the barrel. The purity of the water, the minerals it carries, the ecosystem it flows through: these are not abstract concepts to the distiller. It's the essence of what makes their whisky distinctive. In Alberta we are blessed with extraordinary water, water that begins in the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, water that flows through our rivers, sustains our communities, and supports our agriculture, water that is, quite literally, life. When we talk about Alberta whisky, we are talking about capturing the natural advantage of our land, our climate, and our water and sharing it with the world.

There is real economic potential here. A strong Alberta whisky designation would support the local distilleries like the ones I mentioned in Strathcona county and Sherwood Park, create jobs in rural communities, add value to Alberta-grown grains like wheat and barley, strengthen our agrifood sector, and boost tourism across the province. We've seen this model succeed elsewhere, and members have been, you know, talking about their tours of other places and how that makes sense. Why can't that be in Alberta? I'm glad that we are all, I'm hearing from this House, in support of that.

Regions that take pride in their products, whether it's wine, beer, spirits, create destinations. People travel to experience authenticity. They want to taste something that can only come from one place. Alberta has that opportunity. Imagine visitors coming not just for our mountains but for our distilleries, for our breweries, for our wineries. Imagine touring facilities that showcase Alberta grain, Alberta craftsmanship, Alberta water. Imagine pairing that with our restaurants, hotels, and our festivals. That's not just branding; that's economic diversification.

Mr. Speaker, if we're going to build a brand around Alberta whisky, we cannot ignore the very thing that makes it possible, and that is water. Right now Albertans are anxious about water. They're anxious about whether it will remain clean. They are anxious about whether it will remain abundant. They are anxious about decisions being made that could put it at risk. We cannot have a serious conversation about Alberta whisky without having a serious conversation about Alberta's headwaters.

Many Albertans are deeply concerned about coal mining in the eastern slopes. Those headwaters are not just scenic landscape. They are the source of the water that flows across the province supporting agriculture, communities, ecosystems, and industries like brewing and distilling. People understand what is at stake. That's why we've seen the grassroots action across Alberta. Albertans are organizing. They're speaking out. They're signing a petition to protect the eastern

slopes because they know that once water is compromised, it is incredibly difficult, sometimes impossible, to restore.

There's a phrase I want to highlight today: action is the antidote to anxiety. Right now Albertans are anxious. They're anxious about water security. They're anxious about environmental stewardship to protect the land and water for future generations. But they are not standing still. They are taking action, and they are engaging in their communities. They are raising their voices, and they are demanding that we as legislators take seriously our responsibility to protect the natural resources that sustain this province. They are right to do so because if we want to build something like an Alberta whisky brand, something that depends so heavily on water, we must also commit to protecting that water.

The minister painted a compelling image of the whisky trail in Alberta. I imagine people moving down the Cowboy Trail, highway 22. It's difficult to imagine the appeal of drinking Alberta whisky made from water pulled out of the Oldman watershed after travelling past an open-pit mine in the eastern slopes. Mr. Speaker, the communities, the rural communities, have the value here at home, and they can add more with the Alberta Whisky Act. But none of this exists without water, and that is why this conversation must be grounded in responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I will just add a last little bit here, and that is just what the Member for Calgary-Buffalo mentioned, moderation. For those that may be struggling with alcohol use, it's important to know there is help that is available. We're talking so fondly about alcohol as a characteristic in this House, but in Alberta we have to know that there are people that struggle with moderation. So remember that we have Alberta Health Services addiction helpline, 1.866.332.2322. We could really simplify that. Just start with 811, Health Link, and ask for help if you need it. These are 24/7, confidential helplines that are there to help you.

12:10

Mr. Speaker, where does this leave us? Designating Alberta whisky is an opportunity to showcase our province, support our farmers and producers, build tourism, and create a product that reflects the very best of Alberta, but it also comes with responsibility, a responsibility to protect the water that makes it possible, the responsibility to listen to Albertans who are raising concerns about the eastern slopes, a responsibility to ensure that our economic ambitions do not come at a cost of our natural heritage.

Mr. Speaker, I hope to support the Alberta Whisky Act. I'm excited about the future and especially a future with clean water in Alberta.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a second time]

Bill 22

Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026

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

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move second reading of Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026.

This legislation represents a significant and long-overdue update to Alberta's animal protection framework. It's the first comprehensive modernization of the act in over 20 years. If passed, Bill 22 will strengthen protections for animals, modernize enforcement authorities, enhance compliance tools, and ensure penalties reflect the seriousness of potential offences today. At its core, the legislation is about ensuring that animals in Alberta are treated with care, dignity, respect, and compassion while equipping our enforcement officers with the tools they need to act more effectively.

Mr. Speaker, I will highlight several key aspects of the bill. First, Bill 22 addresses gaps in core definitions, bringing Alberta in line

with other jurisdictions across the country. If passed, this legislation will update and expand the definition of distress to better reflect modern understanding of animal health and wellness. It's important that we get the ambiguity out so people know what distress is and what it looks like. Animal health, welfare, and safety is a top priority for this government, and these proposed amendments ensure that animals across the province can be treated with the compassion and care that they deserve. These changes are about providing clarity, understanding, and bringing Alberta in line and actually, in some cases, surpassing the rest of the country.

As I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, this legislation hasn't been updated in over 20 years. After extensive engagement with organizations such as the Alberta SPCA, Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, and many across the livestock industry, we felt it was necessary that we brought these changes forward, and these changes are a reflection of the vital feedback that we got from those individuals.

Now, I do want to comment that there have been some unsubstantiated attacks or claims by individuals on certain parts of our ag industry. That's why as well within this bill we put in general sporting activity as a reasonable and generally accepted practice. It's important that we defend those that we know have the highest standards of care for animals. That includes equestrian jumping, horse racing, and rodeo, just as some examples. These activities are ingrained in Alberta's cultural heritage, Mr. Speaker, and Albertans involved in sporting activities uphold, as I mentioned, the highest standards in animal care and safety. Families spend years conditioning and caring for their animals long before they enter competition. It's important to establish clear understanding for these activities and the standards of care that accompany them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if passed, the bill will also improve outcomes for animals in distress, a key component of this bill. When an animal is in distress, it's important for peace officers to act quickly and efficiently and have the tools to do so. Peace officer authorities are there to relieve distress and gain compliance when needed, and this will be expanded within the bill, most notably by enabling them to issue corrective action orders to a person responsible for an animal and to subsequently inspect to ensure compliance with those orders. It also enables them to revoke those orders once compliance has been achieved. It will also allow officers to intervene earlier, ensuring that intervention is timely and not reactive. Third, Bill 22 enhances compliance tools and modernizes inspection and investigation authorities. The bill also expands the range of locations that are responsible for the proper care of animals. This includes modern settings such as shelters, facilities involved in online animal sales, and animal-related service providers such as boarding, grooming, and training establishments. These updates ensure that enforcement keeps pace with how animals are housed, sold, and cared for today.

A new offence would also be created to deter and address intentionally false complaints. When a complainant seeks to weaponize the animal protection system, possibly related to an interpersonal dispute, this wastes precious enforcement resources and can lower overall trust in the system.

The Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026, will also strengthen the use of prohibition orders to protect animals from ongoing distress. Currently there is no mechanism to prevent animals from being returned to situations where they may face further harm other than seeking a court order. Bill 22 addresses this gap by expanding the availability of a prohibition order beyond conviction. These orders allow for restrictions or prohibitions on animal ownership in cases where there is an ongoing risk of distress. They are not punitive in nature. They are preventative and focused on protecting animals. The bill also creates an offence for violating a prohibition order and allows for the seizure of animals held in contravention of such an order.

