



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 5, 2026

Day 53

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC), Speaker
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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
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Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
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Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
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Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
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Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
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Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)
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Miyashiro, Rob, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
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Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre
(UC)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
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Sigurdson, Hon. R.J., ECA, Highwood (UC)
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
Tejada, Lizette, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Turton, Hon. Searle, ECA, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
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Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC),
Government Whip
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

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Trafton Koenig, Law Clerk

Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and
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Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridor Development
Chelsae Petrovic	Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement
Ron Wiebe	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (North)
Justin Wright	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (South)
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Johnson
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Kasawski
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Stephan
Wiebe
Wright, J.

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee

Chair: Mr. Lundy
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Nixon
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Sawyer

Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries

Chair: Mr. Lundy
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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Deol
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Deputy Chair: Mr. Wiebe
Arcand-Paul
Bouchard
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Brar, Gurtej
Getson
Gray
Sinclair
Singh
Stephan

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Sabir
Deputy Chair: Mr. Lundy
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de Jonge
Eremenko
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Renaud
Sawyer
Schmidt
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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 5, 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.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Al-Guneid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you grade 6 students from Connect Charter School coming from Calgary-Glenmore. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly along with your educators Ms Price, Mr. Dittmann, and Mr. Ferguson.

Thank you.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House students from Rideau Park school. I want them to rise and receive the warm welcome. I had the honour of meeting some of them yesterday, and they had such difficult questions. They are all future leaders. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to introduce the grade 6 students from Westglen. Please rise as I talk about your school motto, which is to be prideful. That's positive, responsible, inclusive, diplomatic, and efficient, and boy are they ever. Please, colleagues, go wild and crazy for the grade 6 students from Westglen.

The Speaker: Are there other guests? My goodness. Okay. Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce four guests from the MD of Opportunity inside of my riding: Reeve Marcel Auger, Deputy Reeve Brendan Powell, councillors Robin Guild and Cecil Gladue. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise to introduce to you and through you many distinguished guests who have served our country in the Canadian Armed Forces. They're in the gallery today. These veterans and family members have joined us to listen to the motion for debate regarding Canada's Victoria Cross and our men and women who I am honoured to call heroes among us. I ask them, if they can, to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to welcome members of the Visayas Mindanao Association, or VISMIN. They do great work promoting Filipino culture in Alberta. We have Jessa Kuchmak, Bong Noval, Hazel Igot, Anna Hnatiuk, Marlette Kruger, Mariflor Aco, Justin Kuchmak, and Martina Elegino. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce a valued and passionate member of the Alberta legal community. Tory Hibbitt focuses on health and privacy law, is the coauthor of the recent *Annotated Alberta Health Information Act*, and is the past chair of the CBA health law section. It's good to have her here with us today. Tory, please rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you distinguished members of the Alberta Gujarati Association celebrating their 50th year, the golden jubilee, of service to our province. For five decades the association has enriched Alberta's diverse cultural fabric through community engagement and cultural preservation. I ask the members of the Alberta Gujarati Association to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Chamber.

The Speaker: Calgary-Currie.

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you Taylor Blais from our Calgary caucus office. Taylor Blais hails from small-town Alberta and is a University of Lethbridge alumni. She takes care of much of the correspondence to our Leader of the Official Opposition. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly today.

The Speaker: Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Alex and Bethany Barendregt and their daughters, Elliana and Audrey, sitting in your gallery. I wish to have them rise and enjoy the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you some very special guests: veterans Rob Sipes, Bryce Hooper, Michael Charlish, Clancy Keoughan, Brian Webster, and Bruce Given. I would ask that you gentlemen please rise and receive the very traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to introduce to you and through you and to all the members of the Assembly Rofino Aushalla, a respected community leader from the South Sudanese community in Calgary-East constituency. I would ask Mr. Aushalla to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce some really important folks who do work on behalf of all Albertans throughout our province. They're AUPE members from many locals across the province. Apologies if I miss somebody. Holly Standingready, Teara Twa, Michael Decker, Ashley MacDonald, Paulette Gillespie, Charlie Letourneau, Emily

Devereux, and Nancy Burton. If they could please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you and to all members of the Assembly members of the Alberta Association of Midwives: President Marita Obst, Executive Director Jennifer Gullage-Payne, and President-elect Samantha Bird. Please rise.

Statement by the Speaker

Page Recognition

The Speaker: Hon. members, seated in the Speaker's gallery today are our retiring pages. We held a recognition lunch for them earlier this afternoon. I'm so pleased to have them join us here today in the gallery. They provide the Speaker's office with a farewell letter, which I will now share with you. This is their letter.

Mr. Speaker,

As the weather becomes warmer, many of us Pages are reflecting on our retirement from the Page Program at the conclusion of Spring Session. Our time on the Chamber Floor has been more than just a job and we are forever grateful for the opportunity to serve in these hallowed halls as the 'Hands and Feet' of democracy.

The support of numerous individuals has provided us with the ability to grow into the Pages we are today and we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Josie Salmon, Sherrie Sherstan, Terry Langley and the entire staff of the Office of the Sergeant-At-Arms for their continuous guidance and support. Additionally, we would like to thank the Bills and Journals Clerks for their invaluable procedural guidance and the LASS for everything they do to keep us safe and entertained. Furthermore, we would like to express our gratitude to you Mr. Speaker, along with all the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Table Officers for your dedication to the democratic process and faithfully serving all Albertans. Finally, we would like to thank and honour Monique Hamelin for her lasting impact on all of us Pages.

The Page Program is truly more than just a job; the memories we have made during our service in the Legislative Assembly are unforgettable, and the experience we have gained is invaluable. The friendships we have created through our shared encounters are incredibly meaningful and it has been a true honour to serve the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Fiona Marchand-Head Page, Trae Jabs-Lead Page, Kailen Korotash-Lead Page, Daryna Kostyuk, Tanu Yadav, Anna Sommers, Malcolm Henderson, Liam Cloran, Maria McLarney, Daniel Hu, Paulina McLarney, Vida Abbott, Izbel Justin

Pages, please rise. Hon. members, please join me in expressing our gratitude. [Standing ovation]

Along with the pages, please join me in welcoming Miles Henderson. Miles is the father of Malcolm Henderson, one of our retiring pages. He's in my gallery. He's a proud father with three kids in Alberta's education system. He's a very avid member of the community in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood constituency and dedicates his professional work to securing benefits and providing support to Alberta's education workers. He's known across this field as a very cheerful and charismatic leader who uplifts any team he is part of. I ask Miles to please rise and receive the warm welcome.

1:40

Members' Statements

Electoral List Distribution and Use

Member Hoyle: Three million Albertans had their data freely handed over to anyone with 30 seconds and an e-mail account. This massive, unprecedented data breach by UCP-supporting separatists risks our democracy and the privacy of Albertans. It's no wonder that Albertans are worried, angry, and scared, and not to mince words, they should be. The data is on the electors list for a reason, but the UCP-supporting separatists of the Centurion Project did not respect that. They weren't supposed to have it in their hands. They're a third party. The data should never have been on their website.

This breach creates real risks for people who depend on privacy for their safety, and I'm especially concerned for survivors of abuse and domestic violence. Their location and phone numbers should be confidential, not shared potentially with perpetrators of violence. The UCP government has not assured the public of their next steps nor revealed when they knew of this breach. They have taken no actions to assure Albertans of their privacy.

My colleagues and I in Alberta's New Democrats stand with Albertans and call on this government to take action now. They can start by calling an emergency meeting of the Legislative Offices Committee and summon Elections Alberta's CEO to report exactly what has happened. Second, they can tell Albertans what they're doing right now to protect people's private data. They can give clear advice on how Albertans can protect themselves from data theft and identity fraud. They can provide Elections Alberta with the resources it needs to restore public confidence in our democracy. Finally, they can do the right thing, reverse the Bill 54 changes that weakened Elections Alberta's investigative powers.

Albertans deserve better.

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

Pipeline Development

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The world wants and needs Alberta oil. Our oil is the most responsibly produced in the world, and Canada has a stable democracy. It's not prone to military coups or socialist dictatorships, unlike other producing regions.

The geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East and Europe have put a chokehold on global supply. It's estimated that the world has already lost a billion barrels of production since February 28 because of the closures of the Strait of Hormuz. We're in the midst of a global energy crisis, and Albertans are feeling the pinch every time they fill up their pickup or they buy groceries. We, unlike other nations, are fortunate to have energy security.

This makes Friday's presidential approval of the Bridger pipeline that much more critical. Thank you, Mr. President Trump. In short order this pipeline could increase the flow of oil to 50 U.S. refineries in more than 20 states by moving more than 500,000 barrels a day. This potential for that pipeline also has to go to about a million barrels a day of production in the long run. This builds on the President's approval of Enbridge's optimization plan to add 250,000 barrels a day of Alberta oil to Enbridge's network into the U.S. by 2028. These two presidential approvals could be 750,000 barrels of added capacity in the next two years for the U.S.

At the same time our government is pushing for a new 1 million barrel a day pipeline to the west coast, giving us more global access and secure, safe supply for our trading partners and allies. When coupled with the capacity increases likely coming in the Trans Mountain pipeline and these new projects in the U.S., the economic impacts will be worth tens of billions of dollars a year in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, these are generational economics, generational prosperity. We have the fourth-largest oil reserves in the world, and the goal is doubling our production to 8 million barrels a day by 2035.

The world wants and needs Alberta oil. We need to get it to the world for a stronger Alberta and for a much improved Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Louise Lorraine Laderoute, Jenny Quintal, Marguerite Cardwell, Carol May Big Tobacco, Judy Ann Chescue, Bernadette Ahenakew, Edna Bernard, Debbie Darlene Lake, Monique Pitre, Melissa Munch, Katie Sylvia Ballantyne, Rachel Liz Quinney, Amber Tuccaro, Delores Dawn Brower, Audrey Mary Desjarlais, Alannah Jamima Cardinal, Annie Pootoogook, Roxanne Thiara, Aielah Katherina Saric-Auger, Alisha Germaine, Brittany Bearspaw, Chantelle Bushie, Christine Cardinal, Audrey Beaver, Autumn Georgia Bull, Candice Munroe, Natanis Merasty, Courtney Cattleman, Alexis Ermineskin Crier, Tila Whitstone, Ruby Anne McDonald, Cindy Gladue, Nina Courtepatte, Nikki Frenchman, Shelly Dene, Nina Napope Dumais, Barbara Kentner.

Alberta is home to numerous unsolved cases of women whose families are still waiting for answers, for justice, and for dignity of their loved ones. If this government truly cared, it would build a real co-ordinated system that connects families, police, and communities. I know from my experience being on the Edmonton Police Commission that there is no system. There is the Interpol system that can track a vehicle across borders but not our loved ones. If they truly cared, they would do something.

Hay-hay.

The Speaker: Cypress-Medicine Hat.

National Defence Investment in Alberta

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada is entering a new era of defence growth with more than half a trillion dollars in projected investment by 2035 as part of Canada's defence industrial strategy. Alberta is uniquely positioned to lead the charge. We have the land, the talent, and the expertise. In Cypress-Medicine Hat and across Alberta we understand that hard work and innovation go hand in hand, and we have all the potential required to be the best place to grow Canada's defence industry.

We're already ahead of the game, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is the national leader in unmanned systems and advanced testing capabilities from cutting-edge drones to developing state-of-the-art technology ranges. We're also strengthening Canada's defence capacity while creating real economic benefits right here at home.

Our province is also home to critical military infrastructure. Cold Lake, Edmonton, Wainwright are all pillars of national security, and just outside Medicine Hat CFB Suffield stands as one of the largest military training areas in the world. With the transition to the next gen fighter fleet and an increased focus on Arctic and continental defence, Alberta's role will only grow stronger.

Alberta is the gateway to the north. Our proximity to the Arctic combined with our infrastructure and cold weather expertise makes us critical for the future of Canada's Arctic region. The defence industrial strategy is expected to create more than 100,000 jobs while increasing exports and generating billions in economic activities. Alberta must and will be a big player in that success.

This government is also investing over a million dollars to the Alberta Aviation, Aerospace and Defence council to support new

leading industry forward together initiatives to support small and medium-sized business.

We will continue to promote innovation, support our skilled workforce, and attract the investment that creates lasting prosperity for communities like Medicine Hat and across our great province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Support for Military Personnel, Families, and Veterans

Ms Goehring: While this UCP government talks of advocating for the military community, they do not walk the talk when it comes to supporting those who so bravely serve our country. Our veterans have sacrificed so much only to have the values of democracy and human rights they fought to protect be disrespected and dismantled by this government. This government's decision to override the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission 2026 report, opting instead for a UCP-majority committee, is just one example of the way they continue to disrespect our democracy and our military community by extension.

Veterans fought to protect our constitutional rights, and this government makes a mockery of their sacrifice through their policies. They include policies that change how judges are appointed. They've amended election laws to lower the requirements of citizen-initiated referendums, and they have ongoing and unprecedented use of the notwithstanding clause, to name a few.

This government could be taking real action to support the military community today. They could follow through on the promise they made in 2024 to support houseless veterans here in Edmonton with beds allocated to those who have served. They could acknowledge that the Canadian military would not operate in Alberta if we were to separate and that their refusal to put an end to the separatist rhetoric puts billions in military operating funding, and with it opportunities for Albertans, at risk. By fanning the separatist flames, their ability to collaborate with the federal government and advocate for any kind of action for our military is laughable. The refusal to stand with all Canadians and support the Canadian values of democracy and human rights is an insult to those who served as Canadians first and foremost.

To the military community: we see you, we thank you, and we stand with you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Investigation of Electoral List Distribution and Use

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Premier about this massive and dangerous data breach and what the government knew and when they knew it. She responded that she learned about it on social media when everyone else did, which is kind of hard to believe given that everyone in the know knew about this, so I'm just going to try this one again. When did the government and the United Conservative Party learn of this data breach, and what did they do about it?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We found out about it in the media. I know the member opposite found out about it much earlier and didn't let this government know. I'd like to know why. Why didn't he let us know if he had information and wanted us to act

more quickly on it? As it happens, Elections Alberta clearly had the information that they needed in order to launch an investigation, which they have. There are also EPS and RCMP who are looking into criminal charges in the matter, and we have to let the process play out.

Mr. Nenshi: Mr. Speaker, the elections law is actually very clear. If a government or a political party official learns of a data breach, they must inform the authorities. Not the political party, not the government; the authorities. I didn't even know that, but we did it anyway. We called the RCMP as soon as we found out, and we confirmed that Elections Alberta had the information. I'm going to ask one more time. When did anyone in the Premier's office, in her staff, or her party learn of the data breach, and did they inform the relevant authorities?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The relevant authorities were the ones who acted on it. It was available in the media, which is how we learned about it.

I think the member opposite is asking for us to politically interfere in an independent investigation, and we will not do that. The reason we have independent officers is so that they can exercise their independent judgment and call in authorities to do the investigations as they see fit. That is what's happening, and on this side of the House we will not interfere in that process.

Mr. Nenshi: Well, that's a very interesting answer, Mr. Speaker, because we recently received video evidence of an April 16 meeting in which David Parker demoed the stolen data to dozens of people on a Zoom call. Among those people were a senior member of the Premier's office and caucus staff, a Mr. Arundee Sandhu, as well as the president of the UCP, Mr. Rob Smith. On April 16 did either of them tell the Premier, her chief of staff, or relevant authorities that they learned about stolen data?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again: news to me. The answer is no. As I mentioned, we discovered this in the media.

I know the members opposite find this hard to believe, but the person in question has not been supportive of this party for some time. In fact, it was a whole other political party that has been implicated in this, and it's a whole other political party that is being investigated. I would ask the members opposite to stop asking for political interference in the investigation. We want the people responsible to be held accountable, and they will only be held accountable if the process is allowed to play itself out without politicians getting involved.

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

Mr. Nenshi: To be clear, the United Conservative Party, the Premier's own staff, knew of the data breach as early as April 16, but the Premier claims she had no idea. She always does this. She takes the role of the innocent bystander when it comes to waste, fraud, corruption, and abuse in her government, to all the shady things her friends in the separatist movement do. She didn't even tell her caucus about the private jets. To ask a very simple question, then, to the Premier: did she know, or are her own staff keeping her in the dark?

Ms Smith: No, I didn't know. The member opposite knew, and he could have let members on this side know, but he didn't. He also

waited seven days to call the RCMP. They didn't know until April 24, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite needs to answer for why he didn't let us know. If he felt it was an important issue, we had an entire week of question period. He didn't bring it up in this Chamber, and now he's acting all high and mighty about it.

Here's the fact. Independent officers are supposed to do their work independently. That is what we're allowing in this case, Mr. Speaker, and we want the process to play out. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nenshi: Interesting that the minister of public safety just implied that he's been talking to the RCMP about this, which throws the Premier's argument out of the water. We'll follow up on that later.

As a demo David Parker showed how to find the personal information on specific people, and one of the people he showed in that video was former Premier Jason Kenney. The Premier's staff and the president of her party sat there while Jason Kenney's data was being shown to random people and stolen. They sat there. To the Premier: is it okay that Jason Kenney's information has been released, and why didn't your staff do anything?

Ms Smith: It's not okay, Mr. Speaker. It's not okay that there are people in this Chamber, people who are former Premiers, including former Premier Rachel Notley, people who might be at risk of domestic violence, people who are in positions of authority and might be at risk. It's not okay that any of them have had their data breached, which is why we take this seriously and we will not do anything to interfere with the investigation that is currently ongoing by the RCMP and the EPS because criminal charges may be involved in addition to the investigation being done by the Chief Electoral Officer. We have to let it play out.

Mr. Nenshi: She says that it's not okay today, but three weeks ago it was okay for her personal staff and her UCP party president to know about it and do nothing. Others in the UCP knew about this long before. UCP constituency association president Mitch Sylvestre, the Premier's friend, said yesterday that he knew about this from Mr. Parker before and he thought it was probably illegal, but he did nothing. We know this happened. It's not for an independent investigation. Will the Premier at least remove these people from positions of authority in her government and party? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, this is an independent investigation to determine wrongdoing. We are not going to make any statements that might interfere with the outcome of this investigation. The member opposite should know that when politicians interfere in independent investigations, it could throw out the outcomes of those investigations. We want the people responsible to be discovered, to be found out, and to be held accountable, and that requires these processes to play themselves out independently.

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

Mr. Nenshi: I'm not asking about the investigation. I'm asking why her staff and her party officials stayed quiet in violation of the law.

It goes even deeper than this, Mr. Speaker. In the same video recording Mr. Parker shared his screen, but he made an amateur

mistake that sometimes we make on Zoom, which is that he shared his whole screen. And on that whole screen there is ample evidence that he has frequent connections to Mr. Arundee Sandhu, who works directly for the Premier. A simple question. She's trying to distance herself from Mr. Parker, whose wedding she attended. How often does Mr. Sandhu talk to Mr. Parker? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Smith: I'm trying to find a government policy question in there, Mr. Speaker, and I'm having a hard time doing that. The policy at issue is: who is responsible for making the decisions to do independent investigations when wrongdoing is suspected? In this case there is wrongdoing that has been suspected, and the independent officers . . .

Mr. Nenshi: Why did she stay quiet?

An Hon. Member: Why did you stay quiet?

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Leader of the Opposition, I know people heckle a little bit in here, but when you're the one that asked the question, you're probably the one that should most listen to the answer.

Premier, carry on.

