



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 6, 2026

Day 54

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 31st Legislature
Second Session

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

Al-Guneid, Nagwan, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP)
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC),
Deputy Premier
Elmeligi, Sarah, Banff-Kananaskis (NDP)
Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP),
Official Opposition Whip
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (PTP)
Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)
Hoyle, Rhiannon, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)
Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Official Opposition Assistant Whip
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche
(UC)
Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)
Kasawski, Kyle, Sherwood Park (NDP)
Kayande, Samir, Calgary-Elbow (NDP)
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)
Long, Hon. Martin M., ECA, West Yellowhead (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)
Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC)
McDougall, Hon. Myles, ECA, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
Metz, Luanne, Calgary-Varsity (NDP)
Miyashiro, Rob, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)
Nenshi, Naheed K., Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC)
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre
(UC)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North West (UC)
Sawyer, Tara, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),
Government House Leader
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. R.J., ECA, Highwood (UC)
Sinclair, Scott, Lesser Slave Lake (Ind)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),
Premier
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
Tejada, Lizette, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Turton, Hon. Searle, ECA, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Wiebe, Ron, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Williams, Hon. Dan D.A., ECA, Peace River (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC),
Government Whip
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk
Trafton Koenig, Law Clerk

Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and
Executive Director of Parliamentary
Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and
Committees
Aaron Roth, Committee Clerk
Amanda LeBlanc, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Lang Bawn, Managing Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

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

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

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

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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

Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee

Chair: Mr. Lundy
 Deputy Chair: Mrs. Sawhney
 Ellingson
 Nixon
 Pancholi
 Sawyer

Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries

Chair: Mr. Lundy
 de Jonge
 Ganley
 Gray
 Sawyer
 Wiebe

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Lovely
 Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring
 Batten
 Getson
 Haji
 Johnson
 Lundy
 Sawyer
 Singh
 Tejada

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Lundy
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Wright
 Chapman
 Cyr
 Dyck
 Miyashiro
 Petrovic
 Sawyer
 Shepherd
 Wright, P.

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. McIver
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Yao
 Eggen
 Getson
 Gray
 Metz
 Petrovic
 Rowswell
 Sabir
 Singh

Standing Committee on Private Bills

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

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Sabir
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Lundy
 Cyr
 de Jonge
 Eremenko
 Lovely
 Renaud
 Sawyer
 Schmidt
 van Dijken

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.

Wednesday, May 6, 2026

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Alert Ready Emergency Alert System Test

The Speaker: Hon. members, please listen carefully if you don't mind. This afternoon at 1:55 p.m. during Oral Question Period the Alert Ready emergency alert system is scheduled to be tested in Alberta and across Canada, which means all your cellphones are going to scream. So I've a request, either one of two things. Please find an opportunity to put your cellphone in the backroom because even if you turn it off now, the minute you turn it on there's a pretty good chance it'll scream at you then. I know we all want to follow all the procedures of this Legislature, so nobody wants that to happen.

Thank you.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Today it's my honour to welcome Her Excellency Professor Dora Francisca Edu-Buandoh, high commissioner of Ghana to Canada. Hon. members, I had the honour of meeting with Her Excellency and her team earlier today. Alberta and Ghana enjoy a strong relationship, and I was pleased to engage in a productive discussion with Her Excellency with a particular focus on agriculture and health. Her Excellency is joined by Mr. Charles Osei-Mensah, Minister in Charge of Trade and Investment; Mr. Simon Atieku, Minister and Head of Chancery and Diaspora Affairs; and Ms Margaret Adu, honorary consul for Ghana in Calgary. I invite all of you to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Meadows it is my pleasure to introduce to you the brilliant grade 6 students from Daly Grove school along with their amazing teachers and guardians. I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce the grade 6 class from the J.C. Charyk school in Hanna, Alberta, as

well as their teachers and parents and faculty. Thank you for making the drive. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of this place.