Importantly, Mr. Speaker, Bill 22 ensures that prohibition orders issued in other provinces and territories are recognized and enforced in Alberta. This would position Alberta as a leader in this in Canada and the only one doing it. It's important that we make sure that we have that in place because this prevents individuals from evading restrictions by simply moving to Alberta.

This falls in line with the next set of changes in Bill 22, which updates the penalty structure to reflect current realities. The existing maximum fine of \$20,000 is no longer a sufficient deterrent. Bill 22 increases the maximum penalty to \$250,000 and introduces the possibility of up to 12 months of imprisonment. These changes ensure that penalties are meaningful, proportionate, and capable of deterring noncompliance, particularly given the scale of some operations. Bill 22 also extends the time limit for laying charges to two years, which allows for more fulsome investigation. Providing enforcement officers with that necessary timeline will help them do their job better.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, these changes represent a comprehensive and balanced approach. They strengthen protections for animals, support responsible owners and producers, and ensure enforcement officers have the tools they need to act effectively and in a timely manner.

In closing, Bill 22 reflects the expectations of Albertans. It modernizes the legislation, closes critical gaps, and reinforces our commitment to animal health and welfare while respecting Alberta's unique agricultural and cultural context. I encourage all members of this Assembly to support Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any speakers on this bill? Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and to speak to the Animal Protection Amendment Act, an act that I believe is very important for us to be having this conversation on and an act that's been waited on by many stakeholders across the province, with hopes that we would be able to strengthen protections for animals across the province. As the minister has said, this legislation is 20 years in review, and it's something that I think matters to many people.

12:20

So I rise today, and I rise in support of this bill. I think that there are some things that can be strengthened, and I think there are some questions that have come up in the consultations that I've been doing across the province in regard to this. One of the things that I found very interesting is that there are sections within the areas that are interfacing with the Animal Protection Act that tend to get forgotten, and I think the ministry may have forgotten to speak to them as well, and that would be our zoos specifically.

Although they may not be directly enforcing the Animal Protection Act, the Calgary Zoo, the Edmonton zoo, and then a few of our rural community zoos do take care of animals, do have interface with the Animal Protection Act when people are concerned about what they may be observing when they go to visit. They weren't consulted or even told that this bill was coming forward, and so I would encourage, before I move into the other pieces, that the minister maybe have a conversation to talk about their experiences.

What I will say is that even in the conversations that I've had, the partnerships that the zoos have with enforcement officers when they come out and bring up concerns that may have been brought to them by the public: those relationships are always in a positive way. Those relationships are really good, so there aren't a lot of concerns there, but they do have a lot of knowledge and understanding,

especially when it comes to exotic animals and some of the concerns that have come up through that.

Now, in saying that, Mr. Speaker, I do think there've been some good changes that the act has brought forward. I think the definition of distress was probably the issue that came up the most in the consultations that I had with stakeholders. We recognize that animals do actually have feelings and that they do respond when put in high-stress situations.

Anybody that has rescued an animal from a rescue – I have rescued all my dogs through my life. I can say that every time I have adopted an animal, they do come with quirks that are related to experiences that they experienced prior to coming to live with me, and they do respond with anxiety and different things. I do tend to adopt high-energy breeds, though, so some of that may be a predisposition of the breeds that I tend to hang out with. I like Siberian huskies. I also like German shepherds and Malinois, and they have a lot of energy and a lot of personality and a lot of opinions, for sure, so sometimes it could just be me.

Going back to the act, though, I do think that there have been other concerns that have been brought forward to me by individuals that, I think, are just looking for clarity from the minister. That continues to be around some of the concerns around auction houses and some practices that have been brought up specifically around more exotic animals: where these animals are coming from, what kind of practices are being done. What is that interaction, and how is that enforcement being brought forward?

There are concerns – and this may be being addressed in this piece of legislation; however, when I read the legislation, I don't clearly see it – that there is going to still be that opportunity for the Alberta SPCA to be able to look at some of those facilities where we have had repeated individuals reaching out about things that they have observed. Just where are these animals coming from, and how is it that some of these animals are even coming into province? They would not typically be animals that would be seen here, and some of the concern is about that.

I will also say that in my consultation there is still some clarity needed in regard to holding periods and outcomes. Hold periods can be seven days. Previously, purebred animals had different holding periods than nonpurebred animals. Some of them would be IDed. There is the proposed increase from three to seven days, which is going to extend how long purebred animals are held in shelters. There is some question around whether that is a necessity or not, and why is it that purebred animals are seen to be required to be held longer than – Alberta specials is what I call them – nonpurebred animals. There's some clarity. Obviously, that's regulation, but that is one question that's being asked.

One other question around regulation is pathways to permanency, where an owner is identified but return may not be in the animal's best interest. It's still unclear about who gets to decide that and how that decision is actually going to be made and what is the regulation outline in regard to decision-making. Are there going to be clear policies in place that are going to outline how that is going to be decided and then enforced, how is that going to then be communicated, and how long is that going to take?

So, obviously, consistency in application. As with the current legislation, interpretation is key. What is the abandonment definition going to look like? What are custody decisions going to be around regulation and ensuring that there's consistency? We have amazing partnerships. The city of Edmonton works with the Edmonton humane society with their bylaw partnerships. Calgary, obviously, their humane society: the way that they have enforcement is that it's built into the Calgary humane society in the same building. Across the province different societies are doing that, and of course, again,

that is old language. This legislation will change it from “society” to “caregivers,” so I will have to adjust my language.

Because of the fact that we have different municipalities who are taking on this responsibility through bylaw and then we have the provincial SPCA who is doing investigations through the Alberta SPCA and then smaller municipalities who have also tried to take on some form of a role, there is concern around consistency of training, consistency of response, and then, of course, those holding period days, the permanency pieces. A question that has been asked: is there a way to help support more consistent training and ensure that there's more consistency across the board?

I would say that there were comments made around – you know, just because the act is changing, the government doesn't see that there's going to be, really, an increase in calls nor is there going to be a requirement or pressure put on the current investigating officers. I would say that I don't know if that's necessarily the case. I do think that the government needs to acknowledge that if they're going to be reviewing the act, they need to be putting some kind of support and funding behind that. A one-year funding model for the Alberta SPCA is not a long-term solution, nor is it good planning in regard to ensuring that we have enough investigators that they have the capacity to go out and train.

We know that in some jurisdictions RCMP officers are responding to some of these situations, and this is not their priority. This is not something that they focus on, so understanding how that legislation works is something that could be strengthened. As we see a shift with this government to move to another policing model, I guess the question would be: what does that look like? Who's going to be taking on these responsibilities?

One of the big things that continuously comes out is when we're talking about big animals. One of the ongoing concerns that we hear about more often than not are horses, and it's because horses, one, are very difficult to transport if they're in need of rescue, and they are expensive to house and to feed if they are ever taken in under a rescue. They create significant burden for associations across the province that are doing this at a volunteer basis and require a ton of fundraising and support.

12:30

Also, they tend to require some form of assistance more often than not to be able to enter onto property to remove those animals from certain sites, which is conflictual, and at times the question is: who actually gets to hold that responsibility to be able to enter? So I think as we move into regulation, clarifying that, around who actually has the right to enter and that authority, is very important.