Ms Smith: The independent officers are doing their work. We trust the fact that they have all of the powers that they need under the Public Inquiries Act to do the investigations, to ask for disclosure on who that information was shared with, and to follow up and investigate and hold those accountable who are responsible. That's what we expect.

2:00

Mr. Nenshi: I'm not sure why the Premier is so rattled since she runs a government that flouts democratic convention every single day. Ministers never take responsibility. They defund those independent officers, those investigators, and those investigations. They fired an Election Commissioner, they fired an Auditor General, and they never ever come clean. The Premier has yet to take responsibility once in the years she's been in power for a single thing that has gone wrong on her watch. Today will she change course? Will she take responsibility for the illegal actions of her staff and her party officials?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, no one is defunded. Elections Alberta has asked for increases in their budget, and they've had a 115 per cent increase in their budget. They're going to have a meeting on May 11 to ensure that they are properly resourced to fund all of their operations, including the referendum. I suspect members of that independent committee will also ensure that they have the funding that they need. There is an independent Ethics Commissioner, and they are doing their work in investigating this breach and holding the people to account. That is what we have these independent offices for, and that's what they're going to continue to do.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the . . .

An Hon. Member: Oh, one more.

The Speaker: You're right. My apologies.

Mr. Nenshi: I've made that mistake before many times.

The Speaker: I make it lots of times, but I made it again. Go ahead.

Mr. Nenshi: Mr. Speaker, this isn't just about politics. Today is Red Dress Day. Today is the day we honour murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls. This data breach puts women in Alberta at risk. It puts public officials, judges, journalists, police officers all at risk, and all the Premier can say is: we'll wait for an investigation that'll take years to sort out. I'm giving the Premier a chance today. Can she tell Albertans today what she is doing and her government is doing to keep them safe and what consequences the people who didn't talk will face not from the investigation but from her?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Elections Alberta is doing its work. They've gone to court. They've received a court order to make sure that the access to the information has been removed. They have asked as well for a report of every single entity that that information was shared with, and I suspect what we will see after that is continued efforts to make sure that those folks are held to account. In the meantime we have a single point of entry, 211, for anyone who feels that they are at risk of domestic violence, anyone who feels at risk because of this data breach. They can get connected with a social worker who will help them find the resources that they need.

The Speaker: Now the next set of questions belongs to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Today I met a defence lawyer who told me that since his family found out that his name and home address were shared with bad actors in the separatist Centurion Project and that his personal information was accessible for over a month, his wife won't answer the door now without having a knife in her hand. She's afraid for the safety of her family. Three million Albertans have every right to feel worried and afraid. It's the largest data breach in Alberta's history. Would the Justice minister agree that every single day this personal information was accessible by this group, it created additional risk to the safety and security of Albertans?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we take this data breach very seriously, but protecting the personal information of Albertans all across this province is of utmost importance to our government. We hope that those that are responsible for this are held accountable, and we know that the independent officers are currently conducting an investigation at Elections Alberta. We know that the RCMP is leading a province-wide investigation into the potential criminality of this, and we know that the EPS is also working diligently on this. We need to let those organizations do their job.

Ms Pancholi: As the minister responsible for the Election Act the Minister of Justice must be aware that section 19.1 of the act says that anyone who has a list of electors must take all steps to protect it from unauthorized use and immediately notify the Chief Electoral Officer if that's not the case. Does the Minister of Justice agree that anyone who believed the electors' list was being used improperly should have immediately notified the authorities and that every day that they didn't placed more Albertans at risk? Does the minister agree that anyone who failed to report should be held accountable?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, we said time and again that we treat this matter extremely seriously, and we know that Elections Alberta is

currently conducting an investigation. Also, the Election Act has penalties in place for these particular types of breaches heightened from the regular penalties in the Election Act as well. There is up to a \$100,000 fine per instance and/or a penalty of up to one year for breaching data or misuse of data. We know that this potentially is a criminal matter as well, and we're going to let the RCMP and the EPS do their investigations.

Ms Pancholi: Why is the Minister of Justice finding it so difficult to say that any person who knew about the massive breach of Albertans' privacy, the sharing of their names, phone numbers, and home addresses with a fringe separatist group, should have immediately reported that to authorities, and why can't he say that they should be held accountable if they did not do that? Is it because a key staff member in the UCP caucus and two high-ranking party officials knew about it but did nothing? Is it because the UCP could have done something to protect Albertans but they chose not to?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, from the moment that we found out, we took immediate action, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who yesterday in this Chamber said that he found out about this on April 17 and today admitted that he only reported it to authorities on April 24. Will the deputy member get up and say the same thing about the Leader of the Opposition? Will she admit that the Leader of the Opposition knew about this over a week before it was actually reported to the RCMP? What breach did the Leader of the Opposition commit if he did not report that in time?

The Speaker: The next set of questions, without preambles on the supplementaries, belongs to Edmonton-Glenora.

Bill 11

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction was given an opportunity to apologize and correct the record for misleading the Legislature when he said that he witnessed someone dying in a supervised consumption site. He didn't. Then the minister of primary and preventative care said that doctors in New Brunswick have the same two-tier billing model that she's planning on implementing here in Alberta. They don't. Will that minister, the minister of primary care, demonstrate leadership by taking responsibility and show her colleagues that she can stand up, tell the truth, and correct the record?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to continually say that on this side of the House we're going to make sure that Albertans have the absolute best health care possible, and we are not going to stand for the status quo like the members opposite. We're bringing in innovation. We're bringing in new legislation that will empower not only physicians but Albertans to take care of their health. I want to stand on that record, and I'm looking forward to bringing forward more innovations as time progresses.

Ms Hoffman: Given that a legal opinion from Goldblatt Partners is out and it's clear that Bill 11 violates the Canada Health Act because it simply lets "some patients... access medically necessary services more quickly based solely on their ability to pay" and given that the federal minister warned that health transfers could be cut if the UCP refuses to follow the Canada Health Act and they are, will any of the health ministers stand up and assure Albertans that they won't risk leaving more money on the table with

the feds by having longer waits in our public hospitals and just finally kill Bill 11?

The Speaker: The minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the opinion was commissioned by the Canadian Health Coalition. This is the very organization that consistently – consistently – opposes health care innovation and advocates for maintaining the status quo. This is not an impartial body, and presenting this as an expert legal opinion from a lawyer whose primary practice area is labour and employment law, not health law, is not acceptable. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The question was easy to hear. You've got five more seconds to wrap up your answer.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I believe that there are many opinions on this, and this is only one of them. We are going to continue to place Albertans . . .

2:10

The Speaker: Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Given that Bill 11 brings in user fees and extra billing and those who can pay for medically necessary care can get it faster if they pay out of pocket, which is in direct violation of the Canada Health Act, and given that yesterday the minister of primary care said that she would follow the Canada Health Act and given that the Canadian Health Coalition legal opinion from Goldblatt Partners makes it clear that Bill 11 breaches the Canada Health Act – I think they know more about health law than whoever wrote that briefing note – will she follow the law and uphold the Canada Health Act, or is she going to side with the Premier and force American-style health care on Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our public health guarantee is fully intact. We are going to comply with the Canada Health Act. That was my message to the federal minister. Dual practice exists across Canada in various provinces, Quebec and New Brunswick, and it also exists in high-performing European countries like Sweden, like the Netherlands, like Germany, and I could go on. Why do the members opposite not want the best for Albertans? Why do they want them to go out of province, out of country for needed surgery?

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to Lacombe-Ponoka.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in recognition of Red Dress Day, the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit-plus People. This day honours the lives lost, grieving families, and communities carrying that loss while moving toward healing. Could the Minister of Indigenous Relations please explain to this Assembly what Red Dress Day represents and how the government is ensuring that awareness is translated into sustained meaningful action for Indigenous communities?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by offering my heartfelt condolences to the families, survivors, and loved ones of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people. Red dresses displayed in communities are powerful symbols of those lost. Each represents the absence of an Indigenous

woman, girl, or a two-spirit person taken too soon. Through the Alberta MMIWG Roadmap Alberta's government is strengthening a co-ordinated, culturally informed approach to address root causes and prevent violence.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister for that answer. Given that Red Dress Day serves as a powerful reminder of loss and absence stemming from violence against Indigenous women and girls and further given that Indigenous communities have long called for culturally appropriate supports for survivors and families affected by violence, can the Minister of Indigenous Relations please explain how the government is strengthening collaboration with Indigenous leadership to address violence while still outlining the impact of the community support fund and community-based supports for those impacted?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government supports Indigenous-led collaboration through the Premier's council on MMIWG2S-plus, which advises on implementing the road map. Through the First Nations and Métis Women's Council on Economic Security, which helps shape policies to improve outcomes, in 2024-25 24 Indigenous-led projects received funding for safety, healing, and economic security initiatives. This includes nearly \$200,000 for the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary to develop tools supporting Indigenous women, girls, and 2S-plus people fleeing violence.

The Speaker: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for that answer. Given that when an Indigenous woman or girl goes missing, time is critical and further given that fast, co-ordinated action can make a real and lasting difference, can the same minister explain to this Assembly what Aboriginal Alert is and how this initiative helps ensure urgent information is shared quickly across communities and provide an update on how the 10-year strategy to end gender-based violence is being implemented to better protect our Indigenous women and girls?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal Alert is an Indigenous-led initiative that rapidly shares urgent information on missing Indigenous people through media, social platforms, and emergency networks. Since 2023 Alberta's government has supported the program and is providing additional funding. More information is available at www.aboriginalalert.ca. Our 10-year strategy is being implemented through crossministerial work focused on prevention, on support, and accountability. This emphasizes Indigenous-led programming, engaging men and boys and advancing women's economic empowerment.

Program Unit Funding

Ms Chapman: Early intervention reduces the need for intensive intervention later in life. It sets kids up for success and ensures they can reach their full potential. That's why support for the PUF program was a priority for the NDP government. The minister of education now is all talk about the value of early intervention, but the actions of his government tell the real story. The UCP finally coughed up the numbers that show they made huge cuts to this critical program. To the minister: why did the UCP claim for years that they didn't make cuts to PUF, when that's exactly what they did?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Childcare.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to hear the NDP talk about the importance of early intervention, when they stood in the Assembly and voted against bills and other measures that would mandate early literacy and numeracy screening assessments in Alberta to ensure that every student is screened in their strengths in reading and writing. All that being said, though, as it relates to funding for the PUF program, I'm incredibly proud of the opportunity that we've had in Budget '26 and Budget '25 to make significant increases to the PUF program to help and support kids.

Ms Chapman: Given that PUF is a highly effective early intervention system, funding targeted, specialized, individual supports, given that the UCP's slash and burn of early intervention funding saw PUF funding cut by more than half, and given that PUF funding today is still tens of millions of dollars lower than it was in 2019 despite enormous population growth and inflation, when does the minister plan to get early intervention funding back to 2019 levels?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Budget '26 we were fortunate to be able to provide a 6 per cent increase to the PUF program to help support early intervention. The NDP, however, voted against requiring literacy and numeracy screeners for kids in kindergarten to grade 3. The NDP voted against Budget '26, that would see the 6 per cent increase. They voted against Budget '26, that would also see \$20 million be dispatched to help support students that require support in reading and writing. I'm not sure why they're raising early intervention now. They've been voting against it this whole time.

Ms Chapman: Given that after four years of an NDP government funding for early intervention was strong, average class sizes for K to 6 was 20 to 22, complexity was being managed, and educators were not walking off the job in protest, given that teachers and other experts warned that the cuts to PUF would have disastrous consequences for classroom complexity, given that our kids are now suffering the consequences of the short-sightedness of this incompetent government, would the minister like the NDP to take over managing education? We knew how to do it.

Mr. Nicolaides: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker, and our government and Albertans will ensure that it remains that way. Speaking of class sizes – I know the member opposite noted class sizes – it's interesting to talk about class sizes when they were in government, when they were telling Albertans to leave the province. They were telling them to find work elsewhere, and then they say that class sizes were smaller. They were actively driving Albertans out of the province. Very rich. That being said, our government is investing historic levels to address class sizes and complexity and early intervention.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to Calgary-Klein.

Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls

Member Tejada: Mr. Speaker, today is Red Dress Day, when we remember the many Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited folks who have been murdered, gone missing, or have suffered domestic violence. We're called not only to reflect but also to take action. Everywhere you look, this UCP government continues to fail vulnerable people. Nonprofits are being stifled from a lack of provincial support. Children and youth are waiting up to four and a half months just to see a counsellor at the Sexual Assault Centre of

Edmonton. Why is the government response to the calls for justice from the final report into missing and murdered Indigenous women stalled?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children and Family Services.
2:20

Mr. Turton: Yes. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to that member for that question. It's very important that on this side of the House we continue to support those families, those women, those kids that are requiring that additional help, especially this month, as we support those women and children affected by sexual violence. That's why we continue to invest in sexual assault centres with increased funding, women's shelters as well as other programs that provide support for those that are affected by domestic and sexual violence. We will continue to support these incredible survivors and ensure that they receive the support that they require.

Member Tejada: Given that Indigenous people remain an afterthought for the UCP and given that this government has slashed funding for initiatives that reduce domestic violence like circle of safety through Aboriginal Counselling Services of Alberta and given that this government has slapped a gag order on the Law Society of Alberta, preventing them from meeting TRC call to action 27 by requiring the path course for lawyers, will the members opposite apologize for this government's actions, which have put Indigenous lives at risk?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could be further from the truth. This government has stood by First Nations people since the beginning. We have been working very closely with them. We have regular meetings with them. We have regular protocol meetings with them. We took proactive steps to include provisions in legislation that ensured that treaty rights were always upheld, that the constitutional rights were maintained. None of that is accurate. All lawyers, all professionals in this province can continue to take the courses that they need to further their professions.

Member Tejada: Given that the purpose of Red Dress Day is not only to remember missing and murdered Indigenous women but to remind us that we are obligated to solve this crisis and given that domestic violence prevention advocates are raising the alarm over a massive data breach triggered by the Premier's separatist friends, potentially exposing the home addresses of thousands of women fleeing abuse, and given that this government is silent on the impacts of this breach and offers no solutions to survivors whose safety may have been compromised, will the government admit that they care more about placating separatists than protecting at-risk Indigenous women and girls?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, that is simply untrue. Domestic violence, intimate partner violence is abhorrent, and we stand firmly against it. That's why we take this matter very seriously, and that's why we're doing everything we can to protect the personal information of Albertans. We know that the independent offices of Elections Alberta are conducting an investigation but also the RCMP and EPS. For any domestic violence victims who need immediate help, of course, call 911. For support in other areas 211 is available. We'll make sure that there's somebody on the other end of that line.

The Speaker: Next questions belong to the Member for Grande Prairie.

Major Project Approval Process

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Expedited 120-Day Approvals Act is a great piece of legislation that shows how we're committed to a better future for all Albertans. People in my riding of Grande Prairie and the surrounding area want reduced red tape and are looking for strong, clear, and stable policy for local and major investments to grow and quicker project approvals to help these investments happen. Can the Minister of Energy and Minerals explain how Bill 30 will keep the taps flowing, put shovels in the ground, and can lead to an economic boom?

Mr. Jean: Well, Mr. Speaker, the future for Alberta is bright and beautiful. Businesses want certainty, and that's exactly what they're going to get with Bill 30. Projects will not get lost in years and years of approval processes or nonapproval processes. This guarantees that projects over \$250 million can be reviewed in 120 days or less. Regulators will, of course, still make all the decisions. We will not be cutting corners on environmental reviews or Indigenous consultations, but we want to double oil production. We're going to get that done, and we're going to do it for the best quality of life for Albertans.

The Speaker: Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the disastrous policies enacted when the members opposite were in power have slowed us down and given we need clear, strong, and stable policy to make sure that we catch opportunities before they pass us by, can the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration tell us how the one project, one review agreement signed with the feds lays the framework for investors to have a strong, clear, and solid footing that will bring major investments to Alberta? [interjection]

The Speaker: Just the minister, the Government House Leader, at this point.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the members opposite, on this side of the House we believe in supporting businesses and attracting investments. What I can tell you is that the community has been clear that Canada's project approval and regulatory system has become the largest barrier to investment to our country's prosperity. That is devastating news, but I can tell you this. This agreement signed by the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas puts Alberta back in the driver's seat for approvals and projects within our borders. We are going to continue to remove regulations while also respecting the approval process, something the opposition members couldn't even fathom.

The Speaker: Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we often talk about how Alberta is the fastest skater on a slow team and we are the best and fastest skaters in Canada and given that we still see countless possible projects slip through our fingers such as LNG requests from Germany and Japan, can the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration explain how our policies will make us join the fastest skaters, not just in Canada but on the global stage, and, in turn, how this can make life more affordable for Albertans?

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

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under this government we spend time listening to international leaders, not insulting them like the members opposite. I can tell you that what they want is more of what Alberta is selling, and that's world-class energy products.

Now, we see this just days ago. President Trump signed a presidential permit for a new bitumen pipeline that will allow the flow of 500,000 barrels per day from Alberta to the United States. Alberta is leading the way with our Premier, who is showing what it means to be diplomatic and build relationships and put Alberta first.

Music Industry Support

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, our incredible music sector thrives, especially when the tourism economy is churning. The Alberta music action plan priority 6.5 speaks to this point. Great artists touring the province add spice to Alberta's cultural nightlife, but a new report about separatism's negative impacts on tourism has our creative sector concerned, and the spillover effects on musicians are obvious. An Alberta separate from Canada would mean musicians need new travel and work visas just to perform here. Why has the minister of arts and culture not spoken about this threat to Alberta's music scene and . . .

The Speaker: That was quite a bit more than 35 seconds. It's a good question; it was just long.

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, last week we announced our extraordinary Alberta music action plan announcement, the first of its kind in Canada. Many of my colleagues were here. The member himself joined and was able to participate in it. Outstanding Alberta talent represented. This plan will take a focused approach with an Alberta music commission and Alberta music commissioner to highlight Alberta artists on the world stage; bring more audiences here; make sure those artists can live, work, and have careers in Alberta. We are proud of that plan, and the implementation of it will continue.

Member Ceci: Given that touring musicians make stops across Alberta as part of their Canada-wide tours and given that an independent Alberta could force artists to fly over our province entirely and given that Alberta's reputation is already impacting how artists from this province are received when they perform in other parts of Canada, will the minister for arts and culture recognize that separatism hurts our music industry just as it hurts investment in our tourism industry?

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

Ms Fir: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's music industry is growing and thriving and will continue to under this plan. Last year Canada's music sector ranked ninth largest in the world, growing by nearly 6 per cent, outpacing the United States' growth, and Alberta is a key part of that success story. Over 23,000 jobs are supported across our province, and our local music sector generates an estimated nearly \$5 billion in economic output, contributing approximately more than \$2.5 billion to our provincial GDP. We will see that continue to grow.

The Speaker: Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you. Given the Alberta tourism association found members are deeply worried about investments in their industry and given how essential national touring is for Alberta musicians to reach fans and build careers and given this is one more blow to the creative industries after years of inadequate support for

the arts, what is the minister going to do to stand up for Alberta musicians in the face of rising separatist rhetoric that threatens their livelihoods and their ability to secure performance gigs?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we're going to continue to do is support these amazing artists in this industry with annual, continued operating funding of nearly \$15 million for Alberta's music sector. An additional \$800,000 in grants have also been awarded to organizations, including National Music Centre, Alberta Music, and West Anthem, to support early action and ensure the plan delivers the results from the start. Our music industry brings diversification, economic growth, tourism, and is an incredible cultural force that will continue . . .