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

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you the students in grade 9 at Spring Glen junior high, led with their administrator Jamie Barfuss, my friend. I ask them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, seated in the members' gallery today is a great group of staff members from the Legislative Assembly Office that are participating in new employee orientation. Their orientation includes learning more about the legislative process, committee operations, and House proceedings. This foundational knowledge will support them in effectively contributing to their roles within the Legislative Assembly Office. I ask that they all please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Stephan: Mr. Speaker, roses are red, violets are blue; we love Alberta, and so do you. I introduce a Bengali award-winning poet right here from Edmonton, Ms Rita Bose. May the poet and her friends rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to all Shannon Dean, not our wonderful clerk but the mayor of Chestermere, and Tina Petrow, intergovernmental relations adviser for the city. I ask that they both please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you wonderful students and a new graduate who will be joining my constituency office this summer to support my work: Aidan Moore, Megan Lessmeister, and Mahmoud Elbishouty. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I am very proud to introduce to this Assembly my parents, Herb and Terry-Lee Betschart, who are here to come see their favourite daughter and her colleagues at work. I'm very proud to have you here, and enjoy the show.

The Speaker: Edmonton-South.

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you the wonderful delegation from SANA Edmonton, led by chapter leader and dear friend Aina Khan, including Serwan, Shakeel, Mumtaz, Fatima, Rajinder, Irfan, and Nasreen. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you, and I would ask them to stand: Mayor Sandy Bowman, CEO Andrew Boutilier, council and administration from the hard-working and most beautiful place in Canada, Fort McMurray, the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. Please stand.

The Speaker: Calgary-Klein.

Member Tejada: Hello, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you and to all members of this Assembly two weather-hardy flowers hailing from El Salvador and flourishing here in Alberta for many decades: my mother, Ana Tejada, and my aunt Coralia Quiroz. Please rise if you can and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Amrinder Singh and Supreet Kaur, an Edmonton-based couple making meaningful contributions to Alberta's housing sector. Mr. Singh is a premium residential builder, active since 2021, known for elevated construction quality. Mrs. Kaur is a dedicated real estate adviser. I ask that they rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you representatives from the Alberta Construction Association. In the gallery we have Warren Singh, Lois Innes, Jen Hancock, Kelly Vopni, Ben Wagemakers, David Johnson. Thank you for the work you do advocating for the construction industry. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Airdrie-East.

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a very good friend of mine all the way from Airdrie, former city councillor, excellent singer, volunteer extraordinaire Ms Tina Petrow. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

Provincial Forensic DNA Laboratory

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight a significant step forward in our government's commitment to public safety and the rule of law. For far too long Alberta has relied on a federal forensic system that is getting more expensive, backed up, and slow, causing delays in justice for victims.

The numbers tell a clear story. Over the last decade the cost of federal DNA casework has surged by 50 per cent. By next year Alberta will be paying \$7.2 million annually to the federal government, a figure that is projected to keep climbing by 4.5 per cent every year. This isn't just costing more money; it means relying on a system that is struggling to keep up and meet its own standards. That is why Budget 2026 provides \$8.9 million to establish Alberta's own forensic DNA laboratory. By building our own capacity within the ALERT facility in Sherwood Park, we are taking control of our justice system.

1:40

The lab is about more than just spreadsheets; it's about outcomes. For victims of property crime in ridings like mine, the national system often limits the amount of DNA evidence that police can even submit. Our provincial lab will remove those barriers, allowing law enforcement to process more evidence from break-ins and thefts. This means more suspects identified, more charges laid, and stolen property returned to its rightful owners faster. This is a win for municipal partners. We expect to reduce the cost per case by approximately 40 per cent compared to federal rates with a clear path to recover all our set-up costs by 2031.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans expect a justice system that is efficient, accountable, and focused on their needs. By investing in this lab, we're ensuring that when a crime is committed in Alberta, the

evidence is processed in Alberta and justice is delivered for Albertans.