You know, it's interesting because of course the history of this act is actually that we were protecting animals before we were protecting kids. The child protection act in Alberta was actually based on the Animal Protection Act. When we initially started, that's what the basis of this was. Obviously, the child protection act has now moved past by significant measures to protect children, and of course the Animal Protection Act did not keep up with that.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

One thing that is consistent, Mr. Speaker, is the right of entry and the right of who gets to actually access a residence. When I worked in child protection, I had to respond to residences where I had asked for police assistance because I knew that the address I was going into was not the safest environment, which is why I was going there, because, obviously, the kids in that environment were not safe. I remember going with the officer, and I had the court authority, the apprehension order, which meant I had the authority to enter, and the officer saying to me: you've got to go first because you have authority. I was just like: you know what house we're going into,

right? So there is this weird piece attached sometimes to entry of property that would be very good to have defined through the regulation in the act around who actually can go first. As a social worker going first was not always the best experience, and backup was definitely required.

The other piece that I think would be great for consideration for the bill is timelines for ownership decisions and how to manage and avoid unnecessary delays in care and rehoming. Will additional guidance or standardized approaches be introduced to support consistent interpretation across agencies, which I've spoken to already? To what extent will outstanding details, particularly those affecting care and custody, be addressed through regulation? For example, measures such as restrictions on cosmetic adjustments or unnecessary procedures such as docking tails, specialty ears for rotties, that kind of thing: are those going to be considered through regulation?

The recognition of prohibition orders from other provinces. Is there going to be a discussion about how we're going to ensure communication between other jurisdictions? If someone has had issues in B.C. and they're allowed to come to Alberta, do we know about them? How do we ensure that some of that isn't being across borders? Or if we're aware of someone who may be in another jurisdiction, are we somehow creating a system to communicate? And then, obviously, are there any other plans to encourage broader interprovincial alignment to ensure that these protections are applied consistently across all jurisdictions, B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, et cetera?

I do recognize that most of these are regulation, but these are questions that have come forward from stakeholders. I think I'll leave it at that for now. I'm sure as we move forward there are going to be more questions that will probably come up as I hear more from folks, but I'll happily leave it at that for now.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pleasure to rise this afternoon on a day when folks are thinking about a nasty drive on highway 2 once again. We wish everybody a safe journey as they travel to other parts of Alberta and other Albertans as they travel on these highways, including transport trucks, which are transporting live animals throughout the province for various different purposes, to transfer them from one farm to another or across the border for finishing and then back across the border and over possibly to packing plants.

Mr. Speaker, every Albertan has got a connection to animals and animal husbandry, whether they realize it or not. We all are eating food; not all of us are eating meat, but a large majority of Albertans consume meat and meat products. That necessarily means that we should have an interest in how those animals are raised and transported and processed once they are killed for food. I think that's something that doesn't touch the minds of a lot of Albertans when they think about the food on their plate and how it gets there, and it should be more top of mind for more Albertans than it actually is.

The Animal Protection Act, I think, addresses a number of concerns with respect to animals and their care and their protection in Alberta that many Albertans don't think about, especially from the agricultural standpoint. From an animal ownership standpoint most are aware. Of course, as we all know, as MLAs we'd be door-knocking regularly in our constituencies and as you door-knock or ring the doorbell, the majority of the doors we contact have a pet response. Whether it be a cat or a dog or other form of animal, a large majority of Alberta households own a pet.

That, of course, tells us why this legislation should be as important as it is. That it hasn't been updated in 20 years, Mr. Speaker, is a bit surprising. However, we'll welcome the update to the legislation now and support it by and large. There are some concerns, of course, with every piece of legislation, and our job on this side of the House is to highlight those concerns on behalf of Albertans, and I'll do that today.

I also want to let it be known that in my experience in past life, I've had some experience on farms, when a youngster, helping to castrate pigs, little baby piglets, and killing chickens. We used to kill chickens at my uncle's farm out by Skaro, around Bruderheim. Every year we'd kill 125 chickens in one day. The first year, of course, we didn't have the chicken plucker, so it was all done by hand. My father would chop the heads off, let them finish their time on this earth, grab them, and we doused them in the hot water and then plucked them by hand. Of course, we'd have to eviscerate by hand as well, using well water that was pulled up from the well by a rope and pail. It's the coldest water you've ever had your hand in, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you've seen that yourself.

That process of processing chickens by hand, of course, leads one to really get a good understanding of the importance of making sure that the animals are well cared for so they become high-quality food and could feed our family over the winter. With six kids, of course, that was what we ate, or for a good part of the winter. Work on the farms and providing farm food for our family with our relatives was my earlier introduction. We got to learn how to milk cows on my cousin's farm. Of course, they looked after their animals as best they possibly could because that was their livelihood.

Later on, Mr. Speaker, I worked at Canada Packers on the cleanup crew. Part of my job in cleaning up the packing plant was ensuring that the animals that arrived dead from the transport trucks, which was a regular occurrence, usually every shift, particularly pigs – there would be one, two, or three pretty large hogs that would have died in transport, some of them a day or two before they actually arrived at the plant. They were pretty large and bloated, green, gangrenous dead pigs. The employees on that shift would be drawing straws to see who would be the one taking out the daggers to quarter that pig because they were too big to put down the grinder in one piece. So I definitely know how difficult it can be for transportation of animals.

12:40

That's something that I'm sure this bill touches on as well, Mr. Speaker: making sure that not only on farm and while they're being raised but while they're being transported and also while they're being held at the slaughterhouses, their treatment needs to be overseen and regularly inspected to make sure that these animals are cared for right until the time of slaughter so that they're healthy not only for their well-being but for the well-being of the food products which result as a result of the processing of that carcass for meat.

Another thing that I also had some concerns with is the boarding of animals. This bill does address it, and I'm happy about that. Most of us who've had pets and would take a holiday and found a need to board an animal at a kennel are familiar with the term "kennel cough." Almost invariably pets that I've had boarded at kennels would be arriving back home after we came back from a holiday sporting a healthy kennel cough, or an unhealthy kennel cough, I should say. I'm happy to hear about regulations now capturing boarding of animals within it so that the inspection can cover the kennels where animals are boarded and minimize the sickness that is pretty prevalent in these boarding kennels as a result of many animals congregating together and transmitting respiratory infection from one to the other.

That said, the concern that I have about all of this, of course, centres around the enforcement capacity that the legislation may or may not

improve. It's unclear as to whether or not the government's intention is to make sure that with the increased number of regulations and the capturing of other sectors of the animal husbandry area, including kennels and looking at increased oversight over transportation and on farms and on farm access – the stakeholders involved in the industry and the raising of animals have expressed, including the SPCA, that there will be increased calls as a result of this legislation. They welcome the legislation, but they do want to highlight that there will be increased calls for service.

Therefore, it's necessary to ask the question, Mr. Speaker: will there be an increased budget, and who will actually provide the enforcement of the new requirements under the Animal Protection Act as proposed in Bill 22? The protections that are guaranteed under the act or are offered under the act are disconnected, it appears, from the resources that the government is willing to provide for enforcement.