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

Homeless Supports and Affordable Housing

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to supporting Alberta's most vulnerable individuals and families by working with community partners to provide safe shelter, stable housing, and essential supports in growing communities, including urban ridings like Calgary-East. Service providers and municipalities play an important role in helping Albertans access the help they need. To the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services: can the minister outline how our government is supporting vulnerable Albertans through investments in shelter, housing, and community-based services?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We're investing a quarter billion dollars to be able to work with the homeless community, more than the NDP ever dreamed of when they were in power. Most importantly, we've invested in 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week shelters, we've invested in Indigenous-only shelters, we've invested in women-only shelter spaces all across the province, and of course we've invested in our navigation centre, which has helped tens of thousands of Albertans be able to receive services, all of which the Official Opposition voted against as they actively campaign to tell us not to invest in emergency services for the homeless in this province.

The Speaker: Calgary-East.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that access to emergency shelter and co-ordinated services is a critical first step in supporting individuals experiencing housing instability and given that innovative approaches such as navigation centres are helping connect individuals to housing, health care, and social support in one place, can the minister please tell this Assembly how our government is supporting shelters and expanding models to better serve Albertans in need?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, two key areas: when it comes to the work that we're doing on emergency help with individuals experiencing homelessness in Alberta first is, as I just mentioned, moving to 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week shelter spaces, something the NDP protested against and voted against, sadly; also bringing in our navigation centres, which are now being copied all across the country. I'm proud to report that in our province since the navigation centres were brought in, 19,000 unique individuals

have been able to get access to social services, again, something the NDP voted against.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that addressing housing challenges requires long-term planning, accountability, and strong partnerships with municipalities and community organizations and further given that Albertans expect practical solutions that strengthen community stability while improving outcomes for vulnerable people, can the same minister please provide an update on how our government is advancing long-term strategies to ensure Albertans have a clear, sustainable pathway to stable housing across the province?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, as we've discussed in this Chamber many times before, unfortunately, when the NDP were in power they didn't build any new affordable homes in this province, net no new affordable homes in Alberta. I'm proud to be the housing minister who's leading the way in this country with Albertans. Twelve per cent of the population we're responsible for; we're responsible for 25 per cent of all new housing builds, investing \$9 billion in our province. And guess what? Rent is down in Alberta, the only jurisdiction where rent is down by almost 5 per cent.

AISH and ADAP Programs

Ms Renaud: Rocky Mountain House, Claresholm, Camrose, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Edmonton, and now Calgary's mayors and councils have all sent letters to this UCP government, and these municipalities are speaking with one voice. They urge this government to immediately pause the implementation of ADAP and conduct a real consultation. Mr. Speaker, these municipalities are urging this government to stop and assess the impact on municipal services. Will this government listen to the almost 3 million Albertans represented by these municipalities, immediately pause, and actually, truly consult . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister of social services.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the NDP continues to go around the province spreading misinformation when it comes to ADAP. If I was to comply with what that member is asking for or with what municipalities who have unfortunately passed those motions with lack of knowledge of our program have asked for, thousands of people that will receive disability services on July 1 would not receive them, so no, we're not going to do that. We're going to finally stop punishing Albertans with disabilities that go to work like the NDP did. We made a commitment to the disability community, and on July 1 we will fulfill that commitment. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Renaud: Given that this government will be cutting income from AISH recipients – it's on the government's own website; check it out – and it is alarming that this government endorses the spread of misinformation, given that AISH was cut by \$200 last July and another \$200 to be cut from people who stay on ADAP and employment earnings will also be lowered by \$500, why does this government continue to share information that is factually incorrect?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, talking about sharing information that's factually incorrect, that member continues to do it in this Chamber each and every day. She just said that AISH was going to be

lowered in this budget. AISH has been increased inside this budget, and further to that, AISH rates are going up by \$40 a month in this fiscal year, so nothing could be further from the truth. We continue to have the highest AISH payments anywhere in this country. Unfortunately, that member and her party continue to vote against those supports for the disability community because they clearly don't care. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

A point of order was noted at about 2:36.

Ms Renaud: Given that we're weeks away from all 80,000 AISH recipients being moved to a new program called ADAP, which is virtually without any information about who will stay on ADAP and who will be sent back to AISH other than a few obvious groups that they've announced – zero transparency, Mr. Speaker – is this UCP government so afraid of Alberta voters that they refuse to release new AISH and ADAP eligibility criteria, employment targets, and regulations until the Assembly of Alberta is no longer sitting?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, is the Official Opposition, the NDP, so scared of letting Albertans with disabilities go to work that they will continue to fight in this Chamber and vote against things like a quarter billion dollars a year in employment supports, vote against the highest AISH payments anywhere in the country, vote against adding a second disability program to make sure Albertans who can work also can get access to disability services, and also vote against Albertans with disabilities getting their health benefits? That member and her party have fought against that the entire time they've been in power. We reject that, and on July 1 we'll fulfill our promise to Albertans.

Government Procurement Process

Mr. Deol: In just three months a company linked to Sam Mraiche realized over \$300,000 in profit by flipping a property to this government. Nearly two years after the UCP refused to co-operate with Alberta's Auditor General, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has now launched an investigation into this transaction. To the minister: what is this government attempting to hide from Albertans about Sam Mraiche's sweetheart deal for a property, and why is the UCP refusing to be transparent about this transaction?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As members of the Assembly know, Infrastructure's job is to manage government-owned property. We buy and sell land and buildings based on government needs and priorities. As the member has heard countless times, the property that was purchased by Infrastructure was purchased for a direct need for emergency services for our Provincial Operations Centre. We purchased the property at market rate, and we do believe it was good value for Albertans.

Mr. Deol: Given that the former Minister of Infrastructure initiated an internal review into this land transaction involving Sam Mraiche's company and was booted from this government caucus, given that the current minister confirmed during estimates that nine more investigations are under way within the department and given that the former Auditor General was denied access to the necessary information, will the minister acknowledge the government's failure to prevent sweetheart land property deals for UCP insiders like Sam Mraiche?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Infrastructure minister.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. Actually, what I've provided for members of the opposition during estimates was that we are fully complying with the Auditor General. Infrastructure has actually accepted all of the Auditor General's recommendations and has taken necessary steps to improve how procurement is managed. Controls are now in place to address all the key findings from the Auditor General report in 2022. The ministry is ready for a follow-up audit to confirm that the work is complete. We are anticipating that follow-up audit to be occurring in the coming months.

Mr. Deol: Given that members of Mraiche's family have held multiple roles across government ministries and that this network has repeatedly surfaced in procurement controversies and legal proceedings, given that the government dismissed the AHS CEO and board after they raised concerns and given that RCMP officers executed a multiple-day search of Mr. Mraiche's headquarters, will the minister take responsibility and release all relevant documents, or will the UCP continue to withhold information from the public, jeopardizing these investigations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we have been working with the office of the Auditor General. We've never been in mediation with the office of the Auditor General. We have actually been fully compliant and have actually been waiting for their follow-up audit to make sure that we've actually met their expectations with the recommendations that they have provided for us, and we are anticipating that in the coming months.

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

Members' Statements

(continued)

Government Health Policies

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, Alberta used to have one of the best public health care systems in the world, but now that system is being dismantled by the UCP just so well-connected insiders can profit. This is a choice. Emergency rooms are overcrowded, wait times are growing, but the UCP's only plan is to make you pay to skip the line. That doesn't improve access; it just sells health care to the highest bidder.

The UCP is destroying the future for young people who want to build a life here. The basic cost of living is crushing. Young families and students struggle to pay tuition. If people can't see a doctor, can't afford school, and can't afford rent, how could they afford to live here? This government is hurting seniors who paid into this system their entire lives. They have slashed seniors' benefits and raised medication copays at a time when fixed incomes are stretched thin. Seniors are being told to pay more just to stay healthy.

Privatization doesn't work. We have already seen that with the DynaLife disaster. The UCP wasted millions of taxpayers' dollars just to buy it back and admit failure while accountability is dodged and whistle-blowers are silenced. In the United States medical bills are the number one cause of bankruptcy, and now this government wants the same for Albertans.

Let me say this directly to the people of Alberta. You deserve better: better health care, better priorities, and a better government,

one with a backbone, not one that follows the worst pages of Trump's playbook and acts as their puppets.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. member, I didn't interrupt you, but you need to address all your remarks through the chair.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise to advise the Assembly that there will be no evening sitting today.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two published manuscripts, both by Michael Antle, an expert in time change at the University of Calgary and internationally. The first is Longitudinal Location Influences Preference for Daylight Saving Time, and the second is The Controversy over Daylight Saving Time: Evidence for and Against.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two e-mails from Alberta residents, both of whom are extremely concerned about the data breach.

The Speaker: Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is an opinion article by Ralph Scurfield entitled Permanent Daylight Time Could Wipe Out Alberta's Ski Industry, and the second is an article in the *Rocky Mountain Outlook* entitled Banff Ski Hills Say Later Lift Times Likely under Alberta's Proposed Time Change.

The Speaker: Calgary-Beddington.

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a Calgary city council motion passed April 14 calling on the government to immediately pause the AISH to ADAP transition. Tabling on behalf of the Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Haji: I'd like to table, Mr. Speaker, an article from Kathryn Andrusky. She is a family physician in my riding, and she does write about the health care system. It's titled The UCP Change That Could Upend Alberta Health Care.

The Speaker: Okay. That takes us to points of order. One point of order request was noted at 2:36 by the opposition.

Mr. Shepherd: I'll withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Withdrawn. Well, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I appreciate that, and the people at home appreciate that.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Military Honours

41. Mr. Schow moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to establish an independent military honours

review board to review veterans' cases where evidence suggests Victoria Cross criteria were met.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great honour and pride that I rise today to move Government Motion 41. Throughout this debate we are joined in the galleries by Canadian veterans who fought bravely for this country, and I ask all members of the Assembly to please give them a round of applause and acknowledgement. It would be a missed opportunity to not recognize them, and I'm grateful for them being here today and for their service. Now, these men and women understand the bravery, honour, and commitment it takes to put on a uniform and be willing to lay down your life for fellow soldiers, your country, for the freedom of others, and that is exactly why we are debating this motion today.

There is one gentleman who is not here today but is foundational in bringing attention to this issue. Retired General Rick Hillier previously served as chief of defence staff and today serves as chair of a nonprofit committee with a mission to educate Canadians on the bravery and sacrifice of Canadian soldiers, often referred to as heroes among us. This committee, called Valour in the Presence of the Enemy, is advocating for Canada's bravest soldiers to be considered as recipients of Canada's highest military honour, the Canadian Victoria Cross.

This medal was created to be given to veterans who demonstrate "the most conspicuous bravery, a daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice, or extreme devotion to duty, in the presence of the enemy." Despite it being created and minted decades ago to mirror Britain's Victoria Cross, no Canadian soldier has been given the honour of receiving the Canadian Victoria Cross.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, our military heroes have stories that often go untold because our country does not do a good enough job of recognizing the heroic work they do. The situations these men and women are put into would give nightmares to everyday Canadians if they were put in those same situations, and the bravery displayed is nothing short of incredible. Heroes like Tommy Prince, who distinguished himself with actions in Italy and France that led to the destruction of a major German position and the capture of more than 1,000 German soldiers in World War II.

Heroes like Jess Larochelle, who, despite a broken back, a detached retina, and a blown eardrum, held off 20 to 40 Taliban insurgents while protecting three other wounded soldiers.

Heroes like Master Warrant Officer Richard Stacey, who in the midst of an ambush by Taliban fighters spent eight hours treating the wounded, fixing vehicles, organizing defences, calling in air strikes, and shooting insurgents himself, all while issuing clear direction to Canadian, American, and Afghan forces across a convoy spread out for almost two kilometres.

Heroes like Warrant Officer William MacDonald and Sergeant Patrick Tower, who at the battle of the white school put themselves in great peril to save wounded comrades amidst terrifying odds and bad intelligence.

When soldiers who accomplish these incredible feats in the most harrowing of circumstances are still not eligible to receive our highest military honour, I cannot help but share the curiosity of why that is. Anyone who woke up on a military base in Europe, in Korea, in Kandahar, or anywhere else the Canadian military has served has already done something far braver than most people will ever do. For those who distinguish themselves even further such as those whose records I just read and many others, no recognition could be too large.

Mr. Speaker, rather than collecting dust in Rideau Hall, it's time for Canadians who served their country in extraordinary ways to receive the Victoria Cross. I am proud to join the call to find these soldiers and make sure they get the recognition that they deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for bringing forward this motion. The motion says, "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to establish an independent military honours review board to review veterans' cases where evidence suggests Victoria Cross criteria were met."

I would like to start my remarks with expressing my gratitude and appreciation for those veterans that advocated and persevered and put pressure to have this come forward. This is something that has been asked for by veterans for a long time. Queen Elizabeth II created the Canadian Victoria Cross in 1993 for Canadians. It replaced the British Victoria Cross, and this is something that has not been awarded to Canadians. It is time that we start honouring and recognizing the sacrifice and service of so many Canadians.

I think that the group of veterans from the Afghanistan war deserve incredible applause for persevering and making sure that this comes to fruition. We know that other provinces around Canada have also put this call to action into place, and I think that, seeing what's happening all across Canada, this united determination is nonpartisan. It's a way to show gratitude at the highest level for our Canadian soldiers.

Having grown up going to Legions my entire life – my papa was a World War II veteran. He was a medic in the infantry. I had many papas throughout the years who would share their stories. Often it wasn't a lot of detail, and some of that got lost. I think the fact that we're continuing to push for those stories to be shared is essential. Canadians cannot forget what happened, the sacrifices that were made by so many.

Having so many of those veterans here with us today is such an honour. We see their colours, their flags throughout this building. We have memorials in place in this Legislature, and to see the urge to recognize those that have served and fought and sacrificed in recent theatre, in Afghanistan, is huge.

We don't want to forget the stories. I encourage every member in this Chamber to talk to veterans and hear their lived experience and the pride and the honour that comes with serving Canada. I have friends with me today who are here. I have a partner who is a veteran. Being able to have the privilege to hear the stories and the heartbreak and the pride is something that I will forever be grateful for.

I know that in this Chamber this is unanimous that this needs to be supported and recognized. I really urge the government to look at how we treat our veterans and to make sure that it doesn't stop here. Advocating for Ottawa to do something is important. Doing something here in Alberta is also important, and being part of that is essential.

We can't forget history, the human story. The human experience of those that lived, served, sacrificed for us as Canadians is something that I am forever grateful for. I know that this motion means a lot to so many, and I hope that Ottawa is paying attention and able to recognize those that deserve the Victoria Cross.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close my remarks. It's a great moment today to know that we're all coming together, united, to support the military.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with a profound sense of duty and compassion in support of this motion, which urges the government of Canada to thoughtfully reflect on how we honour those who have given so much to our nation. First and foremost, it is both fitting and necessary that we acknowledge the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, those who have served and those who continue to serve with courage and dedication. Their sacrifices enable us to enjoy the freedoms that are fundamental to our Canadian identity: the freedom to speak openly in this Chamber, to engage in debate, to disagree respectfully, and to govern ourselves democratically. The very seats that we occupy in this Legislature exist because generations of Canadians have been willing to defend them, often at great personal cost. We should never forget those who made the ultimate sacrifice, those who never return home.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize the family of our service members – spouses, children, parents, and loved ones – who bear burdens that are often unseen yet deeply felt. In addition, specific individuals who are working to push this initiative forward, including Rick Hillier, Bruce Moncur, and locally I want to acknowledge Warren Cave for his work here in Alberta and for approaching me on this issue and the many veterans and service members who have joined us in the Legislature here today.

It is in the spirit of this collective responsibility and gratitude that I'm honoured to speak in favour of this motion. While in many ways we rightly honour our veterans, there remains a significant gap, Mr. Speaker, in how we recognize the full extent of their service. Currently Canada lacks an independent mechanism to review or reassess military honours once they have been awarded. When new information emerges, be it a testimony, records, or a deeper understanding of battlefield events, there's no formal pathway to reconsider whether a higher honour may be warranted. This means that in many cases acts of extraordinary valour do not receive the recognition that they rightly deserve. This motion calls on the government of Canada to establish an independent military honours review board providing a fair, transparent, and evidence-based process to revisit these cases. The need for such a board is not abstract. It is just pure common sense. It establishes a better path to acknowledge the acts of pure courage and selflessness.

3:00

I want to consider again the cases stated by our House leader, one of which is Private Jess Larochelle. At just 22 years old while serving in Afghanistan, he volunteered to man an isolated observation post alone, fully aware of the imminent danger and the fact that his platoon was undermanned. When the attack came, a rocket struck his position, knocking him unconscious. Upon regaining consciousness, he found two comrades dead and several others wounded. Despite suffering devastating injuries himself – a broken vertebrae, a detached retina, and a ruptured eardrum – he chose to remain at his post and defend his fellow soldiers. Alone, injured, and under relentless enemy fire Private Larochelle provided the only sustained defence fire on that flank. His actions held the line and ultimately saved lives. He stayed at his post until morning, only seeking medical treatment after carrying his fallen comrades out. For his remarkable bravery he was awarded the Star of Military Valour, yet many question whether this honour fully captures the depth of his courage.

We should also reflect on the actions of William MacDonald during the battle of the white school, one of the most intense firefights Canadian Forces have faced since Korea. Pinned down by overwhelming fire with two soldiers already lost, MacDonald made the courageous decision to run towards enemy fire to rescue his

wounded comrades. He was not ordered, Mr. Speaker. He did this motivated solely by their need for help. His actions transcend duty and exemplify true valour. He, too, was awarded the Star of Military Valour, but again, does that honour fully capture the depth of his courage?

Similarly, Sergeant Patrick Tower demonstrated exceptional leadership and bravery in August of 2006 in Pashmul, Afghanistan. Amid chaos and heavy enemy fire Sergeant Tower, accompanied by a medic and another soldier, sprinted 150 metres across open ground to reach wounded comrades. Learning that four Canadian soldiers had been killed, including the acting platoon commander, Sergeant Tower took command and led the remaining soldiers to safety. His actions were also recognized with the Star of Military Valour.

Mr. Speaker, these are not ordinary acts of bravery. They are extraordinary demonstrations of courage, acts that I and the many veterans and service members that have joined us today believe meet a higher standard of valour. Yet since the establishment of the Canadian Victoria Cross in 1993 our highest military honour has never been awarded. For over three decades it has remained unbestowed while our closest allies like the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand have issued such medals. Are we to believe that no Canadian has risen to that level of courage, or is it possible that our system lacks the flexibility to recognize it? This is the central question on this motion.

An independent military honours review board would not diminish existing rewards or rewrite history. It would provide a structured, credible process to examine cases where compelling new evidence or testimony exists, ensuring that recognition can be elevated where warranted. Such a system would ensure our honours are responsive to the truths, and most importantly it would send a clear message to our veterans and their families that our country is committed to listening and doing what is right.

Mr. Speaker, this is about fairness. The federal government needs to properly acknowledge the sacrifices that have been made and ensure they are properly recognized. Stories of extraordinary courage, whether uncovered days, years, or decades later, deserve the consideration that they should, and we can make certain that Canada's highest honours are accessible and not out of reach.

To the government of Canada this motion is unequivocal. Establish an independent military honour review board, create a pathway for reassessment, and ensure that no act of extraordinary valour goes unrecognized at the level it deserves. We owe this to Private Larochelle, to William MacDonald, to Sergeant Tower, and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, we owe this to every Canadian who has worn the uniform and every family that has supported them. I urge all members of this House to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to support Motion 41.