Thank you.

Electoral List Distribution and Use

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, When first we practise to deceive!" This has never been more true than right now as the UCP's tangled web of deceit unravels before our very eyes.

When the Premier was asked how she knew about the massive data breach of three million Albertans' personal information, she said she heard about it through the media like everyone else. However, the Premier's staff attended the Centurion Project meeting back on April 16 where the Alberta separatists showed off their database that they were going to use to try to break up Canada and make Alberta the 51st state of the U.S.A. The meeting featured a demonstration of how easy their database is to look up the private information of people, demonstrating looking up former Premier Jason Kenney's information.

So what did the UCP do? Absolutely nothing. For weeks the UCP staff didn't bother to report this information to the RCMP or Elections Alberta, even though this data breach was in clear violation of the law. It puts three million people in harm's way and at risk of fraud, harassment, or even physical danger. The obvious question is on everyone's mind right now. When did the Premier actually know about this data breach, and why was nothing done about it?

What is the relationship between the separatists and the Premier and this UCP government? Why is the UCP appearing to aid and abet the separatists by changing the rules to make it easier for the separatist petition to be successful, allowing her caucus members to endorse the concept of separatism, and apparently willing to look the other way when the separatists happily show off their list of three million Albertans' personal information that they intend to use to break up Canada into pieces and leave us all exposed to the chaos that will ensue?

Member's Reflections on Party Membership

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, it is one of the greatest honours of my life to represent the people of Lesser Slave Lake. They place their trust in me to be their voice in this Assembly, and I take that responsibility seriously every single day.

Mr. Speaker, there are moments in this role that I'm not proud of; in particular, some of the things I said about former colleagues and teammates in government. Holding government to account is a fundamental part of our system, but I was not elected as a member of the opposition. I was elected as a member of the United Conservative Party, a team I was proud to be a part of and one that the people of Lesser Slave Lake supported. I will always stand up for my constituents. That will never change, but I regret how I chose to do that at times.

Public criticism of the Premier and the government, particularly around the budget, was a short-sighted and passionate response. Hockey was my whole life growing up, and sometimes emotions run high and things get passionate. But no individual performance, regardless of passion and emotion, wins championships or experiences success like a strong team does. I understand that for us to serve our constituents and best serve our province, we need to work and win as a team.

With time and perspective I've come to better understand the responsibility that comes with those decisions in a Westminster system and the impact they have not just on the government but on

the people we serve. For that I'm sorry. What I failed to recognize a year ago is that this government is making record investments in northern Alberta. This government has provided critical funding for highway 88, a brand new corridor with highway 686, and for the protection of communities from forest fires in Lesser Slave Lake and all over the north for years to come. My focus now is where it should have always been: building relationships, working constructively, and finding common ground to deliver real results for my riding.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with this government and supporting this Premier as we continue to make progress for Lesser Slave Lake, the north, and for all Albertans.

Thank you.

Educational Curriculum

Ms Al-Guneid: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the members opposite. We send our children to schools to learn math, literacy, science: the foundations of a strong education, but great education goes beyond strong foundations. Parents want academic excellence for their children. We expect schools to deliver. Parents also want their children to grow into good humans, to develop empathy, to understand the world beyond their own lives, and that what happens far away can shape our lives. Just look at the Strait of Hormuz rippling through the global economy and reaching Alberta's families. We want our kids to be aware and self-aware to make better decisions as adults.

My eight-year-old asked me: why is there war? I paused. I struggled. How do you explain something so complex, so painful to a child who's beginning to understand the world? He had borrowed a children's history encyclopedia from the public library. We turned the pages together: world wars, ancient civilizations, the slave trade, colonization, civil rights movements. At that moment I saw learning. I saw curiosity. I saw a child trying to make sense of the world. I wondered: under Bill 25 and Bill 28, would that book be caught up in the UCP policing neutrality that forgets what education is for?