We're concerned about that, because it happens in other areas where a government will bring forward legislation and say, "We're changing the laws, we're increasing the penalties; there are going to be restrictions on what a person can or cannot do to protect an animal and to make sure that their welfare is being looked after," yet if there's not any capacity to actually have human beings, inspectors go out into the field to make sure that the rules are being followed and obeyed and we're relying on a complaint-based enforcement mechanism as we have in the past rather than a proactive-based enforcement mechanism, which does take more people and cost more money, it's dubious that we'll actually see an improvement in the actual performance measures that this government, I believe, hopes to make; that is, the improvement in the health and welfare of animals and the decrease of the devastating stories we hear about puppy mills and abuse of animals in people's homes or in the trade of animals.

The actual results that we seek, Mr. Speaker, are not found in the words on the paper of the bill; they're found on the ground in terms of how indeed the reporting is done and how the response is made to infractions when they are discovered. If indeed the animals that are found to have been abused or improperly cared for cannot be visited or the sites can't be visited by enforcement officers of some kind, then of course there's not going to be any charges laid. There won't be any sanction against the offender, there won't be a process because there's no way to enforce the regulations or the laws that the government is imposing under the improvements to the Animal Protection Amendment Act that we're debating here today.

That's the biggest concern, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the SPCA, received over 3,000 calls to help animals, carried out 2,266 investigations, helped over 8,800 animals. They don't include calls in Edmonton and Calgary, but those are what the numbers are now. So with the increase anticipated, because of this legislation, in calls for service, the question must be asked: will those calls be answered? It's anticipated that this legislation will result in a need for more enforcement capacity. It doesn't seem to be addressed clearly if the government is intending to increase funding for that or what capacity that will actually be. Will it be a greater number of bylaw officers? Will other policing agencies be asked to shoulder some of the responsibility? If that's the case, then one asks: what specialized training will those other enforcement agencies require in order to shoulder that task of being responsible for enforcing the bylaws and regulations under this act?

When you get into a situation, Mr. Speaker, where you have very many different species of animals either being raised or kept, whether it be pets at home, whether they be livestock, farm animals, horses, pigs, cattle, it could be fish and fish farms and so forth, it could be bees – bees require care and attention, and they need to be looked after and shouldn't be disposed of or treated with disrespect

– all of those have a large spectrum of technical knowledge which one would require to properly care for the animals, and to enforce the regulations, one needs a similar spectrum of training as well. It's questionable whether some of the law enforcement agencies which currently are or may be called upon to actually enforce these regulations will have the adequate training. Of course, training costs money. Will the enforcement officers that are either newly hired or those that are currently in the field be updated as to the training that they are expected to take so that they can properly enforce the regulations?

I know that when we were killing 125 chickens on a Saturday on my uncle's farm out by Bruderheim, we followed rules and regulations, as far as those that we knew at the time, to humanely kill the animal, to make sure that the animals as they were raised had proper food and water and shelter and were looked after and protected from predators, for their own well-being and also to make sure the food supply was safe.

Mr. Speaker, we do need to know about the minister's and the government's expectations with respect to training and with respect to enforcement capacity.

With that, I'll sit down and let somebody else speak.

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

Mr. Haji: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 22 and I rise in support of the bill, but I want to highlight a number of areas that I see as root causes that are leading to the consequences that we see and we are trying to address, which have not been factored into the debate so far. I feel like I need to highlight the root causes that – the problem that Bill 22 is attempting to address is important, something that the members of the House need to take into consideration and then see what else needs to be done. Then addressing, when there is distress or there is abandonment: what are the causes of those situations?

12:50

As New Democrats on this side of the House we support the improvement of this outdated legislation that protects animals. Many of these changes introduced through this bill better align Alberta with other jurisdictions.

This is a bill that confronts a growing but too often overlooked consequence of the current affordability challenge that Albertans are facing. Mr. Speaker, when people's affordability is tested, we see the ripple effect not only on people, but we also see it in animals. We see widespread neglect, abandonment, and distress of animals. This is because their owners are challenged with the current cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, across our communities families are facing a rising cost of living. Housing, groceries, utilities: all are increasing, and many simply cannot keep up. Over 1 million are struggling with utility costs; 22 per cent of Albertans pay the rate of last resort, which means that they pay higher than we do. By the way our policies are designed, those happen to be the ones who are financially challenged. If you think about it, those who will require some sort of support for utilities because of their income, because of their credit history, because of other challenges are the ones that happen to pay more than we members of this House pay on a monthly basis. Over 1 million are being priced out on housing. Housing affordability and rent are a challenge. Nearly 1 million are without access to family physicians, and over 1 million are facing food insecurity. These are the numbers.

Food banks, poverty reports across the country demonstrate that people cannot afford the cost of living, and this has a ripple effect

on animals. The animals are then distressed as well. While I have to acknowledge that the bill is trying to make an attempt to address some of the problems in terms of how we tackle that, it fails to deal with some of the reasons why such distress is more common now.

There are Albertans making impossible choices every single day. In these circumstances even the most compassionate pet owners are being pushed to their limits. Again, that has a consequence. Veterinary bills, food costs, grooming, and basic care are no longer routine responsibilities. They are becoming unaffordable luxuries rather than necessities for these animals. This has a consequence, again, Mr. Speaker. These results are heartbreaking. Animal shelters report people are dropping off their animals. Rescue organizations are stretched. Pets are being surrendered at a rate that is not commonly seen. Some are abandoned outright. There are factors that are leading to these situations that people are facing. These animals who depend entirely on people for care are becoming silent victims of the economic crisis that they have not caused at all.

We must be honest in this Chamber. This did not happen in a vacuum. This happened because of policy choices. This government has failed to adequately address the rising cost of living, and now we are seeing the consequences, not only in human hardship but animal suffering as well. This is not simply an animal welfare issue, Mr. Speaker. This is a societal issue that we need to tackle. When affordability collapses, even the most compassionate among us are pushed to the brink, and when compassion is strained, the most vulnerable, both humans and animals, are the ones who suffer the most. Usually the most vulnerable are the ones that see the first consequences and suffering that is caused by socioeconomic factors. If we are serious about addressing this problem, then we must confront some of the root causes that lead to this, affordability itself.

Mr. Speaker, we should be addressing the affordability crisis and see it as a consequential issue that impacts people and their love of animals. We should be tackling the growing rates of poverty in our province. We should be ensuring that families can afford housing. We should be ensuring that families can afford food and, yes, the basic care of the animals that they dearly love so that they don't have to face abandonment, they don't have to face distress. We don't have to talk about policing because the root causes are what we need to tackle alongside some of the other measures that we have to take.

While Bill 22 recognizes an important symptom, despite speaking in support of the bill, I also have to note that it fails to address these underlying problems. I don't expect that the bill will be amended to address this, but I want members of the House on both sides to take note of what the causes are and how we need to tackle the problem. Mr. Speaker, Bill 22 recognizes, as I said, these important symptoms, but we're not dealing or we're not meaningfully reducing the cost pressures that families are facing. We're not providing a long-term solution to the poverty that we see within Alberta families. We're not stabilizing housing affordability, nor we are easing the burden of essential living costs.

Now, it's obvious in terms of cost of living, specifically when gas prices are climbing, that without addressing these root causes, we are merely treating the symptoms while the crisis continues to grow. Mr. Speaker, you can't police yourself out of the societal issues that have caused the socioeconomic factors. If we truly want to reduce animal neglect, abandonment, distress, then we must ensure that people themselves are not pushed into the crisis because people are the ones that take care of these animals. When people are supported, then animals are supported alongside as well.

Of course, there will be still some issues that we need to deal with, our law enforcement and others, that we need to tackle, but we have to look into the root causes. I urge this government to go

beyond the surface-level solutions. I ask the government to commit to real meaningful action on affordability because that's where the lasting change begins.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any others that wish to speak?