Before I get into my notes on Motion 41, I do want to say a very heartfelt thank you. Thank you to every single one of our active duty Canadian Armed Forces members, to the veterans who have served this country with distinction, to the families who stayed up terrified, wondering and pondering on the safety of their loved ones overseas. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten, and it's the reason why Motion 41 is so important.

This motion calls on the government of Canada to create an independent military honour review board. This board would review veterans' cases where the evidence shows that the criteria for the Victoria Cross were met. The Victoria Cross, as mentioned by many speakers in this Chamber today, is the highest military

honour that Canada has to issue. It's awarded for the most serious acts of bravery in the presence of an enemy. It's meant for moments of courage, where a person puts their life at great risk to save others or to complete a mission. It's for the acts that become legends within our Armed Forces of the heroes even amongst their peers. It's not a small honour and it should be rare, but rare does not mean impossible, as we've seen so far since the creation of this medal.

Mr. Speaker, it's been more than 80 years since a Canadian last received the Victoria Cross. Canada created its own Victoria Cross in '93, and since then not a single one has been awarded. But I hear from veterans and families of veterans that have passed that there are cases where this should have been awarded. Canadian soldiers have served in dangerous combat missions, especially in Afghanistan. Many were wounded. Many lost their lives. Many showed incredible bravery under fire.

Our allies saw the bravery. Our allies have seen the bravery of their own soldiers and issued similar medals to their soldiers. Why not Canada? Countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States have awarded their highest military honours to soldiers who have served in the same wars as Canada. Why have we not honoured those who've laid everything down to fight for our country, to protect the freedoms we cherish?

3:10

This raises an important question, Mr. Speaker. Are we really saying that no Canadian soldier has shown the bravery of our highest honour? I believe we've seen many soldiers and examples that have been shared in this Chamber already. I wonder if it's possible that our system does not allow for a proper second look, a second look that would look at these extremely worthy situations with a fresh perspective.

I believe the system needs to be reviewing how it looks at these cases. The stories documented in the Heroes Among Us series makes this clear. These stories are based on eyewitness accounts and official military citations. Many of these soldiers already received the Star of Military Valour, Canada's second-highest award for bravery. One example we've seen the minister of agriculture just share. I think we owe it to our service members, our veterans, our past veterans, and their families to really recognize and review that when our Canadian Armed Forces members are experiencing highly exposed machine gun positions, taking attacks from Taliban, taking rockets flying overhead, severing limbs, suffering mortal injury but persevere and push on to protect their fellow soldiers with the thoughts of trying to get home, the thoughts of protecting home, we owe it to these CAF members and their families and our veterans and their families.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many examples we could use to justify why this motion is important. This motion does not just say that anyone must receive this medal, and it does not blame past decision-makers. It's simple. Ask for an independent and fair review of the process. Ask to have our Canadian Armed Forces service members and our veterans to be honoured the way that they should.

Honouring our veterans isn't just about ceremonies or words on Remembrance Day, Mr. Speaker. It's about fairness. It's about making sure courage is recognized where it's been shown. When Canada asks its soldiers to serve in harm's way, we have a duty to treat them with respect and honesty when they return home. Motion 41 helps to do that. It tells veterans that their service matters. It tells their families that the sacrifices have been seen. It tells Canadians that bravery did not disappear after the Second World War.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of this Chamber to support Motion 41. Doing the right thing sometimes means taking a second look and reflecting on the shortcomings of the past.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No more speakers.

Did you want to close debate? Yeah.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I just want to thank all members of the Assembly for the robust debate that they've added. I think we've all been enriched by the stories and information they've shared. Whether it's directly or indirectly, everyone in this Chamber has been enlightened and has benefited from the service of those who put their lives on the line and dedicated their lives to the service of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to support Government Motion 41. With that, I close the debate.

[Government Motion 41 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 30 Expedited 120-Day Approvals Act

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill 30, the Expedited 120-Day Approvals Act.

If passed, this legislation would help set a path for decades to come and generations of Albertans for prosperity by speeding up the process to approve major projects in the province, Mr. Speaker. We're actually hoping that this will be an opportunity to change the culture of the regulatory and approval process throughout governments, whether it be municipal, provincial, or even federal.

Currently the process to approve projects in Alberta and Canada quite frankly is cumbersome, riddled with roadblocks, and frankly, very often unnecessary delays. There are truly many examples of projects that have spent years working through the application and approval processes, and when it comes time to seek approval, they only find that they are sent back to square one on a technicality, Mr. Speaker. Possibly they've been working with a government agency streamlined for one or two years. We've even heard scenarios that have come about as a result of that, and then they find out that they applied under the wrong section. Certainly, this must change.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

It has to change because what people don't recognize in the regulatory organizations of this great province and municipality is that time is money and when people do not approve projects, people have to go back to the drawing board, oftentimes paying interest charges, paying finance charges beyond that. In fact, Mr. Speaker, often the project is at risk as a result of these unnecessary delays.

What happens when somebody goes on holidays? Usually it just sits on the corner of that desk and nothing gets done. We need to change that, Mr. Speaker. We have to have more productivity, and we need to get things going and get rid of those unnecessary roadblocks and delays because it's turning investors away. They're looking at Canada and saying: not only can I not get a decent return but I might never get it started. Three, four, six, 12 years later; in cases of mines, 20, 25 years: that kind of financial certainty is what's driving away investment.

We need to have more certainty and faster project approvals throughout government, Mr. Speaker. In fact, self-inflicted federal barriers are estimated to have driven away at least \$12 billion in capital investment from Canadian-based energy companies to the U.S. in the last year alone. Those are Canadian companies that are saying: I don't want to invest in Canada; I know the regulatory environment because I've been doing it for years, but my goodness gracious, I can go to Mexico and I can get it done in two years

versus eight or 16 years or maybe never, or I can go to the United States and do the same thing in half the time for twice the return.

Things have to change, Mr. Speaker. We need to do things differently, and Bill 30 would help bring this investment back to Alberta by setting a clear 120-day approval time frame for projects in our province. Industry has been asking for this. Some of these timelines may seem aggressive to regulatory bodies, but if you look down in the United States, they're expecting to do this in 28 days, sometimes a little bit more, but most of the time they do it much quicker than we do. That's what's driving investment out of Canada.

It's my privilege right now to present this bill and move it through second reading of the House. I'm hoping all members and all parties would support this bill because it would actually accelerate the process by making things better, Mr. Speaker, by moving, my speech says, at the speed of business. I'll wait to see that, because I don't think that we're set up at that right now.

Maybe Bill 30 will see this implemented and over time the culture will change and not just projects where it's \$250 million or more, as in this case, Mr. Speaker, but smaller projects where we can see the culture of change in municipal governments where they want to move things forward, where they give certainty to investors, and they actually have open arms and a concierge approach to people that want to invest money and time in something in our region, in our province, in our cities.

Now, recent global events, geopolitical scenarios: if you watch the news every morning, Mr. Speaker, it's very obvious that the world is a changing place, and one thing is certain, and that is uncertainty. We don't know what's going to happen from one day to the next. The president down south certainly must have his own agenda. I don't know what it is. It has been not clear to me and, I think, not clear to a lot of people, but this uncertainty says more than ever that we have an opportunity. We have a short time frame and a window where we can jump through and actually get things done, get things done for jobs, get things done for families, and for building hospitals and roads and bridges and all those things that we rely on in this country. Those are the things that this bill will help.

3:20

Many countries, many organizations, many large multinationals that produce oil and gas are looking and searching for reliable, responsible energy providers. They know that, long term, the solution is not there on alternative energy opportunities and that we as the fourth-largest oil reserve in the world, ninth-largest with B.C. gas reserve, and possibly the third-largest lithium reserve, have real opportunities to take the world out of, in essence, energy poverty. Many parts of the world are still burning dung and wood in order to heat their meals and heat their homes. Eight and a half million people die every year from energy poverty, and look at the energy security needs.

We have the opportunity to send our energy to market. We just need the opposition to get out of our way, and frankly, the process that's in the way of the process needs to be eliminated. We need to look at the real things that matter to Albertans and Canadians on getting these projects through. That doesn't mean we have to have less of a standard; in fact, the opposite. We believe that if they focus on the process of getting these projects through to a yes or no, they'll do a better job on actually assessing the pros and cons of these projects.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the world is demanding and looking for more energy and more of Alberta's resources. They know that we are the answer for their needs, and we're certainly poised to double production and increase access to markets around the world. Our

Premier has a very aggressive process and expectation on doubling our oil production, but we can do it. We're very close to looking, in the foreseeable future, at 6 million barrels a day, and we will get up to 8 million barrels a day.

We just have to make sure that we take advantage of this opportunity and work together as a country, as Team Canada, Team Alberta, and make sure that we all recognize we're in this together and that if we work together, we can do much better for all of us. We can't afford to spend years waiting for major project approvals, especially after a consultation, Indigenous consultation, and environmental assessments are completed. Every delay impacts jobs, impacts investment, and impacts opportunity for our province, for our families, to ensure prosperity for future generations.

Bill 30 would build on Canada and Alberta's memorandum of understanding that has been hitting the news lately, Mr. Speaker, and continues to be negotiated. This will actually prioritize the development of those projects that need critical infrastructure, that will increase production while reducing emissions that are so important to some of the world. This bill is the next step to help spur development, and not just the energy sector. As many people think it's geared towards the energy sector, the truth is that it is also geared towards the mining and industrial sectors as well, so this bill can be applicable right across the province for major projects over \$250 million.

The initiative will accelerate the process by implementing specific criteria and thresholds for complex projects, because some of these, frankly, Mr. Speaker, take reams and reams and binders of applications to give the information necessary to the regulator. We need to make this process more predictable, more transparent, and more streamlined, get rid of the unnecessary duplication, and focus on the needs of the application itself to be approved or to ask for more information. It would be a key step forward toward ensuring a co-ordinated, one-government approach that industry has been asking for for years.

Mr. Speaker, the bill sets out project criteria, application requirements, approval processes, and timelines for proponents, government, and regulators. It gives certainty with a time frame that makes a lot of sense. To qualify for an accelerated approval process, the project would need to meet a set of criteria. This includes aligning with the province's priorities, being of strategic importance to Alberta's economy, advancing national and provincial security while respecting Alberta's areas of jurisdiction and autonomy, and having, as I mentioned before, a minimum capital investment of \$250 million. We're hoping, as I said, that if we take 120 days to approve a \$250 million-plus project, maybe, just maybe, our regulators will consider that a \$50 million project: maybe that should be fast-tracked a little bit faster. It would make a lot of sense, and if we work together, we can get that culture of change where people understand what's necessary and what's not. We need to focus on what's necessary.

To be considered, Mr. Speaker, project proponents would be required to show that the environmental impact assessment and the Indigenous consultation have advanced to the appropriate stage before seeking expedited status. What that means is that in their mind it's done and we're going to make sure it's done because it has to be of the best standard possible, the best standard of Indigenous consultation in the world. That's what we provide here in Alberta, and that's what we're going to continue to provide under this bill as well as environmental stewardship.

You can go anywhere around our province and find that we are the best, the best at responding, the best at eliminating those unnecessary things that are happening to harm our environment. We're going to

make sure that we take that very seriously even while we're continuing to explore the opportunity of an expedited process.

Alberta's duty to consult remains for any project that may impact treaty rights, Mr. Speaker, section 35 rights or otherwise. If passed, Alberta's government will establish a review and support process through a newly created project co-ordination review team within Executive Council. Executive Council: the name speaks for itself. Those are the folks that are actually the final authority to get things done. When Executive Council wants to get involved in things, people know that it's a very serious matter and it's going to move forward. Executive Council will assess the major projects application and make recommendations to a committee of deputy ministers. Once a qualified project is approved by the committee, cabinet would issue an order in council expediting approval timeline.

Nobody's going to be surprised by this, Mr. Speaker. They're going to know it's coming, because it's going to be discussed for some period of time beforehand, and when it comes they will know that they have to hit that 120-day timeline. They just have to get those answers to those questions in between. Industry, the regulators, have told us that they can do this. It's within that time period.

The issuance of the order in council would actually trigger a 120-day approval clock for the regulators with the same timeline requirements applying for all subsequent required permits upon receipt by the regulator. That means we hit the 120 days and move it back and people would be able to put forward their own timeframe, but the regulator would be responsible to do it and deal with the applications within that time period.

The final decision, of course, to approve an application or to deny it will remain within the regulator's purview, Mr. Speaker, except now they will be required to rule and make that decision in a timely manner, and we think that that's going to make a big difference to applicants and captains of industry that are looking for that clarity.

Once Bill 30 is passed, our government will focus on finalizing details, making internal systems updates, co-ordinating the rollout, and implementing the accelerated process. Taking action to keep the province at the forefront of permitting excellence is critical for Alberta to truly unleash its potential, Mr. Speaker. Industry has been calling for it. Even NGOs across the country and North America have been calling for it. We need more clarity and more certainty. Taking action to keep the province at the forefront of this is absolutely critical as we go through this geopolitical time, especially given our assets and our resources here in Alberta.

Passage of this bill would allow our province to compete with some of the other jurisdictions around the world that are much more aggressive and much better at this kind of thing, Mr. Speaker, but it will also give us the opportunity to seek those investments from other jurisdictions where we, quite frankly, just are not able to attract. We need to grow our economy, and we need people, organizations to come into Alberta and invest and create wealth and create jobs.

Taking action today is absolutely critical for Alberta to ensure prosperity for decades to come. I believe, Mr. Speaker, and I would submit to you that this bill would send a strong, positive signal to industry that Alberta's government is committed to getting these important projects built in a timely manner with certainty and predictability to industry.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby move second reading of Bill 30, I think one of the most important acts this Legislature will deal with, the Expedited 120-Day Approvals Act.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Al-Guneid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to join debate and offer a few thoughts on Bill 30. I want to start by saying that, of course, we want to build big projects in Alberta and, of course, we want to see regulatory efficiency and timely approvals. Business leaders and investors say time and time again that they want certainty and they want to understand the rules, and the rules in Alberta cannot disrespect treaty rights, cannot disrespect Indigenous consultations, and cannot ignore environmental protections. This will cause major delays and impact the certainty that companies actually need to invest in our province.

3:30

I do actually appreciate what the minister said on April 15, 2026. No project can actually be submitted in the process without completing the environmental impact assessment and the Indigenous consultation, which obviously deals with courts, and we want to make sure that process is dealt with appropriately. If it's not, the project won't go ahead.

I do appreciate that clarity, actually, on how the environmental assessment and Indigenous consultation must be completed before applying for that 120-day review period.

However, that's not what Bill 30 actually says. Section 2(2)(g) requires a "proof acceptable to the Minister of the status of any planned, ongoing or completed consultations with Indigenous communities respecting the project." A planned consultation is not a completed consultation, Mr. Speaker, and what defines a proof here? Will a social media posting seeking consultation qualify, for example? Is sending an e-mail to Indigenous communities a proof acceptable to the minister? What is the actual standard here? And why not make this potential law as clear as what the energy minister had said in his actual statement? Very clear, very crisp. Why not spell it out and spell out Alberta's duty to consult in this bill? The duty to consult is not mentioned even once in this bill, and I do not see any amendments to other statutes that impact the ministries of energy or environment or Indigenous affairs.

When Crown land is used for projects or development, there is a duty to consult with Indigenous peoples. This duty to consult is included in Canada's Constitution, under part 2 of the Constitution Act of 1982. That is clear; however, it is unclear what this bill does. It sounds like the minister is creating a committee, another committee, to review projects for him, for his office. It doesn't provide clarity on existing laws or changing statutes anywhere else, and we certainly, Mr. Speaker, do not want to see good projects being stuck in courts because the government did not provide clear policies for project proponents.

Then comes section 2(2)(f) that requires, again, proof of the status of the environmental impact assessment. Again, my question is: what is an acceptable status? What's an acceptable proof here? Is this an initial contract with an environmental consultancy or a company? What does this mean, actually?

Mr. Speaker, I do agree that geopolitics are complex right now. It's very hard to predict what's going to happen tomorrow. With the U.S.-Israel war on Iran we've seen a shock in the system and a shock to oil prices, with prices moving as much as \$25 USD a day. The tanker shipping costs alone increase significantly with the war. It's not only the turbulence in oil prices but the turbulence in prices across the value chain. We're seeing global energy shortages and jet fuel shortages – goodbye vacations in the future – and Alberta families are feeling this impact right here at the pump right now in Alberta. We are in an affordability crisis, and this is an added crisis that we're seeing.

We heard this week from the CEO of the International Energy Agency, Dr. Fatih Birol, who said that oil and gas aren't the only

two commodities now missing from the world's markets; it is also trust and predictability, Mr. Speaker. That's where Canada comes in. Obviously, that's where Alberta comes in as Canada's energy capital and Canada's oil and gas capital.

Yes, Alberta's major projects deserve to be greenlit in a timely manner in this crisis with efficient regulatory process while respecting Indigenous consultations and environmental impact assessments, and companies need certainty and clear rules, but the language in this bill is vague and it does not match the ambition and it does not match what the minister actually said in the House. Will the minister amend this bill to match what he actually said and make it clear for project proponents?

Mr. Speaker, while the majority of the conversation around Bill 30 speaks to the projects and impacts on the oil and gas industry, the legislation could apply equally to other industries, including mining, utilities, forestry, transit, and data centres, anything really from what I can see in this bill. My question is: how will this bill apply to renewable energy projects as well? The UCP government's policies have practically brought the renewable energy sector to an absolute halt. We haven't really seen renewable projects built since the ridiculous UCP moratorium on renewables in 2023 because the UCP government spooked investors with their renewables ban. Then the government doubled down on scaring away investors by adding so much red tape and unfair rules. It has piled on red tape. Where is the red tape reduction minister here? He seems to be missing in action. Renewable energy corporate deals have dropped by 99 per cent as of 2025 due to all this red tape implemented by this government.

There is a compounded effect here. The government has injected so much uncertainty with the redesign of the electricity market that does not provide a clear path for major energy development in the province in that sector. There are also targeted policies by the UCP government against renewables, from the moratorium to the vague rules of pristine viewscape and the 35-kilometre buffer to the hypocritical 30 per cent upfront security requirement, that no other sector has. Then we have the new – it's under implementation – the \$15 per module or recycling fee. Now the new consultation: the government has just directed the Alberta Utilities Commission to conduct targeted consultations this year to establish new default setback standards for renewable infrastructure from residential buildings.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be super clear. I do agree that communities need to come on board. We need to bring communities on board, and we need to listen and consult with rural Alberta when these major projects happen, but what we see here are deliberate targeted policies against one sector only. No other sector – no other sector – has gone under such UCP-targeted and unfair policies like renewable energy projects in that sector. It is death by a thousand cuts. If the utilities minister is clearly doing a great job in stopping investments in the renewable sector through adding so much red tape, where is the minister of red tape reduction? And how will the energy minister through Bill 30 . . .

Mr. Nally: Right here.

Ms Al-Guneid: Well, start doing the job, Minister.

How will the energy minister through Bill 30 help major projects in the renewable energy sector come back from the dead?

I would like to see this bill applied to the renewable energy sector to provide the regulatory efficiency and investor certainty instead of this deliberate pile-on of red tape on the sector, the biggest red tape around the renewable sector. Again, no other sector has seen such type of targeted red tape.