Education is about understanding. When our children learn that Indigenous people in Canada are incarcerated 10 times more than non-Indigenous people, I want them to ask why, not just memorize statistics. The residential school system lasted over 160 years, affecting at least five generations of Indigenous children. That is truth, not ideology. If we deny children to ask hard questions, to build empathy, to understand, we are not strengthening education; we are diminishing it.

Thank you.

Government Accountability

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, last week Elections Alberta confirmed something deeply disturbing. The provincial list of electors, personal information tied to nearly 3 million Albertans, was exploited without authorization. Not a mistake; a choice. Elections Alberta issued a cease and desist and sought an emergency injunction. Now the RCMP are involved yet again.

This is not just a breach of privacy. It is a dereliction of duty, and it didn't happen in a vacuum. Government dismissed the warnings, laws were changed, and UCP staff participated in the disclosure because insiders mattered more than the public.

This is not an isolated incident. There are questions about spending, contracts, access, matters before the courts, RCMP investigations, and search warrants issued on party loyalists. When a government works this hard to keep information hidden, it's not transparency they're protecting; it's themselves. This demands scrutiny, not secrecy.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a Conservative government. Conservatives believe in stewardship and accountability, protecting the public, not insiders. What do we get instead? A government that looks out for its own, closes ranks, and avoids scrutiny instead of demanding it. It's control without accountability, power without consequence, and now a system that can't even safeguard personal information: those of Albertans. This is a government that protects itself first, refuses to investigate suspect dealings, and won't even listen to its own institutions. This government's not defending the public; it's failing them.

But this is much bigger than one breach. It's about trust in our democracy, and there must be consequences because when trust is broken this badly, change isn't optional; it's inevitable.

Seniors' Benefits

Ms Sigurdson: The minister of seniors and assisted living cut seniors' programs by implementing a 9 per cent reduction in the income threshold for eligibility. Despite the minister's inaccurate statements that programs were not cut, many seniors will no longer have the vital supports they need. This illustrates a stark set of priorities made even more troubling by the extreme profits being taken in by the oil and gas sector at the same time. The minister's decision exposes a system that protects corporate wealth while squeezing those least able to absorb the impact.

1:50

Lowering the income threshold means many seniors who previously qualified for supports such as drug coverage, social supports, and other essential benefits are now excluded. These are not wealthy Albertans living in luxury. They're retirees on fixed incomes facing soaring costs for housing, utilities, groceries, and health care, and they are mostly women. A 9 per cent drop in eligibility is not a technical adjustment. It is a deliberate cut that pushes vulnerable seniors closer to financial and medical insecurity, forcing impossible choices regarding basic needs.

At the same time Alberta's oil and gas industry is reporting record profits driven by high global energy prices and long-standing policy advantages. Billions of dollars are flowing to corporate shareholders, and much of it is generated from publicly owned natural resources.

This raises a basic question of justice. When the province gets windfalls from oil, why aren't there supports to ensure seniors can age with dignity? Economic abundance must be shared, not hoarded. Resource wealth should strengthen public services, and social programs, especially for seniors who spent decades contributing to Alberta's economy and communities. Instead, the burden has shifted downwards. Profits flow upwards. Another important policy question is always: who benefits from the decision? Clearly, seniors are not benefiting.

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. This data breach story keeps getting worse and worse for this government. Albertans are scared and they're angry, and now we know that the Premier's office knew that Albertans were at risk for weeks and did nothing. Yesterday the Premier said she knew nothing of the actions of one of her most senior staff members, and now we've had it confirmed from them

that Mr. Sandhu and potentially other UCP staff were at that meeting of the Centurion Project. Again, did the Premier know her staff were at that meeting?

Ms Smith: No, Mr. Speaker. The person in question is a caucus staff member who does opposition research. He actually goes to a lot of events, including events of the NDP, so we can see them play their equity cards at their various events, and I'd like the member opposite to talk about which member of his staff were also in that meeting. He didn't answer the question yesterday. Clearly, there were people at that meeting who told him one other piece of information. He also had a screenshot of the letter that Jen Gerson had sent to Elections Alberta. We didn't have that. The member opposite had two pieces of information. Why didn't he tell the government?