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation waives opportunity to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a second time]

**1:00 Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 21

Interprovincial Trade Mutual Recognition Act

The Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate – Madam Chair. I just can't seem to get those straight these days.

It is a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 21, the Interprovincial Trade Mutual Recognition Act. What I will say off the top: this is a good piece of legislation. It is looking to do some good things. In particular, this is going to be good for small businesses in Alberta, and that's a refreshing change. I have to say that the record of this government for helping small businesses in Alberta has been relatively poor while, unfortunately, their record for hurting small businesses in Alberta has been quite good.

Let me talk about that a little bit, explain how this government has been challenging for small businesses in the province. You know, we look at how they have continued to raise costs for small businesses. Think about insurance rates, Madam Chair. We know that Alberta insurance rates have been fluctuating between the highest and the second-highest in the country under this government ever since they removed the rate cap that was in place in 2019. In fact, it's estimated that rates in Alberta went up by around 35 per cent just up to 2024.

Now, the UCP chose to let that just go on. They dragged their feet for years. They did nothing to help individuals and, of course, did nothing to help businesses because so many businesses rely on vehicles. For fleet vehicles, sole proprietors who have to get around, who have to go to different job sites, those costs went through the roof and drove up costs for small businesses for years. Then what was his government's solution? Well, this government's solution was to come in with a piece of legislation that then said: we'll let your rates go up by 15 per cent for the next two years. The first point where this government has been hard on small businesses, raised their costs, made it more difficult for them despite the benefits that we may see from Bill 21.

Second, utility costs, Madam Chair. In 2019 we saw the UCP also remove the price cap on electricity, and we saw skyrocketing utility bills for businesses across the province. Utility rates as much as quadrupled during that period at points. Now, of course, we did see the government bring in some legislation, but that wasn't until 2024. Again, for years small businesses in this province struggled with those soaring utility rates with no help from this government, even through the midst of the pandemic and all the other blows that they endured. Indeed, as my colleague from Calgary-Glenmore said

at the time of the legislation: they closed the barn door after the horses had already bolted.

A little more currently, Madam Chair, we think about fuel costs. We have soaring fuel costs right now due to the U.S. President's war on Iran. Now, what we know is that, of course, is going to be driving up costs for everyone in our province, including businesses. You know, conservatives love to talk about all the impacts of high fuel costs, how that drives up the price of absolutely everything. Indeed, the federal cousins of this government are talking right now about the need to reduce fuel taxes to support individuals and businesses.

In fact, the government did do something the last time we were in this kind of a situation. When Russia invaded Ukraine back in 2022, they introduced a fuel tax relief program – that was before the current Premier – that could reduce the amount of tax collected up to the full 13 cents per litre depending on where the price of oil was, so there've been an awful lot of folks who've been asking if this government would provide that relief again, chief amongst them a lot of businesses for whom this is driving up costs. Even the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, so we're not just talking about crazy socialists here, Madam Chair. We're talking about folks that are well inside the conservative camp that are calling on the government to pause the provincial fuel tax.

Now, what was the Premier's response to this? Even if we took off 13 cents, well, the price would still be high. Literally. That was her response on her radio program on Saturday: won't make enough of a difference; why should we bother? The Finance minister, we just heard him in the House today, said: well we don't want to be too reactive to the needs of Albertans. I think being reactive to the needs of Albertans is precisely what government is supposed to do, Madam Chair. This is yet another area where this government is failing businesses by refusing to take the steps they could to help them reduce costs.

Another one, Madam Chair, as we talk again about Bill 21, the Interprovincial Trade Mutual Recognition Act, which is about supporting trade and, in supporting trade, supporting small businesses. Unfortunately, another area that we've seen this government fail small businesses is public safety. Indeed, when I raised this concern in this House, about the impacts of public safety and social disorder on businesses here in my constituency, the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services stood and called it a made up NDP crisis.

The fact is, Madam Chair, that last summer, ahead of the fall municipal elections, the Alberta business council surveyed all of their members, everyone from the top CEOs of some of the largest companies in our province to the owners of local businesses in rural areas. You know what they found? Ninety-four per cent of business leaders were concerned about public safety and crime in their communities, and they ranked it as one of their top priorities, wanting to see government take action to tackle crime, invest in mental health and addiction supports, and work to keep public spaces clean and welcoming. The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce has called for the same.

This government continues to take next to no action. A lot of performative steps, a lot of half measures, but they are failing to provide the supports that our municipalities need. They're cutting funding for many of the organizations that provide preventative services that help deal with issues like social disorder across the province, and that same minister that called it a made up NDP crisis mocked the call from Alberta Municipalities and others for an increase in FCSS funding that would help address these issues. Now, the federal government, which this government loves to yell about, just announced yesterday that they're giving over \$600,000 to the city of Edmonton to invest in those same preventative

services. That's how you help small businesses, Madam Chair. This government isn't interested.

You know, the best example, especially as we talk about interprovincial trade, Madam Chair, is what this government has done in terms of increasing red tape and fees for businesses. In fact, this is something I heard about from businesses directly right here in my constituency.

Last year, Madam Chair, January of last year, we had the announcement of a co-operative agreement, so we had something good happen. Between the governments of Alberta and B.C. there was a co-operative agreement announced that allowed for direct-to-consumer wine shipping between B.C. and Alberta. Now, the summer before, the Premier stood and she said: "Hey, this deal is going to be a win for Albertans and British Columbians. This is going to promise more market access for businesses, that's going to be more prosperity for Albertans and British Columbians." But you know what? That deal was barely in place for a couple of months, and this government turned around and just wiped it out.

They did this by introducing this new wine markup system and something called the ad valorem wine tax. What that did, Madam Chair, is it effectively added an additional percentage-based markup on all wine bottles that were over a certain price, starting at \$11.25 a bottle. Immediately people started speaking up from the business community. B.C. wineries noted that with that in place, Alberta was now effectively putting a higher tax on B.C. wine than the United States. We'll recall that this was right at the time when our friends in the United States – well, let's not besmirch all Americans with the actions of their President – when President Trump was talking about annexing our country, driving up tariffs on everything. We were working to try to support each other as Canadians, and this government elected to start charging Canadian wineries more than Americans to import into Alberta. Under the U.S. policy at that time Canadian wine was subjected to a 25 per cent tariff. This government put in a \$4.11 per litre markup and then, with the ad valorem tax of up to 15 per cent, they put their tax range into the range of 26 to 28 per cent for many wines from B.C.

1:10

Who did that hurt, Madam Chair? That hurt restaurants. They were already facing, of course, the rising cost of utilities, the rising cost of food. They were already dealing with the fact that their guests were spending less due to inflation and their shrinking disposable income because, of course, this government has done next to nothing to help Albertans with their affordability issues. Then this government introduces a new tax which raises their costs even higher. Not just the restaurants, Madam Chair; it hurt workers.

Phoebe Fung from the Vin Room in Calgary, a quote from her: when I talk to my fellow restaurateurs, they're saying they're cutting hours because you have to find the cost reduction somewhere. Not only did this government hurt businesses outside of Alberta – despite talking about how much they want to reduce trade barriers, they raised them – they hurt Alberta restaurants who are struggling, then, with the higher costs this government imposed on them, and then they hurt Alberta workers by forcing those restaurants to cut the hours. [interjections]

The government members are chirping now because they don't like to admit when they made a mistake. They love to bring up the history of everyone else, Madam Chair, but they can't admit when they've done something stupid, and the fact is they did something incredibly stupid here. [interjection] The minister of forestry is chirping in now. He's been sitting there in that government for I don't know how long, and he knows precisely how many stupid decisions they've made at the cabinet table. He's been there to vote for them. The fact is that they hurt Albertans and Alberta businesses.