Mr. Speaker, besides removing the red tape and ensuring regulatory efficiency, one of the biggest challenges for the business community right now is separatism fears in Alberta. That is stalling projects in Alberta right now. We've seen the chief executive officer of ATCO, Nancy Southern, say that discussions around Alberta's secession are already hurting the investment climate. She said that Asian partners in a major hydrogen project have said that they won't make a final investment decision unless there's certainty around the Alberta separatism question. I quote here. She says: there are just too many questions for them to be confident that they can move forward with large-scale investment decisions, so I think that the separatist discussion is very unhelpful and not constructive to Alberta. End quote. She continues and says: investors in major projects are asking how an independent Alberta would get its products to coastal ports, what kind of trade deals it would have with its neighbours, what currency we'd use, and how stable the economy would be. These were questions from ATCO.

3:40

I do want to say that I truly understand Albertans' frustration with the federal government, Mr. Speaker, over the years. I do recognize the anger and frustration. However, Alberta brings incredible value to Canada, and we gain from our participation within Confederation: health care transfers under the Canada Health Act, the Canada pension plan, the great Canadian passport, the RCMP, the military and intelligence services, and education supports that cannot be taken for granted, not to mention our national pride and a team to cheer on at the Olympics and international events.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen the impact of separatist talk and referendum in the last 25 years in Quebec post their own separation referendum. The GDP per capita growth has averaged a little more than 1 per cent. Quebec went from being one of the have provinces, which is the phrase we use for the richer half of Canada, to being one of the have-not provinces. Quebec never recovered. The forces threatening an Alberta separation from Canada are troubling and impacting our investment climate in these major projects that this bill is trying to expedite.

Could Alberta have a better deal in Confederation? Most likely. And we can make our voice heard and engage in firm negotiations while maintaining a stable investment and jobs environment in our province. I have to say that the MOU talks by the UCP government and the Premier are encouraging, and we have a Prime Minister that has extended the olive branch to Alberta. We must support these efforts, Mr. Speaker, and I support these efforts because it has to be country over politics. It has to be Alberta over politics, and the UCP government plays a critical role in bringing down the temperature in Alberta to stop fuelling the grievances and the separatist sentiment.

Talk on separation is deeply out of step with where the country is headed as well, Mr. Speaker. Provinces are looking to drop interprovincial trade barriers and work together to grow Canada's economy, and we need a trade strategy that puts Canadians first, one that protects our values and advances our prosperity. I love Canada. I love Alberta. Albertans are proud Canadians. That's what I hear from Albertans across the province and in my constituency of Calgary-Glenmore. This country is not perfect, and we have big challenges as a nation, but it is so worth fighting for that every single day.

So I implore the members opposite, the minister, the Premier to take Alberta separatism off the table. They can do this not only to provide the investment certainty and expedite major projects in Alberta but to protect our province and our country, Mr. Speaker. We have this duty and responsibility as elected officials in Alberta's Legislature right now.

In conclusion, I do appreciate the intent of Bill 30, Mr. Speaker, to streamline and to focus on project reviews. I truly don't believe the bill has all the necessary elements to ensure certainty for companies. It is unclear what it does. We understand that a review committee will be formed to review projects – hurrah for another committee – that will review in no more than 120 business days. We need to be clear here. It's 120 business days, which is five to six months. It also remains to be seen how the 120-day decision timeline will operate for major projects requiring public hearings. We haven't seen what this means, where the schedules must abide by the rules of procedural fairness.

I worked in the oil sands sector, Mr. Speaker, and the project I worked on was delayed by a year due to a public hearing, so I hope the regulations will bring some clarity and certainty to project proponents on how hearings will fit in with all this and their unpredictable schedule. You can't change a hearing. This 120-day period is not an automatic yes due to the requirements of Indigenous consultations and environmental impact assessments.

We also don't see amendments to existing statutes or other laws, so what is new here? Is it forming a review committee for the minister? The minister can form a review committee without creating a bill and wasting the Legislature's time, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing to see here. Expediting approvals is one thing; cutting corners that could lead to delays in years-long court challenges is another.

While we support Bill 30, the UCP must ensure corners are not cut that could cost companies and the economy down the line. We want to build major projects in Alberta. This needs to happen, Mr. Speaker, and the way you do this is by rolling up your sleeves and doing the hard work, not shortcuts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 30, the Expedited 120-Day Approvals Act. I, you know, have questions similar to my colleague from Calgary-Glenmore, but I do want to start also by saying that, of course, I support projects that build our economy and create stability and predictability for industry. Of course, I support processes that are efficient – I hate inefficiency just in general – so I support projects going through an application process in a timely manner. But it is really unclear to me how this bill addresses any slowdown in approvals because I'm not actually sure, when I read this bill, where the barriers are or, like, where the slowdowns in approvals are. This bill doesn't amend any existing statutes or legislation or processes. It just says that we're going to finish things in 120 days. It doesn't really identify what will be different.

I want to zoom in on clauses 2(2)(f) and (g) because those, to me, are the really important ones in the bill. They talk about how environmental impact assessment and First Nations consultation status must be provided. I don't really know what "status" means. You could say that it's ongoing or started. That is a status. That doesn't mean it's been completed. The minister has said in the House that environmental impact assessments and First Nations consultation processes must be completed before projects could enter this 120-day review time, but that is not what is in the act.

I think what we have seen from previous pieces of legislation that have come forward from this government is that if it's not in the legislation, we cannot guarantee that that is how it will happen. When we stood in this House and debated the All-season Resorts Act, the Minister of Tourism and Sport assured me that all standard public consultation protocols would be followed to create all-season resort designated areas. Then the first all-season resort

designated areas that we saw contravened that standard protocol and practice. So I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, if I don't trust this government to just do the right thing and make sure that all standard protocols are followed. If it's not in the piece of legislation, I can't trust that it will happen.

That frustrates me, Mr. Speaker, and it should frustrate industry as well because it actually means that the 120-day approval might not be a 120-day approval. If the process isn't completed, it could get bounced back to the proponent, and then they're told to complete it, which would mean that it's not 120 days. Oh, maybe it'll be 200 or 300 or 500 days. I think that if it's not in the legislation, we can't guarantee that it'll happen, and that is frustrating for me and for others.

The clauses say the "proof acceptable to the Minister" for the status of an EIA and for the First Nations consultation. Well, I don't love that. I've talked about that in the House before. I don't actually like it when the minister gets to decide when something is done because the minister can change. As I have said many times in this House, we need to have more specific criteria of what is proof acceptable to the minister, what is status of the process, and that is not in here. That's highly problematic.

3:50

This bill creates a project co-ordination review team to provide recommendations to the minister on if a project should be approved or not, again leaving it in the hands of the minister to decide. That's also problematic to me, Mr. Speaker, because the act doesn't define which minister. It could be any or all ministers for any or all projects.

Are all-season resorts included in this 120-day approval process? I get e-mails about all-season resorts every single day right now because every single all-season resort that's been proposed is in my riding of Banff-Kananaskis. I can tell you that the length of time of the approval process and the thoroughness of that process is the biggest concern that is coming forward from my constituents. Did those apply to this 120-day approval process also? What about the AI data centres that have come forward that we've been asking about in the House on multiple occasions? Do they also now apply to this?

No offence, Mr. Speaker, but I get very little confidence whenever I ask the ministers opposite about an environmental impact assessment. I have very little confidence that they truly understand what it is and why it's important and why we do them, so I'm just going to take a moment to describe why environmental impact assessments are important and why they take so long. I don't think the members opposite truly understand. One of the reasons why EIAs take a long time is because we have seasons here. We have four seasons, in fact, and winter is very different from summer. The animals are very different in their behaviours and habitat choices or even, in the case of migratory birds, if they're even here. You can't conduct an environmental impact assessment over the winter and say that those results apply to year-round wildlife habitat security and availability and population and distribution because many of those animals aren't active during the winter.

I see the members opposite kind of chuckling at this idea that we have seasons, but I'll also just say that I have read environmental impact assessments that tried to say that winter was sufficient for fieldwork to assess impacts on wildlife movement and habitat use year-round.

There is a reason why environmental impact assessments take so long, and there's a reason why those environmental impact assessments need to be so thorough. We're talking about large projects with potentially large impacts on the land, water, and communities. It takes time to do a good job here, so I would really

hate for an act like this to lead to cutting corners or doing a bad job just to try to meet a deadline. If there's one thing that I have learned in doing wildlife-based research, it's that the existence of a deadline doesn't make you do better work. The existence of a deadline, if you're just by yourself, forces you to consider how to do a worse job but make it look like you still did a good job.

In the bill briefing I did ask people if this bill will result in hiring more people to review project proposals so that they can get these projects reviewed in a more timely fashion. The answer was no. So if you're not increasing the capacity of the people to review these proposals and you're not changing the amount of information that is required for this process, because apparently environmental impact assessments and First Nations consultation will need to be completed, I don't really know what's new.

I don't think, unlike the minister's insinuations, that people in the public service and in the regulator are sitting on their thumbs waiting for something to happen. I think they're all working very hard to review the projects that are coming across their desks. Giving them a deadline of 120 days without changing anything else in the system is not going to help projects go through the process any faster, Mr. Speaker. It's just going to create a lot of stress for the people who are actually doing the work and reviewing these project proposals. I don't think that people in the public service and in the regulator are slacking off. I think they're busting their butts to try to do all of the work that is being asked of them.

I just want to take a moment to say thanks because I think that the work that they're doing is incredibly hard. It's really complex. These large processes, these large projects, are complex. If we don't take the time to fully understand the impacts of these developments, we run the risk of creating lawsuits and massive environmental liabilities that future Albertans will have to take care of.

The importance of First Nations consultation also cannot be understated. There are multiple lawsuits from First Nations against the government of Alberta right now because they haven't done their due diligence to take the time to understand cumulative effects or the impacts of existing developments on water quality, land use, traditional rights, traditional access to lands, and many more factors. So if we're doing the best job in the world on First Nations consultation, which we aren't – it's almost insulting that the minister could even insinuate that. But if we were, wow. Wow. We should actually be working every single day to improve our processes for First Nations consultation and engagement on large projects. It's actually embarrassing to me that the minister would even stand up there and say that we have one of the best systems in the world for First Nations engagement and consultation.

I used to work for the public service, Mr. Speaker. I've done the First Nations consultation as per the Aboriginal consultation office, and I can tell you that one of the first things that I heard from every Indigenous consultation office that I met with was how it felt like it was a box-ticking exercise and not meaningful and not providing enough time or funding for site visits to accurately consider the treaty rights and the true relationship to the land that our Indigenous brothers and sisters bring to the table. It's a box-ticking exercise. It's a rubber stamp. It doesn't generate respect, and it definitely isn't addressing truth and reconciliation, and it is definitely not the best in the world. It is not. Our environmental impact assessment process is also ...

Mr. Jean: Name one.

Dr. Elmeligi: There are so many.

Our environmental impact assessment is also not the best in the world, Mr. Speaker. It isn't. I'm sorry. We have a government that

is exempting three data centres from having to do an environmental impact assessment right now. In Bill 31 the government has included clauses where the Alberta regulator doesn't have to conduct public hearings. Well, that will feed quite nicely into this 120-day approval if public hearings don't have to be conducted on these large projects.

All of these things together contribute to a government that isn't taking this seriously. While I support regulatory efficiencies and I support 120-day approvals, I actually think this bill is disingenuous because I don't think it will be able to be honoured because still all of that background work will have to be done before a project is funnelled through this process for the 120-day approval.

So I'm struggling a little bit to think about what problem this bill solves because it doesn't identify how it's going to make things move faster. It doesn't identify increasing capacity in the regulator. It doesn't identify what is proof acceptable to the minister of environmental impact assessments or First Nations consultations. And I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I don't trust this minister when it comes to his ability to judge whether an EIA or First Nations consultation is adequate. He proves – not him. Sorry. This government proves and demonstrates every single day that they don't understand what an effective EIA is or what adequate First Nations consultation is.

So while I support the bill, there's no way I trust this government to implement it in a way that actually serves the people.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Any others wishing to speak to Bill 30?

The minister has an opportunity to close debate if he so wishes. That has been waived.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a second time]

Bill 31

Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, based on the second-last speech the Member for Calgary-Glenmore will be very thrilled that I rise to move second reading of Bill 31, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. I believe she was asking for that if I heard correctly.

At its core, red tape reduction is about one simple idea, making life easier. It means fewer unnecessary rules, faster decisions, and a government that works at the speed of people that actually live and do business. That that's what this bill is about. Since 2018 Alberta's government has eliminated nearly 220,000 regulatory requirements. We've cut red tape by more than one-third, and we've saved people and businesses over \$3 billion. We've been recognized as a national leader for that work, but we're not slowing down. This is our 11th red tape reduction bill. That matters, Mr. Speaker, because it shows that it isn't a one-off effort. It's how we govern. If you're not actively cutting red tape, then it grows back. It slows things down, and it makes life harder for people.

4:00

Bill 31 proposes changes to 18 pieces of legislation across eight different ministries. Some are technical; some are housekeeping, but taken together they make government simpler, faster, and easier to deal with, and that's what people care about. Let me walk through a few examples. It starts with something that affects every single Albertan, time. Albertans are tired of changing their clocks twice a year. We're tired of learning how to reprogram our ovens twice a year. It's outdated, Mr. Speaker, it's inconvenient, and it doesn't reflect how people live or work today. We're proposing to put an end to seasonal time change and move to one consistent time year-

round, Alberta time. No more spring forward. No more fall back. Just one consistent time all year.

Now, I know there are questions about what that means in practice. In some parts of the province mornings will be darker for a bit longer, but that daylight doesn't disappear. It just shifts. It moves later into the day. When people are driving home from work, picking up their kids, or trying to get outside after a long day, it will still be light out.

That's something we don't always have today, Mr. Speaker, and that matters. We're already on daylight time for about eight months of the year. If we went the other direction and stayed on standard time year-round, some communities would see the sunrise as early as 4 in the morning. That's not practical. That's not how people live their lives. This change reflects how people actually use their day. It gives families more usable daylight in the evenings, more time to be outside, more time together. Beyond that, it brings consistency. No more adjusting clocks. No more missed meetings or scheduling confusion. Just one predictable system that works year-round.

We're not alone in this. Across western Canada there's a clear move in this direction. Saskatchewan has been on a fixed time for decades. The Northwest Territories is moving to end the seasonal time change. British Columbia would remain one hour behind us year-round. That creates a consistent and predictable difference across the region. South of the border many U.S. states are looking at doing the same thing. So this isn't Alberta going out on its own. It's alignment, it's consistency, and it's a practical response to how people live and work today. At the end of the day, this is a simple change, but it makes a real difference and it's exactly what red tape reduction is all about.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about iGaming. Online gambling is already here. The majority of it is unregulated with zero player safety or social responsibility standards. As we move towards a regulated market, our job is to make sure the rules can keep up. These amendments allow advertising standards to be set through the AGLC, and that will give us flexibility. It allows us to respond quickly as the market evolves, and it ensures strong protections for Albertans, clearer rules, faster updates, better safeguards. That's what this change delivers.

Now I want to turn to how government systems actually work. Take land titles. We're modernizing the system through ARLO. That means secure digital submissions, reduced backlogs, faster turnaround times, less waiting, and more predictability, a system that works the way people expect it to.

We're also updating the Condominium Property Act, improving governance, strengthening accountability, and making dispute resolution faster and more accessible. We're aligning tenancy legislation to provide a clear, consistent 365-day notice period. That's about clarity, that's about certainty, and that's about making the rules easier to understand.

Mr. Speaker, this bill isn't limited to one ministry. It reflects a coordinated effort across government. In Advanced Education we're improving clarity on professional governance; in agriculture we're allowing irrigation districts to communicate the way people actually communicate, through e-mail and websites instead of newspapers, simple change but real impact; in Energy and Minerals we're removing outdated references; in environment we're eliminating duplicative requirements while maintaining strong protections; and in Forestry and Parks we're creating clearer rules for day-to-day operations, less time navigating process and more time delivering results.

That's really what this all comes down to. Each of these changes may seem incremental on its own, but together they add up to something much bigger. They reduce friction, they improve clarity, and they speed things up. They make government easier to deal with, and that's the goal because, at the end of the day, red tape reduction isn't about government; it's about people. It's about

making things work better for Albertans. If passed, this bill will continue building Alberta's reputation as the best place in Canada to live, work, and invest. I encourage all members of this House to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-North East.

Member Gurinder Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Imagine a picture of a public hall that exists in every community in this province, whether it is a big-city neighbourhood, a small town, or a settlement that has been there for generations. It might be a community league hall, a seniors centre, cultural hall, friendship centre, parish hall, legion, or a town hall, but people know what it means. There is a clock on the wall, there is a sign-in book at the door, and there is someone responsible for looking after the place, checking the exits, making sure the lights work, making sure the building is safe, making sure the hall belongs to everyone, not just the loudest voice in the room. That hall is not fancy. It is not perfect, but it is public. It belongs to the people.

That is how I look at a government, Mr. Speaker. A government is the public hall of democracy. It is where important decisions are made, where we keep the records, and where we respect the voice of the community. When a government brings forward a bill like Bill 31, we have to ask: what are they doing inside that public hall? Are they listening to the people who use it, are they protecting the sign-in book, are they allowing the caretaker to do their job, or are they walking in with the attitude that they own that place, that the clock can be changed no matter what the community voted for, that the guest book can be handed over to private interests, that the caretaker can be told to stand aside when something dangerous is happening? That is the heart of my concern with Bill 31.

This is an omnibus bill. It touches many pieces of legislation across many ministries, but when we step back, three parts stand out. First, this bill puts Alberta on permanent daylight savings time. Second, this bill gives the AGLC authority to sell personal information connected to assets such as Play Alberta if those assets were sold. Third, this bill appears to restrict the authority of the AER by repealing provisions related to inquiries and ground disturbances under the Oil and Gas Conservation Act, Oil Sands Conservation Act, and Pipeline Act.

Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on those three things – the clock on the wall, the sign-in book at the door, and the caretaker of the public hall – because Bill 31 is not just about paperwork; it is about trust. It is about whether Albertans can trust this UCP government to respect a vote, it is about whether Albertans can trust this UCP government with their personal information, and it is about whether Albertans can trust this UCP government to protect landowners, communities, public safety, and the environment when powerful interests are involved.

Let's begin with the clock on the wall. Albertans have had a long debate about daylight saving time. It is not new. Parents talk about it when children's sleep schedules are disrupted. Workers talk about it when shifts change. Farmers, health care workers, teachers, small-business owners, seniors, and commuters all have opinions about it. I want to be very clear. There are Albertans on both sides of this issue in good faith. Some people are tired of changing the clocks. Some people prefer more daylight in the evening. That is why a government should listen carefully.

4:10

In 2021 Albertans voted on a referendum on this issue. The official result is reflected on the Elections Alberta website, and a

narrow majority voted against it. In a public hall when members vote, you do not keep calling the meeting until you finally get the answer you want. You do not say: well, perhaps the member did not understand the question. You do not say: well, perhaps the vote was inconvenient. You do not say: well, we know better than the members who showed up. You respect that vote. This is the democratic principle at stake here.