The Alberta Hospitality Association: their comment on the policy, that I can only assume was supported by the minister of forestry, said, "Policy decisions ripple. When they hit small businesses, especially restaurants already on the brink, the consequences are real: job loss, business closures, and an even tougher economic recovery." You know how they wrapped up their statement? They said: what we'd just really like is to have a seat at the table. Isn't that just a kicker, Madam Chair? All of those impacts this government had, all of the ways they hurt businesses, hurt Albertans, hurt trade, and they had never consulted on the policy, not only ignorant in the decision; tone deaf in its creation. Of course, we know that's the track record of this government. This is not a government that actually consults with anyone before they take actions that do harm.

It also hurts small businesses that deal in the wine industry, some of them here in my own constituency. Madam Chair, I can tell you that those businesses were speaking out before the policy passed this House. It's not like the government didn't know. It's not like they weren't warned. As soon as that bill hit the table, the wine industry, the restaurant industry, the hospitality industry mobilized to warn this government to back down, and they didn't. You know what? That hurt Canadian wineries.

Again, we're talking here about an interprovincial trade bill, which is taking positive steps. Let me be clear. We will be supporting this bill, but it's important that we recognize this government's record. They hurt Canadian wineries because – you know what, Madam Chair? – virtually no Canadian wines were priced below the \$11.25 threshold they set. That meant, then, that they were adding a price pressure, an incentive not to buy Canadian wines; to buy instead mass-produced American wines and wines from other countries because those fell below the threshold. Restaurants that were trying to support Canadian wineries, many of which were already struggling, were hit even harder. The response from the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction: well, we're still the most tax friendly and open jurisdiction in Canada. Cold and callous words when your policies that you're enacting are making it harder for businesses to be able to function.

You know what? The best part, Madam Chair – the best part – the government estimated they would bring in \$22 million to \$23 million a year. You know how much they brought in? Ten million, so less than half of what they projected. But you know what? The worst part is not that loss of government revenue. The fact is that 50 per cent below – that prediction was based on the number of bottles of wine that had been sold by restaurants, by businesses in the previous year. That meant sales were cut by about 50 per cent. A 50 per cent cut in those sales for Alberta businesses, restaurants, stores, traders at a time we were trying to boost economic activity.

A final comment on this. I want to quote Mr. Al Drinkle from Calgary's Metrovino Fine Wines: I'm honestly exhausted from dealing with this to such an extent over the last year; I feel like I have my real job back; I can go back to selling wine 100 per cent of the time instead of the constant lobbying that ate up so much of my time. I will give the government credit, Madam Chair. It took them a year, but they listened. They backed off on a bad policy. But folks like Mr. Drinkle had to spend half their time, instead of running their business, lobbying this government because they refused to listen to them before they forced a bad policy through. We had a 50 per cent loss of income on the sale of these bottles of wine amongst Alberta businesses and businesspeople.

At least now we have Bill 21 where, despite this government's many failures, the costs they've driven up for businesses, the way they've increased fees and taxes, red tape, we've got a small step forward. I certainly hope that with Bill 21 we're going to see more of this kind of action and a lot less of what

we've seen from this government in terms of small businesses in the last three to four years.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and offer a few comments on Bill 21. Before I get started, I want to just highlight the fact that our caucus is going to support this bill. We believe that this is a good piece of legislation. The only reason we're speaking is because we would rather be here talking about this interprovincial trade act than go home for the long weekend, I guess. It's part of my duty as the Official Opposition to keep the machinery of government moving rather than letting everybody go home early for the weekend. So you're welcome. You're welcome.

I want to build on a little bit of what my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre said in his comments. He talked about some of the negative effects that the government policy has had on economic growth. Of course, it's important to remember that the goal of this Interprovincial Trade Mutual Recognition Act is to increase economic growth in Alberta and within Canada by implementing interprovincial trade agreements and reducing those barriers to entry for products coming from outside of Alberta and for those products being exported out of Alberta to other parts of the country. My friend from Edmonton-City Centre was quite eloquent in talking about a number of the ways that the government has turned around and taken damaging actions to prevent the economy from growing.

I just thought it would be interesting to talk about this government's record of economic failure over the last seven years that it's been in office. Looking here at the Alberta economic dashboard, which publishes data that's collected by the government of Alberta from various sources, it's interesting. When we were in government – the NDP was in government in 2018 – the gross domestic product per capita in Alberta hit a high of \$75,000 and change per person, and ever since the UCP was elected, it has steadily declined. It was \$71,000 per person in 2024. I'll be interested to see what the 2025 numbers are, but I can't imagine that the UCP would be selling themselves as good stewards of the economy when we've seen GDP per capita drop by \$4,000 per person over the five years that they were in government from 2019 to 2024. You know, there's nothing there that they should use to support their claim that they're good stewards of the economy.

1:20

Again, by measures of annual capital investment by province in 2025 we were well below the Canadian average in terms of how much capital investment was created. In fact, we were only above Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, which actually saw overall year-to-year decreases in capital investment, so we were the third-last province in the entire country when it came to capital investment in 2025.

Of course, the government likes to pat itself on the back when it comes to allegedly creating jobs. I just want to remind all members of the House that when we left office in 2019, the unemployment rate in Alberta was 6.4 per cent, and it's now hovering around 6.5 per cent. Over the last seven years this government has done absolutely nothing to put more people to work. In spite of everything that they claim to have done to spur the economy, you know, cutting taxes and cutting minimum wage and allegedly reducing red tape and all of these things that they claim to do, it's had no measurable impact on the economy. In fact, the economy is now objectively worse than it was when we left office in 2019. [interjection]

I hear the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills laughing out loud. Obviously, the facts aren't enough to shake her from her delusions about her image of the Alberta economy. Go check it out. It's on the economic dashboard. Everything that I've said here is absolutely – it's right here.

Ms Hoffman: Factual?

Mr. Schmidt: It's factual.

Like, maybe I lie, but the numbers don't lie. I would never ... [interjections] Right. Yeah. Raise a point of order. Oh, sure. What a shocking double standard. If I had said that about the members opposite, they would have all jumped out of their seats immediately. But because I say it about myself: "Oh, that's fine"? Hypocrites. Hypocrites, all of you. No.

The point that I was making is that the economy is objectively worse now than it was in 2019, when the current government took over, and nothing that the government has tried to do to spur economic growth has actually improved ...

Mr. Yao: Thank your federal friends for that.

Mr. Schmidt: Oh, now it's the federal government's responsibility, which is weird because all provinces have the same federal government, at least that's my understanding of the Constitution. Maybe that's not my friend from Fort McMurray's understanding of the Constitution. We all have the same federal government, yet economic growth in places like B.C. and Manitoba and Ontario and all of these other provinces has eclipsed Alberta's. In fact, Ontarians now earn more per week than Albertans do, which is the first time in living memory that that has happened. This is the first year in my life that Ontarians have started to bring home more money per week than workers in Alberta do. That is the legacy of this government.