The government may say that people hate changing the clocks. Maybe many do. The government may say that this is a simple modernization. Maybe it sounds simple. The government may say that Alberta should have Alberta time, but no branding exercise can erase this fact, that Albertans were asked a question and Albertans gave an answer. This is the problem with this government, Mr. Speaker. The problem is not simply the clock; the problem is the attitude, the attitude of this UCP government, that public input matters only when it supports what the UCP already wants to do. That should worry every Albertan because if this government can ignore a referendum on time, what will they do with future referendums? If it can shrug off the voice of Albertans on this issue, what assurance do Albertans have that it will protect the voice of the people on issues that are larger, that are deeper, and that are more consequential?

Mr. Speaker, this is not how the public hall should be run. The clock on the wall belongs to everyone. The decision about the clock should not be treated as a declaration that this Premier can move around whenever it suits her. Right now this government is showing Albertans that when the people vote, the UCP listens only if the vote goes their way.

Now let us turn to the sign-in book at the door. Every public hall has some kind of record: who booked the hall, who attended the meeting, who trusted the organizers with their information. That sign-in book is not merchandise. It is not a side asset. It is not something to be bundled up and sold because it happens to sit in a public place, but Bill 31 opens the door to exactly the kind of concern Albertans should be alarmed about. The bill would allow the AGLC to sell and disclose personal information with cabinet approval when personal information is connected to an asset being sold. The bill says that cabinet must be satisfied that reasonable measures are in place to protect the personal information after sale, and it sets some limit on how a purchaser may use it, but that does not answer the central question. Why is the government creating a pathway to sell Albertans' personal information at all?

This matters especially when we talk about Play Alberta. Play Alberta is not just a sign on the wall. It's not just a brand. It's not just a line in the balance sheet. It is connected to real people, real vulnerabilities, real households. And when someone engages with the public gambling platform, that information can be sensitive. It can reveal habits, financial behaviour, risks, addiction concerns, and personal circumstances. It is not the same as selling old chairs from that public hall. This is where the UCP's priorities become very clear. Instead of asking, "How do we protect people from gambling harm?;" instead of asking, "How do we strengthen public health and addiction supports?;" and instead of asking, "How do we make sure public platforms serve the public interests?;" the UCP is asking, "How do we prepare the ground in case we want to sell?"

That should be an alarm for all of us because there is a larger pattern here, Mr. Speaker. The UCP has shown time and again that it is far too comfortable turning public assets into private opportunities. They look at the public hall; they see a sale sign. They look at the sign-in book; they see a commercial asset. They look at people's trust and treat it like a line item.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have very fresh reasons to be concerned about data. Albertans saw serious allegations and investigations

around the unauthorized use and public exposure of millions of Albertans' information that got posted in a searchable online database until a court order required it to be taken down. What's more concerning is that the president of the UCP and staff from the Premier's office attended that meeting, yet they did not do anything to report to relevant authorities.

So when this government asks Albertans to trust them with more pathways for personal information to be sold or transferred, Albertans have every right to ask: who gets notified? What happens if someone does not want their information to be sold? How will this protect people who used a public platform because they believed their information would remain under public control?

Mr. Speaker, the sign-in book at the public hall belongs to the people who signed it. It does not belong to a private corporation. It does not belong to this UCP corrupt cabinet. It does not belong to whichever buyer is waiting outside the door. The UCP should not be creating a legal doorway to sell Albertans' personal information while asking us to simply trust them.

It is even more troubling that this issue is tied to gambling because gambling is not just entertainment for everyone. For some Albertans it's an addiction. It's a debt. It's a public health issue, Mr. Speaker. A responsible government would treat that reality seriously. A responsible government would say that public data, public assets, and public health must be protected together, but this government seems more interested in setting the table for privatization than strengthening the protections for people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let us turn to the caretaker of the hall. In any public hall someone must be able to act when something goes wrong. If the roof leaks, someone needs authority to fix it. If the door is blocked, someone needs authority to clear it. If there is a hazard outside, someone needs authority to stop people before they get hurt. That is the basic idea of any regulator.

The Alberta Energy Regulator is supposed to ensure the safe, orderly, and environmentally responsible development of energy resources in Alberta, but we all know the AER has problems. The AER has been criticized for being too close to industry. Landowners have raised their concerns, municipalities have raised their concerns, people who care about water, land, and public safety have raised their concerns, and this year reporting said that the AER exposed the e-mail addresses of nearly 600 people who submitted comments about a controversial coal mine project in Crowsnest Pass.

And what does Bill 31 do to protect it? It repeals provisions that allowed the AER to hold inquiries in certain circumstances under the Oil and Gas Conservation Act and the Oil Sands Conservation Act, and it repeals Pipeline Act provisions related to inquiries where construction, operation, or a ground disturbance have been suspended. Now, the government may say: "Do not worry at all. These sections are obsolete. These matters are handled elsewhere. The Responsible Energy Development Act supersedes them." Fine. Then answer the questions plainly. If a landowner raises a concern, who responds? If there is a ground disturbance, who intervenes? If a well or facility is shut down, what inquiry rights remain?

Albertans are tired of being told by this government: trust us. They have been told to trust this government on coal. They have been told to trust this government on health care; 90 days, Mr. Speaker. They have been told to trust this government on data, and again and again they find out that the doors were being opened behind them.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, we do not fix a regulator that already struggles to earn public confidence by removing tools and saying: do not ask too many questions. The answer is to make it work for the public. The answer

is independence. The answer is accountability. The answer is transparency. So when landowners call, someone answers; when communities raise concerns, someone listens; and when there is a hazard, someone has the authority and courage to act. Bill 31 does not give Albertans that confidence. It gives them more uncertainty.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the public hall because this bill has other pieces, too. It changes how strategic capital plans are prepared, rules around condominium boards, land titles, irrigation district notices, hazardous waste transportation processes, park management, rules around regional and subregional plants. It changes the Women's Institute Act. Some of those changes may be administrative, but they are all being carried into the same hall under the same banner: red tape reduction.

Here's the problem, the fundamental problem with this government's vision and version of red tape reduction. For the UCP red tape means any rule that gets in the way of what they already want. A referendum result: red tape. Privacy safeguards: red tape. Regulatory inquiry powers: red tape. Public consultation: red tape. Environmental protection: red tape. Dead children are also red tape for this government. But for Albertans those things are not red tape; they're the locks on that public hall.

The UCP keeps telling Albertans that they are cutting red tape, but too often what they are really cutting is the cord of public accountability, and Albertans can see it, Mr. Speaker. They see a government that says it believes in referendums until the people vote the wrong way. They see a government that says it believes in privacy while opening the door to the sale of personal information to their private friends. They see a government that says it believes in responsible development while making the regulator less clear and less trusted.

This is a government with the wrong priorities, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nally: Then why are we crushing you in the polls?

Member Gurinder Brar: Call the election.

At a time when Albertans are worried about the cost of groceries, rent, insurance, this government is focused on changing the clocks. At a time when Albertans are worried about access to health care, this government is preparing pathways for gambling-related public assets and data to move towards private hands. At a time when landowners and communities need confidence in regulation, this government is making the AER's role less clear. This is not leadership; this is arrogance dressed up in administration. This is ideology wrapped in an omnibus bill, Mr. Speaker. This is a government walking into the public hall and acting as if the hall belongs to them. It does not. It belongs to Albertans, and that is why New Democrats oppose this approach.

But, Mr. Speaker, opposition is not enough. Albertans deserve to know what a better government would do. An NDP government would respect the voice of the people. When Albertans vote in a referendum, we would not treat that result like inconvenience. We would respect it. We would remember that democracy is not just asking people a question; it is about accepting the answer. An NDP government would protect public data and public assets. We would not treat personal information like a commodity. We would not open the door to selling the data connected to public platforms. We would put Albertans' privacy ahead of corporate convenience.

An NDP government would protect public health, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about gambling and iGaming, we talk honestly about addictions. We would invest in prevention, invest in treatment, counselling, harm reduction, recovery supports, and mental health care. We would not allow private profit to come before people's well-being.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

An NDP government would make sure the AER does the job it should be doing. That means a regulator that is independent, accountable, and focused on the public interest. That is the future Albertans deserve, a government that respects the vote, a government that guards the records, a government that keeps the hall safe.

Madam Speaker, Bill 31 asks this Assembly to accept too much on faith. That is unacceptable. It asks to trust the UCP on regulatory changes. It is too much to ask. Albertans deserve more than: trust us. They deserve answers. They deserve protection. They deserve respect. So I say to this government that before you change the clock, respect the people who voted on it. Before you sell the sign-in book, ask the people whose names . . .

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

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to oppose Bill 31, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. Albertans elect a government and expect one simple thing, that when they speak, you listen. This UCP government: they win the vote and turn their back every single time. This bill proves that it is not red tape reduction. It cuts out Albertans' voice.

Madam Speaker, look at the pattern. When the teachers' strike happened, teachers stood up for our kids and for themselves. Families stood with them. Albertans said loud and clear: give our kids everything they need to succeed in their life and treat our educators fairly. And what this government did: they rammed through the notwithstanding clause and crushed the teachers' strike. No listening; just force.

Albertans said no to coal mines in our foothills. They're worried about our water, our wildlife, our land.

Mr. Nally: We're on Bill 31.

Mr. Gurtej Brar: These hecklers always go to the Rockies, Madam Speaker, enjoy their time over there, but they don't know how to respect Albertans.

This government ignored them anyway. Now we are stuck paying millions in settlements. Albertans are cleaning up a mess they never wanted.

Poll after poll showed that most Albertans want to stay in the Canada pension plan. They want stability. They want security for their retirement. This government kept pushing the exit anyway, ignored the people again and again.

Then the electoral boundaries, Madam Speaker. Months of public hearings . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt. Just a reminder to direct your comments towards the bill, Bill 31, please. Thank you.

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just mentioning what the pattern with this government is. They always ignore the voice of Albertans.

About this Bill 31, Madam Speaker, I'm talking about democracy, how it works, but this government doing what they're doing right now is not democracy. It's arrogance. When Albertans speak, experts report, communities engage, this government ignores. That's the UCP way. Democracy is not just election night. It's listening every day in between. When stopped, trust dies.

4:30

Now Bill 31: same old story; wrong priorities. Albertans are drowning in the cost-of-living crisis. Groceries are killing families' budgets. Rent is out of control. Thousands cannot find a family

doctor. Waiting lists are months long. What is this government doing? Forcing a clock change Albertans already voted against and opening the door to sell our personal data.

In 2021, Madam Speaker, Albertans voted in a clear referendum: do you want year-round daylight saving time? The majority of Albertans said no. They said: keep things the way they are; no more messing with our kids' sleep, workers' schedules, or farm routines. This bill rips the vote to shreds. It locks us into permanent daylight saving time anyway. If they will not respect a referendum from just five years ago, why would anyone trust them on the next one in October? This is not leadership. This is telling Albertans that their vote only counts on election day. After that, too bad.

It gets worse. The bill changes the Alberta liquor and cannabis act. It lets the government sell or hand over personal information from Play Alberta accounts: names, addresses, bank details, gambling habits, all of it. If they sell that public asset to a private buyer, our private lives go on the auction block. We already have enough data breaches and companies profiting from our information. As my colleague from Calgary-North East mentioned about the growing concern from Albertans among the recent voters' data leak involving the separatist group, they never asked for this. They never voted to make their personal data part of some fire sale. This government is doing it anyway, cutting red tape for buyers; cutting privacy for the rest of us.

Then they weaken the Alberta Energy Regulator. They tweak the Pipeline Act, the oil sands act, the oil and gas act, and the gas resources act. They strip away some inquiry powers. They make it easier for big projects to slide through with less scrutiny. We need strong rules to protect our waters, our land, our air, but this government is busy cutting corners.

Look at the proof. In 2013 there were only 387 orphan wells in the whole province. Today over 8,000 wells need reclaiming, and 4,200 need sealing. Shockingly, in April 2026 alone more than 4,000 new wells were added to the orphan list, the most ever in a single year, I would say in a single day. Companies walk away, taxpayers and orphan funds get stuck with the bill, and this bill makes it easier for the mess to grow. While families cannot find doctors and cannot pay their bills, this government is busy weakening the watchdog that's supposed to protect our environment.

Madam Speaker, priorities are completely upside down. This is not red tape reduction; this is respect reduction. This government thinks it knows better than teachers, better than ranchers, better than retirees, better than the majority of Albertans who voted no on the time change. Those Albertans are watching us right now. They expect us to stand up and say: "Your voice matters. Your vote matters. Your future matters more than short-term favours for insiders." Bill 31 fails that test. It puts politics before people.

I urge every member to vote no on Bill 31. Send a clear message: Albertans' voices still count. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer some thoughts on Bill 31, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. Before I get into the bulk of my comments, I want to thank my friends from Calgary-North East and Edmonton-Ellerslie for their thoughtful remarks. They've certainly both hit on most of the major issues that I have with this bill. I just want to really focus on a couple of the key points that I think need to be reinforced and that I've been hearing concerns about from the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Just following up on where my friend from Edmonton-Ellerslie left off with his concerns around reducing the regulator's ability to

conduct hearings and investigations into various facilities that they have the responsibility to regulate and enforce: we continually see that this government's regulator is ignoring the law. They ignored the minister's own directive to collect security. They've ignored the law to shut down operators who fail to pay their municipal taxes. It looks like they broke the law when the regulator's president met with the minister's chief of staff. So why bother changing the rules here, Madam Speaker, when the Energy Regulator clearly has no concern for following the legislation that it's given the mandate to uphold and the minister doesn't do anything to hold them accountable? You know, we're forced to ask what the point is of even having these legislations on the books or tinkering with them in a red tape reductions act like this one.

I think that, again, we will continue, as a result of the changes in this bill, to see the weakening of oversight and enforcement of the energy industry in this province. We don't have a good track record of holding the industry accountable for its financial and environmental obligations, and this will continue to get worse under this government after this legislation is passed.

I want to focus the bulk of the time that I have remaining on the changes to daylight saving time that the minister is proposing. Now, first of all, Madam Speaker, I think it's important to really get at the basics here and explain to the members opposite why days are longer in the summer than they are in the wintertime because the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, in debate around Bill 30, expressed surprise when my friend from Banff-Kananaskis got up and talked about seasons in Alberta and how they hamper the quick completion of environmental impact assessments. The reactions we saw from the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland indicated that this was the first time, I think, he realized that we had seasons in Alberta.

I know that the government has a very, let's say, tenuous relationship with science, so I think it's really important to just educate members about why we have longer days in the summer than we do in the winter. Just imagine that you're standing on a world that's evolving and revolving at 900 miles an hour. As the Earth rotates around the sun at 900 miles an hour, it's also rotating on its axis at 19 miles a second.

An Hon. Member: It's not flat?

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. That's right. I know. The Earth is a sphere.

As a result of this Earth orbiting in an ellipse around the sun and at the same time rotating on its own axis as it's orbiting the sun, we have periods of time when the Earth is tilted towards the sun, when it's at this portion of its orbit, and then portions when the northern hemisphere is tilted away from the sun, okay? I know I lost members when I said that the Earth was round, but please stick with me here.

4:40

As the Earth rotates around the sun and because it's tilted, there are times when it takes longer for the Earth to make that rotation around its axis, and that hemisphere is exposed to more daylight at those times and exposed to less daylight at the times when the northern hemisphere is pointed away from the axis. That's why we have longer days in the summertime and shorter days in the wintertime. [interjections] Yeah. And that causes problems with everyday life here in northern locations because we have significant differences between the number of daylight hours that we get in the winter as opposed to the number of daylight hours that we get in the summertime.

Certainly, daylight saving time was implemented as a way to make the daylight hours available at a time when they're more convenient

to people, you know, shifting those daylight hours to earlier in the morning, when they're inclined to get up and go to work, and saving the evening time for when they're at home with their families.

Certainly, this has been a matter of significant debate in the province for a long time. I remember that when we were in government, one of our private members brought forward a bill that would have scrapped the conversion to daylight saving time, and unfortunately our Premier at the time was a coward and caved to the demands of the NHL and that crook Gary Bettman, who conspires with the rest of the NHL officials to prevent the Edmonton Oilers from winning the Stanley Cup or prevent any Canadian team from winning the Stanley Cup for the last 33 years. She caved to Gary Bettman and his cabal of NHL cronies because they expressed concern about late start times for NHL games if we were to stay on daylight saving time all year-round.

That's shameful. It's shameful that she showed such a lack of courage, especially when one of the NHL teams, the Calgary Flames, never plays after the switch to daylight saving time anyway. So what's the point? [interjections] Listen, you know, it's not my fault the Calgary Flames suck. [interjections] Yeah. Anyway, well, the point of removing daylight saving time was a terrible one, and I am sad that the Premier showed such a shocking lack of courage at the time to adopt the motion by our own private member to scrap daylight saving time.

Regardless, Madam Speaker, in 2021 this question was put to a vote of the people of Alberta, and a majority of the people of Alberta who voted in that referendum elected to keep daylight saving time. Now, that's not a position that I personally agree with, but as a person who values democracy and input from the public on such important matters, I respect the outcome of the referendum, and I wish the government would do the same and keep daylight saving time, as the people of Alberta told this government to do in the referendum in 2021. But the government is keen to distract and deflect from its litany of scandals and corruption and is offering this as the latest distraction to the people of Alberta, so they're going forward with it.

I take issue with this bill labelling the new time zone that Alberta will be on as Alberta time. Nothing could be further from the truth. We will be on Saskatchewan time. For a government who has consistently and repeatedly stood up over the last seven years in this House and talked about how Alberta has a distinct and unique culture in Canada, for us to give up our own time zone to be on the Saskatchewan time zone is an affront to the people of Alberta. It's disrespectful to the unique culture that we have in this province.

An Hon. Member: It's about time you stand up for Alberta.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. I'm standing up for Alberta. I wish the members opposite would do so and keep Alberta on its own time zone rather than caving to the Saskatchewan time zone lobby.

Now, one of the things that I find particularly egregious about staying on Saskatchewan time year-round, Madam Speaker, is the weird distortions that it's going to have on people's perception of what a day is across that time zone.

While I was preparing for debate, I just looked up some interesting facts. Because your geographic location is a determinant for the sunset and the sunrise and it changes from east to west as well as north to south, should this bill pass, morning on December 21 in Estevan, Saskatchewan, will start at 8:43 a.m. That same morning, the people of Calgary, Alberta, will see the sunrise at 9:37 a.m. It could very well be that somebody from Calgary gets a phone call from their aunt or uncle or grandparent from Estevan, Saskatchewan, and they say, "Good morning," and somebody in Calgary will have to say: "What the heck are you talking about?

The sun hasn't come up here yet." It's absolutely egregious, and it goes against the point of having time zones in the first place.

The reason we have time zones that are the size that they are is so that the start and end of the day are roughly equivalent across the globe so that a morning will start at 8 o'clock in Calgary and it will start at 8 o'clock in Estevan, Saskatchewan, and it will start at 8 o'clock in Winnipeg and start at 8 o'clock . . . [interjections] The minister of service Alberta had the opportunity to educate us on the purpose of time zones, and he failed to do so, so I'm happy to do his job for him, Madam Speaker.

The purpose of time zones was to make sure that the day was roughly equivalent in terms of when the sun would rise and when the sun would set in a given time zone, and this government has thrown it all out the window.

This is a slippery slope here. What's to prevent Edmonton from adopting its own time zone from Calgary? In fact, you know what? I might bring forward such an amendment: make sure that Calgary is three hours behind Edmonton so that if I leave my house in Edmonton at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, I arrive in Calgary at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and I haven't wasted any time driving to Calgary, which I normally would do if I were driving to Calgary. I would waste that three hours going to Calgary, but if Calgary were three hours behind, I would lose no time at all.