What I think that this interprovincial trade act will do: will take some meaningful measures to increase economic growth here in Alberta, but I just want to close off by making some humble suggestions about other things the government could do to increase economic growth in Alberta. It's a pretty simple list. Just invest in education. Invest in education at both the primary, secondary, and at the postsecondary levels. You know, we have one of the lowest funded per student education systems in the entire country. We are now reaping what this government has sown with respect to its changes and its neglect of the education system in that our students are performing worse on provincial achievement tests than they ever have in this province. We are losing ground to other provinces in this country in terms of academic achievement for our elementary, junior high, and high school students, and we will continue to do so unless the government takes meaningful action to hire more teachers, hire more educational assistants, put more complexity teams into complex classrooms, and build more school spaces.

We need to make those fundamental investments in education because it's not just the resources that we have here in Alberta that build a strong economy, but it is smart people who are able to take advantage of the gifts that we have here in Alberta that are the actual drivers of the economy. If we neglect our children, we will fail to improve the economy.

That goes at the postsecondary level as well. This government has been extremely negligent in terms of supporting postsecondary education in the province. The training and the research and the development that happens at universities and colleges are of critical importance to growing an economy that's prepared for the future, and the government is simply letting future generations of Albertans down by not investing in the education that we need today.

I will close by summarizing my arguments. This government has a terrible track record of economic growth. I'm pleased to support

this piece of legislation because at least it will help heal the damage that this government has done a little bit. And if the government is serious about its goals of growing the Alberta economy, it would invest more heavily in education.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Have the wheels turned enough? Nope. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: The wheels on the bus, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much to my colleagues for speaking to this bill before I did. It gave me a chance to think of some titles that might be better. The current title is Bill 21, Interprovincial Trade Mutual Recognition Act. It could be called the Better Late Than Never Bill. It could be called the Helping Government Try to Speak out of Both Sides of Their Mouth Bill. Whatever it is, it's definitely not making things worse, which is my standard for supporting a bill in this House. It is not as high a standard as I might aspire to, but this definitely won't make things worse. I wish it would have made things a lot better.

Here it is. Just to review a little bit of why we're here today, in the fall, November, actually, the Premier and, I believe, the minister of jobs, technology – JETI . . .

Mr. Neudorf: Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration.

Ms Hoffman: Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration. Thank you.

The JETI minister and Premier agreed to the Alberta interprovincial free trade pact, so it's an act to implement the pact, and the federal government, of course, brought forward their One Canadian Economy Act.

When I was thinking about both of these initiatives, one of the main ways that I think a lot of Albertans I represent and Albertans in my family have tried to push back against the tariffs and the threat that we've been feeling very much from our partners to the south, or what were partners to the south, has been how we use our money, how we invest in our local economy, shopping local, these types of things. I know that grocery chains have definitely been saying "made in Canada" on lots of products. Some were made in Canada; some weren't, but they've been encouraging people to take this opportunity as part of a bigger country to act as one Canada and to support a Canadian economy.

One of the best areas to be able to do that, because we buy it every single week, or most of us do, is at the grocery store. I'm thinking about my uncle Larry as I read this bill. He was one of the first people I know who downloaded – there were a few apps that were created. Some were created by Albertan bright minds. He had one of the first ones that you could scan the code at the grocery store, you know, the barcode, the UPC code. You can scan the UPC code at the grocery store, and it would tell you how much of that product was Canadian or not Canadian and help you know if you were putting your money back into the local economy. It's been a lot of fun spending time at his house lately. Pretty much the only fruit he has is blueberries because it's so hard to get Canadian fruit this time of year.

1:30

I was thinking: wouldn't this be a great opportunity for us to tackle how a lot of us are trying to spend our money on supporting Canadian by supporting food products through interprovincial trade? It's one of the things that's exempt from this bill and one of the things that we have the most opportunity to use our money to engage in supporting the Canadian economy.

Other areas that are exempt are alcohol. We just spent some time supporting the wheels of motion of this place debating the Alberta

Whisky Act. Again, whisky is exempt from this act. We know that we've got a number of local cannabis producers. Cannabis is exempt from this act. Live animals, tobacco, and plants, as well, are exempt from this act. For some of those, I imagine – specifically, thinking about live animals, I'm also thinking about a speech given recently by my colleague from Edmonton-McClung talking about transport of animals. I get that some pieces might need to be exempt, but I think for a lot of Canadians we would like to see the local government, provincial government here in Alberta, the current one, do more to address barriers around a number of those other areas, particularly food.

One of the food products that I don't think we talked about enough in this place is our honey producers. Our bee farmers here in the province of Alberta produce . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Oh, we've talked about them a lot. You talk about them.

Ms Hoffman: I'll talk about those bee farmers. Thank you very much for the encouragement from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Bee farmers: in the Peace Country in particular, in northwestern Alberta, we have some of the best honey in the world and some of the largest producers in the world. It's one of the things that I often try to give to people who are visiting from out of town or out of province or out of country. Wouldn't it be great if we could open more opportunities – I know a lot of us buy Quebec maple syrup – if we could create more opportunities for people in Quebec to buy Alberta honey? I think that we have a lot of these types of food products that could be of benefit to our national brand and finding ways to continue to support a growing, strong Canadian economy, particularly when what have been our biggest customers in the past and what we've been the biggest customers to are not being good partners.

I also want to acknowledge that we do have some issues around integrating supply chains right across this country, and that's one of the reasons why under the NDP government we worked so hard to expand market access with things like oil by rail and creating more opportunities to be able to get our products from east to west as well.

What else did I highlight here that I want to make sure I touched on? Oh, the fact that here in Alberta we're one of the last jurisdictions to introduce this type of legislation. The current government said that one of the reasons why they've done that is because they wanted to take a chance to learn from other provinces and territories, and they've certainly had a lot of chances to learn.

Again, to keep this relatively succinct this afternoon, Madam Chair, Thursday afternoons are one of the best times of the week to be in the Legislature. I hope everyone is having a great time hearing these remarks on a bill that doesn't make things worse. Therefore, I will very happily vote in support of Bill 21 and thank my colleagues for contributing to this important debate. Hopefully, we can see legislation in the weeks or months to come that addresses alcohol, cannabis, food, some of those key areas that I know Alberta products could very happily bolster opportunities in other jurisdictions to support our local producers.

With that, Madam Chair, I will take my seat and look forward to hearing the remarks from my colleagues opposite.

The Chair: Is it time now? Are there others?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 21 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? That is carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 21.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. van Dijken: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 21.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

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

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I hope everybody has a wonderful long weekend. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, April 13, 2026.

Happy Easter to all.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 1:36 p.m. to Monday, April 13, at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 31st Legislature - 2nd Session (2025-2026)

Activity to Thursday, April 2, 2026

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — International Agreements Act (Smith)

First Reading — 6 (*Oct. 23, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 77-85 (*Oct. 28, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 109-18 (*Oct. 29, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 133-35 (*Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 184-87 (*Nov. 4, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 250-52 (*Nov. 6, 2025 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 26, 2025; SA 2025, cI-3.8]

Bill 2 — Back to School Act (Horner)

First Reading — 26 (*Oct. 27, 2025 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 27-28 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve.*), 29-35 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 35-36 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve.*), 37-45 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 45-46 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve.*), 47-54 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 28, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on October 28, 2025; SA 2025 cB-0.5]

Bill 3 — Private Vocational Training Amendment Act, 2025 (McDougall)

First Reading — 65 (*Oct. 28, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 135-37 (*Oct. 30, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 187-93 (*Nov. 4, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 215-16 (*Nov. 5, 2025 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 334-37 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 371-73 (*Nov. 19, 2025 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c17]

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

First Reading — 121 (*Oct. 30, 2025, passed*)

Second Reading — 193-201 (*Nov. 4, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 216-24 (*Nov. 5, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 289 (*Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned*), 323-34 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 408-13 (*Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 447-55 (*Nov. 24, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 26, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c18]

Bill 5 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Schow)

First Reading — 271 (*Nov. 17, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 322-23 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 407-08 (*Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 589-90 (*Nov. 27, 2025 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 11, 2025; SA 2025 c23]

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

First Reading — 150 (Nov. 3, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 252-60 (Nov. 6, 2025 aft., adjourned), 289-98 (Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned), 337-39 (Nov. 18, 2025 aft., adjourned), 341-51 (Nov. 18, 2025 eve., adjourned; amendments introduced), 455-65 (Nov. 24, 2025 eve., adjourned; amendments introduced), 504-14 (Nov. 25, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 681-86 (Dec. 2, 2025 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 713-21 (Dec. 3, 2025 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c19]

Bill 7 — Water Amendment Act, 2025 (Schulz)

First Reading — 121 (Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 224-35 (Nov. 5, 2025 aft., adjourned), 298-307 (Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned), 351-55 (Nov. 18, 2025 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 480-93 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 536-43 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned), 661-63 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c27]

Bill 8 — Utilities Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Neudorf)

First Reading — 478 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 663-70 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 737-44 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading — 766-71 (Dec. 4, 2025 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 11, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c26]

Bill 9 — Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Amery)

First Reading — 319-20 (Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Second Reading — 378-91 (Nov. 19, 2025 aft., adjourned), 493-501 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., adjourned), 549-54 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned), 676-79 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., adjourned), 815-22 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 855 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned), 873-80 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Third Reading — 891 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., adjourned on division), 892-900 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 11, 2025; SA 2025 c24]

Bill 10 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (Nally)

First Reading — 271 (Nov. 17, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 374-78 (Nov. 19, 2025 aft., adjourned), 514-21 (Nov. 25, 2025 eve., adjourned), 543-49 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned), 670-76 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 728-29 (Dec. 3, 2025 aft., adjourned), 744-45 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 789-94 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c25]

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

First Reading — 426 (Nov. 24, 2025, passed)

Second Reading — 555-64 (Nov. 26, 2025 eve., adjourned), 590-96 (Nov. 27, 2025 aft., adjourned), 637-46 (Dec. 1, 2025 eve., adjourned), 808-15 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 856 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned), 867-73 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division with amendments)

Third Reading — 913-14 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., adjourned on division), 916-22 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c21]

Bill 12 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (S) (Horner)

First Reading — 478 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 693-98 (Dec. 2, 2025 eve., adjourned), 731-37 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 745-50 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., adjourned), 850-55 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading — 860-67 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c20]

Bill 13 — Regulated Professions Neutrality Act (Amery)

First Reading — 404 (*Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 564-73 (*Nov. 26, 2025 eve., adjourned*), 629-37 (*Dec. 1, 2025 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 686-92 (*Dec. 2, 2025 eve., adjourned*), 801-08 (*Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2025*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 cR-13.3]

Bill 14 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Amery)

First Reading — 763 (*Dec. 4, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 794-801 (*Dec. 8, 2025 eve., adjourned*), 844-50 (*Dec. 9, 2025 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 856 (*Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 880-87 (*Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division with amendments*)

Third Reading — 922-23 (*Dec. 10, 2025 aft., adjourned on division*), 924-31 (*Dec. 10, 2025 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 11, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c22]

Bill 15 — Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Ellis)

First Reading — 943 (*Feb. 24, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 972-83 (*Feb. 25, 2026 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1141-48 (*Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1337-44 (*Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill 16 — Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act (Boitchenko)

First Reading — 963 (*Feb. 25, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1065-68 (*Mar. 12, 2026 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1148-52 (*Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1216-19 (*Mar. 24, 2026 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 26, 2026 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026, cT-6.7]

Bill 17 — Fiscal Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Horner)

First Reading — 1039 (*Mar. 10, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1210-16 (*Mar. 24, 2026 aft.*), 1241-44 (*Mar. 25, 2026 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1270-73 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1273-76 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 26, 2026 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2026 c3]

Bill 18 — Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act (Amery)

First Reading — 1124 (*Mar. 18, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1332-37 (*Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill 19 — Appropriation Act, 2026 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 1140 (*Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 1222-27 (*Mar. 24, 2026 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1248-58 (*Mar. 25, 2026 aft., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 1278-88 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 26, 2026 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force March 26, 2026; SA 2026, c1]

Bill 20 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2026 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 1197 (*Mar. 23, 2026 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 1219-21 (*Mar. 24, 2026 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1244-48 (*Mar. 25, 2026 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1276-78 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 26, 2026*) [Comes into force March 26, 2026; SA 2026, c2]

Bill 21 — Interprovincial Trade Mutual Recognition Act (Schow)

First Reading — 1261 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed*)
Second Reading — 1344-49 (*Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 1404-08 (*Apr. 2, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill 22 — Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026 (Sigurdson, RJ)

First Reading — 1299 (*Mar. 30, 2026 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 1399-1404 (*Apr. 2, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill 23 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Amery)

First Reading — 1299 (*Mar. 30, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill 24 — Alberta Whisky Act (Nally)

First Reading — 1329 (*Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 1393-99 (*Apr. 2, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill 25 — An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act, 2026 (Nicolaides)

First Reading — 1329 (*Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill 26 — Immigration Oversight Act (Schow)

First Reading — 1353 (*Apr. 1, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill 27 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Horner)

First Reading — 1353 (*Apr. 1, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill 28 — Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Williams)

First Reading — 1385 (*Apr. 2, 2026 morn., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025 (Ganley)

First Reading — 121 (*Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 154-65 (*Nov. 3, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 274-76 (*Nov. 17, 2025 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 202 — Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025 (Kasawski)

First Reading — 248 (*Nov. 6, 2025 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 276-84 (*Nov. 17, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 427-31 (*Nov. 24, 2025 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Energy Storage Planning for Investment Act (Al-Guneid)

First Reading — 319 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 431-39 (*Nov. 24, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 608-13 (*Dec. 1, 2025 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 204 — Public Interest Disclosure (Publicly Funded Health Entity Whistleblower Protection) Act (Sweet)

First Reading — 534 (*Nov. 26, 2025 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 613-20 (*Dec. 1, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 1014-20 (*Mar. 9, 2026 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 205 — Non-Disclosure Agreements Act (Johnson)

First Reading — 1129 (*Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed*)
Second Reading — 1169 (*Mar. 23, 2026 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities*)

Bill 206 — Accessible Alberta Act (Renaud)

First Reading — 1063 (*Mar. 12, 2026 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 1081-94 (*Mar. 16, 2026 aft., adjourned*), 1166-69 (*Mar. 23, 2026 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 207 — Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Dyck)

First Reading — 1269 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed*)
Second Reading — 1300-1311 (*Mar. 30, 2026 aft., passed*)

Bill Pr1 — The Ranchmen's Club Ordinance Amendment Act, 2026 (Ceci)

First Reading — 1269 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed*)

Bill Pr2 — Prairie Bible Institute Amendment Act, 2026 (Sawyer)

First Reading — 1269 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed*)

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