That's something to consider, but I also urge the government to consider adopting a time zone that reflects Alberta's unique culture. We don't want to be on B.C. time. We don't want to be on Saskatchewan time. Perhaps we should split the difference and maybe be on Saskatchewan plus a half hour.

An Hon. Member: Like Newfoundland.

Mr. Schmidt: Like Newfoundland. Exactly.

Madam Speaker, many of us grew up learning that our favourite programs would be on at 6 o'clock, 6:30 in Newfoundland. We could change that and say that now it's 6:30 in Newfoundland and Alberta. I think by adopting this unique time zone, we would properly respect the unique culture of the people of Alberta. Instead, the government has decided to disregard the democratic will of the people, disregard the unique culture, and they're just adopting the Saskatchewan time zone.

For all of those reasons, Madam Speaker, I think that all members should vote against this bill. Thank you.

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

Would the minister like to close the debate?

4:50

Mr. Nally: Waive.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a second time]

Bill 29

Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

[Debate adjourned April 23: Ms Sigurdson speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there members that wish to join the debate on Bill 29? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again I rise in this Chamber to speak against the privatization and the creation of an American-style, two-tier health care system in this province. The minister so affectionately called our current health care system, which this government is responsible for and has been while it has

fallen apart day by day, the status quo. Looking at this piece of legislation and the suite of privatization bills that this government has introduced in this House, I fundamentally disagree with this government's status quo of our public health care system.

Our public health care system should be funded by this government for all Albertans. I say this because I think of how my relatives will be hurt by this privatized system. While we're looking solely at diagnostic testing, this system will harm low-income Albertans, which is why I am against Bill 29, another omnibus bill that amends several pieces of legislation, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act, Pharmacy and Drug Act, Provincial Health Agencies Act, and Health Insurance Premiums Act.

Madam Speaker, my main concern about how low-income folks, who are overwhelmingly my people, Indigenous people, will be harmed is just that. Our job in this place is to ensure that no harms come to Albertans. Creating an Americanized, two-tier health care system such as what is happening with diagnostic testing through this bill and the suite of bills passed by this government with cheers from the other side and comments from cabinet about health innovation: at what cost?

Look at our neighbour to the east, Saskatchewan, whose private pay for MRI program has not reduced public wait times but actually substantially increased wait times after introducing private-pay scans. Madam Speaker, in my household we have this conversation regularly, and most recently we lived it. I've spoken about my honey, who broke his ribs while trying to be young and careless a few months ago. He and I had to attend the only hospital near Edmonton-West Henday, the Misericordia hospital, which is currently under the UCP status quo. The wonderful health care professionals were under major strain, unsurprisingly. Upon arrival my partner was told that they could not estimate how long of a wait he would have to get imaging done. It ended up being just over 12 hours, or half a day, spent in the waiting room.

During this wait he and I had a conversation about private diagnostics. If you've ever met my partner, Madam Speaker, although he's incredibly patient with me, patience is not his strong suit. While we had this conversation, I would remind him, and we were both reminded of the folks sitting around us and the folks behind the counter, all of which are either constituents of mine or of the members in this Chamber.

While there the health care workers were under immense strain as several folks had called in sick. This was around early January, the height of cold, flu, and COVID season. While waiting I overheard several professionals indicating that they were going on their 12th, 13th, 14th hour of work. Our hard-working health care professionals like the nurses, doctors, custodians, and technicians were pitching in because this government will not and has not heeded their call for more staff.

Madam Speaker, I'm not just saying this as an observation. I had the chance to tour the emergency room – that very emergency room – a few days later, who'd mentioned that they needed more personnel and needed more personnel the day the new emergency wing had opened. That was not long ago. That was a few months ago. While the option of privatized diagnostics is attractive for folks who can afford them, let us remind ourselves that many Albertans are one or two paycheques away from financial concern. This government is not offering any relief for this ongoing burden of increases in costs because of trickle-down economics or whatever, but what this bill fails to recognize are the workforce needs that this Americanized, two-tier system bill does not address. Diagnostic testing needs workers. We need these technicians. And where is this privatized system going to find these workers? Well, it does not take a rocket scientist to put two and two together, and I want to talk about a very specific section of this bill in a few moments.

But back to my conversation with my partner. What came out were exactly the same concerns that I raised earlier: low-income Albertans and in particular noninsured First Nations or Inuit peoples or people that just don't have insurance. Madam Speaker, many low-income Albertans do not have that insurance and will be relegated to the public system, which will continue to be underfunded while the UCP is in government despite their inclusion of flowery preamble language into the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act saying that this government is "committed to improving access to the health care system, without financial barrier" and then immediately countering it with having a choice in how Albertans access care. Of course, access to care only matters as long as you're not a trans person in this province. So, naturally, Albertans are weary about this government meddling in affairs under the guise of innovation.

I have to talk about what we see, particularly at our hospitals, and hear about the lack of support caused by this government in all areas of vulnerable Albertans' lives, violence in our hospitals, threats against the lives of health care professionals at their workplace, folks experiencing houselessness turning to hospitals as the only place where they can get assistance because, despite a navigation centre, there is still a lack of culturally appropriate or safe housing options for folks.

The last time I had to go to the hospital before that time with my partner was again with my partner, who had to undergo more diagnostic testing for another matter a few years ago. I promise, Madam Speaker, he's not that big of a hypochondriac. Like, maybe a healthy amount of being a hypochondriac, but I do think there's something to be said about that self-referral option as well, which will undoubtedly cause the numbers of diagnostic testing to go up. But I digress. An individual does know their body better than any government could. You can ask a trans person that.

Madam Speaker, this time my honey and I were at the Royal Alex. I spent time waiting for him to finish his testing, and while there I saw my people in wheelchairs sitting outside the front door. I saw them being ushered out by security. I saw them looking for a safe place to be a Brown-skinned person on the streets of Alberta. What this demonstrates to me is a failure of the systems because of this government, not the failures of those individuals.

My people continuously get forgotten by government after government after government, and it's looking pretty intentional at this point. We have been demanding action for a very long time, longer than I've even been in this place, and when we do not have action by these conservative governments, my people suffer. We're the ones that hurt. We fall further down the rungs. We crowd the doorways of a hospital because that is symptomatic of a failure not of the people but of the government that should be working for the people, for all Albertans, not just the corporate greed of private health care facilities, not to destroy our public health care system while saying, on one hand, that this government will improve access without financial barrier. The only way to do that is to fund the public health care system. Full stop.

Madam Speaker, with the time I have left, I'd like to briefly talk about concerning changes to the Provincial Health Agencies Act, that I talked about earlier. Briefly, the amending of acquisition, leasing, and disposal of land and buildings by provincial health corporations: we saw this in the UCP's earlier bills to sell hospitals or the lands of hospitals or portions of hospitals. I won't go at length into this, but the change to section 1.975(o)(iii), the inclusion of section 5.0993 and subsection (2), in my view as an employment lawyer, brings me great concern, in particular, how antiworker this inclusion is with forcing employees of regional authorities, provincial health agencies, or provincial health corporations,

whether represented by a bargaining agent or not, to pay back their severance in the event that they were terminated.

5:00

Madam Speaker, the way this is drafted would have a former employee of those entities required to pay back their severance even in the event that they were terminated with or without cause, the latter obviously posing the most concern. An employee who was terminated without cause would have to repay their severance if they get another job with the Crown. This may be those very health care workers that move between the several health ministries – this government pretends to have cut red tape but has created more red tape by creating more health ministries – whether that's someone going from Recovery Alberta to, say, Acute Care Alberta.

Aha, Madam Speaker. That's potentially where the intention of this government is, dissuading health care professionals from going back into the public system and encouraging them to the private system lest they have to pay back their severance for being terminated without cause.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, this is why I cannot stand up for the UCP government's continuing Americanization of a two-tier health care system by pretending it is in the name of innovation and to buck the status quo. That status quo has been set by the UCP. This is their status quo. The situation of our health care system is the UCP's status quo, and Albertans deserve so much better.

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

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really pleased today to rise to speak to Bill 29, which is another step in this government's destruction of our health care system and removes consumer protections. Instead of repair, they are destroying it. The minister insists on calling it innovation, but that is serious mislabelling. It's intentionally falsely framing this when really it is looking at breaking something that was their system instead of improving it.

They have shown that they do not know what they're doing. That is why, despite several ministries with huge staff and perhaps a million dollars a day or more being paid to consultants, they cannot tell Albertans what their plan is. When they bring these bills in, they can't even tell us what they're planning in any level of detail in the regulations and what this is going to cost.

We know that with this bill people will be able to self-order diagnostics, and the bill is not limited in any way. This is just about diagnostics. We know that this is going to cost a great deal of money to our public system, and it's going to cost a great deal of money to consumers who are going to order tests and pay for tests that they see on the Internet or that their neighbours suggested that are of zero value and could cause them harm.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, when you build a bridge, you hire qualified, experienced engineers. The same goes for a health care system. People die when you make serious errors with either. Innovation is not the name for bringing in ideology and destruction. This is just opening the door. This bill is opening the door to carpet baggers like insurance companies and those corporations that come in with their big private diagnostic testing.

Let's dig into this issue a little bit. What happens when people order diagnostic tests that they do not have the knowledge or skills to even know what to order, they don't know how to interpret the result, and they certainly cannot undertake the appropriate follow-up when something is identified that's in most cases what we call an incidentaloma or maybe it's a variation of normal that could be

meaningful in a very limited number of clinical situations but usually has no clinical meaning?

In the health system tests now need to be ordered by a person that has the knowledge to order the right test for the right situation. This protects patients from unnecessary tests, it avoids the false comfort that comes from doing the wrong test and thinking everything is fine, and it avoids wasting a huge amount of money. In many cases tests can only be ordered by specialists with the expertise in that particular condition that the patient is being followed for because when you order, let's say, an MRI scan, there isn't something that's just called an MRI scan. An MRI scan then needs a recipe. It's like you're ordering dinner. You have to be more specific about: well, what exactly do you want here? What are you looking for?

I worked in the area of multiple sclerosis. Over the years first we had no MRI scans – I'm pretty old; been around a long time – then they came in, and they continue to evolve what is done, in terms of the physics and the sequencing and the value of the different tests, to the situation that people are having that test for. An MRI scan will have a menu of different sequences. You'll have to determine: well, what do you want the scan of? In multiple sclerosis sometimes we also want to get the cervical spine as well as the brain. Sometimes we want to include the orbits to look at inflammation at the back of the eye and see the optic nerves well. We want to do different sequences that highlight different things within the brain. Is there inflammation? Is there damage to the axons?

All of that takes expertise, and the average physician even is not going to know what to order. The radiologist often determines which sequences are being done, but they're done in collaboration with the specialist who orders the test because you know what you're looking for. Either there's a conversation, or it's a common problem that you see in a subspecialty, and you know what needs to be communicated to the radiologist so that they can then protocol that scan so you get the right scan to give you the answer that you want.

There are many tests that are done that are just completely the wrong test. The science changes over time, such that do you want a CT scan for that or an MRI scan for that? It depends what you're looking for, and it depends on those sequences. Individuals are not going to know this. Primary care physicians are not going to know this in the context of many, many conditions, so we're going to have people that are going to be going and having tests done that are not going to answer the question that they have in their mind, but they might in some cases be reassured that things are fine when maybe they're not. If they'd seen a physician and the right test, which might not even be imaging, was done, they would be better off.

They very often find something that's a little bit different. It might be just a variation of normal, because our anatomy is all different. We all look different. We look different on the inside as well. The exact course of blood vessels, which we might be looking for, can take little changes. Somebody might have three vessels going into a certain spot rather than two. All of these things usually have no significance, but in some clinical situations they may. Therefore, you have to know what you're looking for, and you have to interpret the test in light of the clinical situation.

Now, if the person orders their own, they don't know what the clinical situation is. They often don't have the language to order this. They may be ordering the test because on the Internet it said, "Oh, you should get an MRI," so people go and get an MRI. We are going to be investing enormous dollars of the public health care system into the follow-up of all of these tests because people are going to then go to a physician to discuss the test, or they're not going to go when they have a health condition where they should be seeing a physician because they've had the test. Actually, the test

alone is really not going to be the thing that's going to come to a diagnosis.

5:10

This bill allowing this personal ordering is going to also open people up to this big world of the wellness market, which is a multitrillion-dollar market where unscrupulous people investing know there's an opportunity here to offer this with no benefit to people, but people will buy into it and get these tests done. I'll give one example, which is whole-body MRI, which is one of these things that's out there as: hey, get this and we screen you for all these cancers. Well, the truth is that the way that's done is not the way to screen for any cancers. It is a complete waste of the person's dollars, and then it's going to waste our public health care dollars to follow up on all the little spots that are found there. Inside your body is like the outside. You might have a mole here. "Does that mean anything?" "I don't know. We better follow it." Then we get public testing for things that are absolutely inappropriate.

When we order a test, we also need to know: do we need to give some intravenous dye with it to really get a better look at it? The information that needs to be provided is not going to be there appropriately. When a person has a symptom, they may have in their head the idea that maybe this is a brain tumour, and they go get an MRI because they want to rule that out when actually it maybe sounded more like a stroke or multiple sclerosis or something different. A physician assessment would have gotten something completely different.

Private imaging centres are business. They are not there to provide that clinical assessment. They're there to do tests, and the specialists that run them and work there work in collaboration with the physicians ordering the tests. By bringing this bill in, they're being cut off and abandoned to be interpreting tests without having really an understanding of the clinical problem, what the varying things are that could be going on. They're going to have to be very careful from a medico-legal perspective to include and report in enormous detail information that is likely to make people worried or upset, and it's going to talk about things that would be of no meaning if there was an understanding of what the test was done for.

Every part of this testing also is going to take a lot of staff time. We know that we are very, very short of MRI technologists, varying technologists in our system in Alberta and in Canada, and the private centres are going to be taking these people. It's easy work. People aren't sick. They don't need to help them on and off the exam table. They're being wooed by higher income, by not having to work in the evenings and the weekends. Who wouldn't take those jobs when they're burned out already from the situations in our public system? It means that people that need tests done in a short period of time for a follow-up of worrisome cancers, for example, are waiting longer and longer. This is happening already, and we're going to be making it a whole lot more worse.

These people are going to also be coming to their doctor. We have a shortage of physicians. They're going to come to a family doctor and want to go over this test, and if they don't have one, they go to emerg, and they're going to sit in there and be part of the crowd waiting in emerg. They're going to wait a long time because they're not as sick as the other people, and they're going to wait for an emerg physician to see them and want to go over their test.

I'm wondering if this government will make it clear that physicians can opt out of this private system by letting them follow their conscience and not see the people that get a private test done and don't go through the usual part of the system and have a test that's needed so that they don't have to use their time going over tests that, for the most part, are not needed rather than seeing sick

patients that need to be seen or filling out AISH forms. Whatever it is that's sitting on their desk that they have to do really is more important than a test, reviewing a test, or following up something that they're pretty sure means nothing, but you know they had the test and now we have to do all the follow-up. Is that going to be something where physicians can follow their conscience, or are all physicians going to have to see every patient and follow through with follow-up of these tests?

Now, a lot of work has been done in a project to guide physicians and nurse practitioners to order appropriate tests. Now it's a campaign . . .

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

Member Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

It's pretty clear that I think my colleagues and I are going to firmly oppose anything that comes forward that encourages for-profit health care in Alberta and in Canada. I hope that every member of this Legislature was listening to my colleague from Calgary-Varsity as she talked about her experiences in health care. She is a physician. She has years of practice in specialized care, in working in this area. Mr. Speaker, I do not, so I'm actually going to take a minute to maybe talk about something that I'm a little bit more familiar with, and that would be economics and efficiency and the use of funds in health care and whether or not privatization is going to achieve or not achieve the goals that we all want.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, as I get going, that the people of Alberta are listening to this debate. The people of Alberta are already living the experience of privatization in our health care system. As I begin, I just want to say that one of the many letters that I received from a constituent of Calgary-Foothills – his name is Bruce. He was told that he needed to wait 18 months for an MRI for his debilitating back pain. He believes that this is inexcusable. I think all of us believe that this is inexcusable, that he would have to wait 18 months for an MRI when he's already seen a physician that is recommending that he gets an MRI, but he was told by that very same facility that if he was willing to pay, he could get an MRI that week.

Mr. Speaker, this raised a lot of questions for Bruce and a lot of questions for many other Albertans. If this is already happening, and we're already seeing the spill-on cause of longer wait times for MRIs in the public system, and now Bill 29 is going to propose that we load more MRI's using that very precious MRI resource capacity that we've got in the province, it doesn't take a rocket scientist or an economist to know that it's going to spill over into longer wait times for people who have already talked to their physician and are waiting for a publicly funded MRI. That is inexcusable.

I want to talk a little bit about, as I said, economics and efficiency and cost controls and whether or not we're going to achieve what we hope to achieve. This government has talked a lot about the model that we're following is Europe, and so I thought I would pick up a report, just so people know that these economists actually do work in health care.

5:20

I just pulled an article: Public Versus Private Healthcare Systems in the OECD Area – A Broad Evaluation of Performance. This was published in the *European Journal of Health Economics*, 2025. I'll start out just by quoting from the abstract of this article, Mr. Speaker.

The analysis concludes that there is no evidence supporting the hypothesis that transitioning from a publicly administered system to a privately dominated system will enhance efficiency. By

contrast, there is strong evidence that overall efficiency increases with the public share of financing. These conclusions also hold true for the more restricted group of OECD countries in Europe.

There is ample evidence that this is not a random opinion of someone, Mr. Speaker. These are qualified academics engaged in deep research studies. This study included all OECD countries, 38 countries. The OECD has already created selection criteria that include validity, relevance, and international comparability across those countries to make these studies valid.

For background evaluation and discussion in the present context, the relevant indicators used were health status, health care performance, access, quality, and capacity of the health care system. Mr. Speaker, these researchers knew what they were looking at. This is a deep comparative research study across 38 countries, including the 21 countries in Europe.

To make it clear, Mr. Speaker, they found that there was no evidence that greater efficiency is gained, or as this government would say, the – air quotes – innovation of introducing privatization in our health care. I'll look at, again, the study when they look specifically at European countries in their discussion. Further, they said that there's clear evidence that stronger government involvement in the funding of health care expenditures is associated with higher efficiency. The higher the share of public funds in the health care budget, the more efficient the system. This research is pretty clear.

I thought, since I have a few more moments, Mr. Speaker, that I would speak to a country that has also been raised in this House with respect to, like, where we see the privatization of health care. I think it's internationally accepted that the Nordic countries are perhaps the model of socialist countries where they want to ensure 100 per cent coverage of their citizenry. In a paper, Sweden Health System Summary 2024 by the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, they looked at that in Sweden there was a 2015 Patient Act that granted citizens free choice of primary and outpatient specialized care nationally, but this led to unexpected consequences with the establishment of new, private, digital health care providers and increased expenditures by the government. In response, to strengthen primary care, the government initiated targeted funding in 2018 to develop a new system emphasizing prevention and person-centred services. The reform agenda was to clarify primary care responsibilities and collaboration, focusing on physicians as first point of contact, that specialist care reforms were focused to be evidence-based and standardized processes.

Mr. Speaker, here we have a country that 10 years ago did start to move down the path of some privatization and within a few years of doing that they learned and they backtracked and they refocused on their government physician-centred care to achieve better outcomes for every citizen in Sweden. We have evidence.

Now, I'll also say that in Sweden, in their spending on public health care: just a couple of comparisons. Their public system provides 1.74 MRIs per 100,000 citizens; comparable here in Alberta, it's .91. CT scans: they provide 2.37 per 100,000; in Alberta, 1.13. These are, I should clarify, the number of machines that are available for doing tests.

We could be looking at the fact that, you know, maybe we do need more machines. That's maybe not in denial. But what we can also look at are additional studies that show that when we move to privatization – again, when we talk about efficiencies in the private system, if we're thinking, "Oh, the private clinics are going to purchase more machines," that will cost more money. Administrative costs, profit costs: Mr. Speaker, these are not going to increase efficiency. All this is going to do is make our public lines longer and more costs to government. There's already evidence to back that up, so I have to say no to Bill 29.

Thank you.

Member Miyashiro: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 29, also known as the next step towards for-profit, two-tier, Americanization of Alberta's health care system, a system where those who are already struggling with affordability issues will have to wait longer for diagnostic testing because those that can afford to pay jump to the front of the line.

But first, Mr. Speaker, let's have a moment of silence for that last UCP attempt at widespread health care privatization, the DynaLife debacle. Let's bow our heads, shall we? The UCP government thought the investors in DynaLife weren't making enough money, so the government gifted DynaLife – that's correct, gave for free – the entirety of Alberta's health care lab testing system. After DynaLife crashed and burned because they didn't have the capacity to effectively implement the system handed to them, Alberta Precision Laboratories, run by AHS, had to rematerialize – it's like something out of *Star Trek* where you're energized and then transported and then come back – and they had to take over.

When this was all said and done, the Auditor General's official review of this debacle said that it cost at least \$125 million to the provincial government. The Auditor General reported that

while we received a considerable amount of information, it is important and necessary to emphasize that we did not receive all the relevant information we requested and cannot be certain we had access to all the pertinent information . . .

Documents were either not provided or heavily redacted.

This is what privatization does. Even when the Auditor General demands and requests information, it's not turned over.

So here we are, Mr. Speaker. The UCP government wrongly argues that private access encourages earlier screening and detection, which potentially improves health outcomes and reduces downstream treatment costs. The Alberta Medical Association, though, projects that, you know, over 3,300 Albertans would choose to pay privately for preventative diagnostic imaging annually. That self-referral and private payment will increase costs to the publicly insured health care system by \$784 per diagnostic test, and follow-up from any positive tests would generate about another million dollars in low-value care borne by the publicly insured health care system. So it's going to cost us money again because once again this government has this great idea that they haven't completely thought through, Mr. Speaker. They implement legislation that time after time we've seen in this whole entire session they have to change and they have to adapt because what they're proposing doesn't make sense and isn't going to work.

5:30

Self-referral will also likely contribute to many unnecessary tests and divert resources away from those who have medical referrals. Self-referral, private-pay diagnostic imaging and screening lab tests increase physician workload, especially in primary and specialty care, because they require follow-up on incidental findings, abnormal results, communication, and care co-ordination, which brings us to another point, and I think I may be mentioning this later on. How do public and private systems communicate? Is the private system going to have access to all the databases and communication systems that our public system has?

You know, the other thing we need to look at is that populations without timely access to primary care may turn to emergency departments for follow-up. Again, we're putting extra stresses on emergency. Unnecessary tests may create avoidable patient harm. As my colleagues have already mentioned, there's a limited workforce pool. Just by saying you want something doesn't make it happen unless you staff it up, and we've seen this in a number of initiatives that this government has put forward.

Increasing private payment for diagnostic testing will encourage private providers to focus their time on the for-profit market. The public system will experience even more shortages of technologists and increased wait times for patients because, of course, you're going to go to where your hours are better, the conditions are better, and you don't have to probably work shift work. Physicians won't be liable for private-pay self-referral tests that they're unaware of.

This fragmented care, Mr. Speaker, is a risk to patient safety because private and public systems are not integrated, as I just mentioned, and we don't know of any pathways for communication that exist between these two systems. The self-referred, private-pay systems will disrupt continuity at a system level, resulting in fragmented patient journeys that undermine long-term outcomes, and we're seeing this in other places. Evidence from Saskatchewan's private-pay MRI program shows that parallel private systems do not reduce public wait times and in Saskatchewan's case actually substantially increased wait times after introducing private-pay scans.

I think, as my colleague from Calgary-Varsity said, if you allow patients to pay privately for full-body MRI and CT scans without a referring physician or provider, it does nothing to increase hospital capacity. It does nothing to add beds. It does not relieve pressure on overcrowded emergency departments. Patients who access faster scans through private payment still rely on the same strained public system for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care, leaving the root causes of delays untouched.

This government also fails to address the system's most critical constraint, workforce shortages, as my colleagues have all spoken about. There's no separate pool of technologists, radiologists, or nurses, so expanding private-pay options simply draws scarce staff out of the public system, weakening it and increasing inequities. Our pressures stem from an aging population. I've said elsewhere in my debates that we're looking at a quarter, or 25 per cent, of our population in Alberta to be very soon seniors. Seniors have a higher demand for diagnostics, and there's limited workforce capacity to meet that demand. Private-pay self-referral diagnostics and imaging do not reduce wait times or system burden.

Across Canada and most comparable health systems internationally accreditation and legislative frameworks require that lab testing be ordered and overseen by an authorized health care practitioner. Once again, we note that self-referral diagnostics and lab services increase the risk of inappropriate testing, missed follow-up, and patient harm. Evidence consistently demonstrates that removing provider involvement undermines both patient safety and system efficiency. It's estimated – I think I mentioned this already, but it's worth saying again – that self-referred, private-paid diagnostic imaging would add approximately \$784 per test to downstream costs to Alberta's publicly funded health system. Those are costs that, obviously, we've seen we can't afford.

At its core, the UCP approach ignores the real pressure: chronic workplace shortages, limited bed capacity, and rising demand from an aging population. Instead of strengthening the system, it drains resources, deepens inequities, and leaves Alberta's health care crisis worse. Mr. Speaker, lost in the UCP's desire to further fragment our health care system is that close to a million Albertans are without a family doctor, making it very hard to get follow-up from any diagnostic tests. Albertans do not want a two-tier, pay-to-skip-the-line health care system and see that allowing private payment for self-referral diagnostic and lab services creates queue jumping based on the ability to pay instead of your medical needs.

As expected, Mr. Speaker, medical experts are diametrically opposed to the UCP government and their desire to allow private pay. The Alberta Medical Association was not consulted on this legislation. They were only told it was coming. AMA president Dr. Wirzba said that he's flagged concerns to the province, including

allowing patients to self-refer for certain diagnostic tests due to the frequency of false positives. He said that 10 to 40 per cent of scans show some level of abnormality; fewer than 1 to 2 per cent of those are significant. Doctor Wirzba said: it's medicine 101; we learn not to test people who are unlikely to have significant abnormality because the risk of these false positives is so high compared to real positives. This is being sold as something to improve access, but we're very concerned that this will actually further burden the public system according to Dr. Wirzba.

Dr. Paul Parks states that the biggest bottleneck in Alberta's diagnostic system is a shortage of skilled technologists, not a shortage of machines. Dr. Parks fears that private-pay imaging will draw workers out of hospitals in favour of more attractive working hours and conditions. Dr. Eddy Lang, emergency room doctor with the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, said that this move could boost the bottom line for companies who do private testing. This won't prevent hospitalizations and cancers down the road.

Some questions for the minister: who will be responsible to follow up on diagnostic tests that were completed through self-referral? When there are staff shortages, will workers be drawn out of the public system and into the private care system? Will people who can pay get faster access to care? How will the quality and consistency of care be maintained across the changing system? How is the government going to attract more family doctors to make sure people can get public referrals before they need to pay out of pocket?

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta New Democrats do not and will not support the introduction of privately paid self-referred diagnostic and lab services. These are services that keep physicians out of the picture. It's a responsibility of the provincial government to make sure that the public system is sustained and supported so that Albertans don't have to pay for private options to get the care that they need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member Batten: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to join debate against Bill 29, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. To start, actually, following a little bit on some science lessons we had earlier today about how the world rotates, the round world rotates, I want to talk about some cool body facts. The reality is, as the Member for Calgary-Varsity had mentioned, we are not carbon copies of each other. Every single human being is different. All of our science, our medicine is based on research that continues to evolve as we learn new things.

5:40

I mention this because in Bill 29 there is talk of self-referral, right? That's great. I think I've got something maybe because Dr. Google told me, and I'm going to go pay out of pocket because I've got, you know, some dollars, apparently, that I need to burn on this. Cool. Now I have that diagnostic test. What happens with it, Mr. Speaker? Well, somebody needs to look at it and interpret it, but something we have here in Alberta – right? What is it? MyHealth Alberta? My Alberta health? Anyhoo, the lovely app where you can access your diagnostic and lab results.

I mean, I have a question for the government. The self-referral piece: you pay out of pocket, you go and see some someone somewhere, you get, say, a whole-body MRI. Where does that data go? Does it wait until there's actually a publicly funded physician to interpret it past whatever the radiologist said, past that initial look-see, or is it released to Albertans to then try and interpret themselves? That's a real concern, Mr. Speaker.

When we first opened that up, when we first provided Albertans that look-see into their lab results possibly before they were in contact with their family physician, it caused a lot of anxiety. Those are lab results that you have a physician overseeing. Your anxiety has someone to talk to about it so that you're not further distressed. If you go to a private space and get that diagnostic testing because you can pay for it and you're curious, where does that data go? Mr. Speaker, I am really concerned that this continual privatization of our health care system, of our public health care system, public dollars going into private profit, not serving Albertans; lining people's pockets.

On this side of the aisle we put Albertans first. I want to ensure that every Albertan has access to the care they need when they need it and where they need it. I want to make sure that, should you need a diagnostic test, as in there is evidence to suggest this is necessary, not "I have googled" or "I heard someone say something once and I think maybe I have that," we need to make sure that our health care system actually meets Albertans where they are. Otherwise, there's no point.

I come from Saskatchewan, the birthplace of our national health care system. As mentioned just a few moments ago from the Member for Edmonton-West Henday, Saskatchewan has tried this. They tried it with MRIs. You know what it did? It increased the line to the publicly funded MRIs, diagnostic interpretation, et cetera. It did not serve those in Saskatchewan. Here's a question again for the government. We know it failed elsewhere, so what has the government done to ensure we're not repeating the same mistakes? As much as, apparently, this government really wants to be on Saskatchewan time, I have no interest in repeating other provinces' failings, and that was a failure, Mr. Speaker. That didn't support people in Saskatchewan – not at all – so to see that same mistake being made here, like, that is just, I mean, inexcusable, and it's really, really bad governance.

Here's the thing. I get it. You know, in life, there are things you can do, and there are things you should do. Having, say, a full-body MRI, apparently, is something that we're going to be able to pay out of pocket to do inside this province. Should we, though? We've heard from the Member for Calgary-Varsity, who has very, well, I guess, first-hand experience working with patients trying to interpret incredibly difficult, complex diagnoses, trying to connect different diagnostic testing, trying to figure out what is going on with a patient. It's super complicated. Humans are not simple, and I think this bill is actually so incredibly disrespectful to Albertans by implying we are, by implying that Albertans think that they know everything. I don't think that is fair. I think Albertans are very, very smart, and smart people understand that they can't be an expert in everything. They seek expert opinion because the reality is that we can't be experts in everything, even if folks might think they are.

Science evolves. Medicine evolves. It wasn't that long ago – goodness, I think it was the early 1990s – when we started studying women, Mr. Speaker. Early 1990s: like, that's just insane, yet here we are. In fact, really cool things come out in science all the time. Did you know ovaries have glial cells? Glial cells are found in the human brain. They're so important for structure, for regeneration, for support, for immune reaction, and we just learned they're in ovaries. That is so cool. That can mean life-changing results for people seeking fertility because we finally started, well, studying women.

Science and medicine evolve. Research continues. By assuming that any one of us could go completely out of their own field and receive nonsense information and then not feel stressed about that: let alone the burden it puts on the public system, there is no win here for Albertans, Mr. Speaker. There might be a win for those

operating the private facilities. By no means are we closing the door on opportunities for Albertans, but at the end of the day if Albertans aren't actually being served, then what the heck is this for? As we, you know, continue to learn, apparently there have been decisions that aren't for Albertans.

I'm really worried that this isn't for Albertans, that this is about, again, privatization, which actually removes access, does not open access. Nothing in here talks about dollars committed to building more centres or providing better access to the public system. There's nothing in this bill about that. This bill is all about blocking access for a whole bunch of Albertans so that a handful of Albertans can on a whim go and, you know, whatever. Whole-body MRI: no big deal. If those folks, the folks who can pay out of pocket to have whatever diagnostic testing they might desire that day, are connected to a family doctor – because we know that of the total of five million, a million Albertans are not connected to a primary or preventative, a family doctor.

Let's just play this out. Not connected to a family doctor, can pay out of pocket: receives this lovely thing. There's a whole bunch of weird things on it because, Mr. Speaker, as I started, human bodies are incredibly diverse. Teratomas: probably not a word that's frequently used in here. Teratomas are when, like, teeth or hair or other cool, gnarly things grow where they're not supposed to. What if you had a whole-body MRI and there's a pair of teeth but no family doctor to talk to? Would that not cause you stress? It sounds like a silly example, but it happens, and if you go looking for something, you will find something because we are not cookie cutters.

I remember in nursing school, Mr. Speaker, a friend of mine had it. She had some diagnostic stuff done because she had symptoms of things. Well, through that diagnosis, one of the things we discovered is that: "Oh, hey. Did you know you have liver tissue hanging out on your right kidney?" What? Why? Well, during development that is where it went. Is it causing harm? No. Is it kind of cool? Yes. Would it have freaked her out had she not had the professional to interpret that for her? Yes. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, if you can keep the nonrecognized conversation down just a little bit.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Member Batten: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm closing up here because I know that there are members on this side that would like to continue this debate as well because we are so passionate about Albertans and about the future of our public health care system, and this bill is yet another step to dismantle it, which breaks my heart, Mr. Speaker, because Albertans, I mean, deserve the best, and actions speak louder than words. These actions will hurt Albertans, full stop, and I hope that everyone inside this space truly considers the consequences to their actions and that they vote against this bill.

Thank you.

5:50

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say just a few words here in regard to Bill 29, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. We've heard a lot of people talking about cost and about efficiency and about making sure that we use public dollars in the most efficient way for achieving public health care outcomes.

One issue I think that deserves attention and, really, I would say, Mr. Speaker, is the elephant in the room in terms of economics – not an actual, literal elephant in the room; it's a metaphor – is that of insurance, because when you have private health care, you have

private insurance. Private insurance is the money driver of the health care industry in so many countries that have a combination of public health care and private health care. Indeed, most countries in the world, you know, have some version of this, and indeed, we do here in Canada as well.

The key here is to make sure that public money is spent in the most efficient way to deliver that public service of health care. That's what we're here for, that's what the federal government is here for, and we finally hear the federal government speaking up and saying: well, you know, some of these elements of private paying for public health care is in fact in contravention of the Canada Health Act. I welcome sort of going down that path. We need to look at it carefully. It's not just a law that we are in compliance with or breaking, but it's an extension of this idea of using public money efficiently to provide a public service. What happens: when you have an increase in private health care, you have an increase in private insurance.

I don't need to say, because we all know – we're all experiencing it ourselves – and all of our constituents know as well that we are in an affordability crisis here in the province of Alberta, right here, right now. We've never seen food prices so high, fuel prices so high, the cost of accommodation, and all of the monthly budgets that we have to deal with. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you suddenly had to pay four or five or six or seven times more for private insurance for health care? Where does that money come from? It's not like you add on to your wages or to your monthly income. They will take it out of your monthly income to pay that insurance rate through your job. In places all across the world – but all you have to do is look below the forty-ninth parallel, in the United States, to see that your health outcomes are directly determined by what sort of insurance you have and how long it lasts.

How do private insurance companies make money? They don't make money through benevolence and, you know, their care for humanity. They make it because they will make money off that insurance, so that your health care is determined by how much insurance you have and how long that insurance lasts for.

I know lots of doctors and health care professionals that are coming back now because the American system is so messed up, but then, of course, they're confronting things like this bill, Bill 11, and so forth, and they're wondering: where do we go? Right? The reason that they leave the United States is because it's not the doctor or the nurse that's making the diagnosis; it's the health insurance policy that's making the diagnosis.

Should that individual who comes in with a broken arm or so forth get that MRI straight away? Well, let's see how much insurance they have first, right? That's the issue. That's the elephant in the room, the metaphor, Mr. Speaker, that we all need to address, because in this time of unaffordability can we add another expense onto our monthly bills to make sure that we are covering ourselves and our families for health care? I don't think we can, and the only way that we can do that is to make sure that we use the universality of health care, that we combine all of our needs together, and we pay together through that system. Health care is not free. We pay it as a public insurance guarantee for all of us, but when you start cutting down the population that's paying into that thing, then you are cutting some people off from the ability to access the health care they need. It's as simple as that.

We don't have to look any further as well than to the millions of Americans, for example, who can't afford private health insurance so they go without, or they reach into their pockets and have to pay for that procedure through, you know, whatever means they can, sell their house or use their credit cards and all of these things.

The number one cause of private bankruptcy in the United States, Mr. Speaker, is when a health care crisis happens to an individual or to their families. Of course you'll sell your house if your child needs emergency surgery. Of course you will pool all of your resources together at risk of personal bankruptcy to look after someone, yourself or someone that you love. But does that need to be the way we run our system? No. I would suggest not.

Yes, our health care system right now is undergoing a lot of stress and a lot of strain. A lot of it is to do with capacity. Do we increase our capacity by offering a private health care stream as an alternative for people to access health care? Absolutely not. It's the same doctors and nurses and facilities and support staff that are there to provide that service. All you are doing is hiving some of that away for a private, for-profit system where a person is going to pay out of pocket.

As I said, this is a clarification I want to make again and again. It's mostly not people reaching into their pocket and paying for that health care. It's their private health insurance that'll have to pay for it, or they have to sell and go into bankruptcy to pay. That's what it is in most places, or you just do without, which is even worse. You don't even get that service, that diagnostic service or whatever, because you just can't afford to pay, so you just don't even do it. That leads to worse health outcomes. It leads to more complicated health issues and ultimately costs our society way more in money and in stress and mortality as well.

Yeah. Are there some problems with Bill 29 and the approach generally to health care by this UCP government over the last seven years? Absolutely profound, existential, damaging threats to health care here in this province. Private alternatives don't provide an answer.

Another huge issue in regard to the private delivery of health care is in regard to data integrity of patients. Again, insurers are not doing, you know, private health insurance through the goodness of their heart. They are playing the risk of how much they're going to make on the premium versus how many outputs they're going to have to pay into. Part of the way that you can reduce that is by having more data on your patients to make that risk assessment.

Mr. Speaker, we all witnessed perhaps the most dramatic breach in data history here in the province of Alberta in regard to our electoral lists that have been put onto the Internet and made public for everyone to see. You can't take that back. Do we trust this UCP government to hand over data on health insurance, on health issues, handing it over to the private system to somehow use private health care as an alternative? Clearly you can't trust this UCP government with our data, giving it away to people who might use it for purposes that, you know, are even against the law.

We saw both a UCP president and a senior staff in the UCP government have access to seeing exactly what they were doing with our electoral lists, 2.9 million names going up on the thing . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. It's 6 p.m. The House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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