The Speaker: This is your last chance to leave with your phone before the alarm goes off . . . [interjections] Order. The clock has started.

You get a fresh 35. Go ahead.

Mr. Nenshi: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's staff . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: And another fresh 35.

We're going to hear the start of this here, folks.

Mr. Nenshi: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's staff didn't tell her. Now she expects the opposition to tell her.

But back to the real question. The Premier expects us to believe that a senior staff member, not a fresh 20-year-old staffer, someone with decades of experience in Conservative politics, thought it was totally okay that Jason Kenney's personal information was released to nefarious characters. Can the Premier confirm that's her story? Her staff member was there. It's just like going to a Vaisakhi event, no big deal, and he didn't tell anybody.

The Speaker: Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The staffer was from caucus and attended this event, as he has many others. There was no way for him to know that this data was illegal. That was not disclosed on the call, and the member opposite even confirmed that when he spoke to the media yesterday. There was no way to know that this was Elections Alberta data. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. I insisted we hear the question. Now I'm going to insist we hear the answer.

Ms Smith: There was no way to know that this was Elections Alberta information. However, combined with the letter from Jen Gerson that he had that we did not have, he knew. Why didn't he tell the members of this Legislature? Why didn't he tell the government?

Mr. Nenshi: So it's true. The Premier's staff member sat through a meeting where her friend David Parker gleefully shared Jason Kenney's information "Look what I can do; look what you can do" and her staff didn't tell anybody. It's just business as usual for this government to dox a former Premier and put him at risk. That means the Premier has created an office culture where it's either okay to be incompetent and not know that's a problem or to be so deeply unethical and not care. Premier, which is it?

Ms Smith: You know what's unethical, Mr. Speaker? Somebody who received the letter from Elections Alberta weeks ago, who knew about this call weeks ago and who did not tell the hon.

members of this Chamber that their personal information was at risk. Every single person in this Chamber had reason to be interested in that information, reason to want to know, and the member kept it secret. Maybe he should tell this Assembly why. Why did he keep it secret?

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

Mr. Nenshi: In the Premier's world calling the cops is keeping it secret, and she's worried about 38 of her members. She's not worried about 3 million Albertans, survivors of domestic assault, police officers, and judges who are at risk.

You know, like many people in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, I'm a man of faith, and this brings to mind a biblical verse. James 4:17, "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them." The minute we knew about this breach, we called the cops. Why does the Premier and her chief of staff think it's okay not to?

Ms Smith: Once again he's misleading this Chamber. He did not call the cops. He sent an e-mail to an unmonitored inbox, and it took over a week for the cops to know what was going on. Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite has some explaining to do. He was the one who knew about the Jen Gerson letter from Elections Alberta. We did not know about that, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to know how he knew. He was the one who knew as well about this call because he had staff members on that call, too, apparently, but he had a whole week in this Chamber to ask questions and bring it up, and he didn't. Why not?

An Hon. Member: Answer the question.

The Speaker: Let's hear the question, and then let's hear the answer. How would that be? Go ahead.

Mr. Nenshi: I know the Premier still wants to be Leader of the Opposition and ask the questions, but she has to answer them. Let's be clear here. Calling the cops, which we did do by the way, is a duty and it is the law. It's not interfering with an investigation; that's what the Premier does. What the Premier's office did is nothing.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Nenshi: Alerting the authorities doesn't mean calling the bank robber and telling him the cops are on their way. The point is that the Premier has staff who think it's totally okay to conduct illegal acts. So why has the Premier cultivated that culture in her government and in her party, that breaking the law is totally okay?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 1:57.
The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Jen Gerson was asked why she didn't tell the public earlier, she said she didn't want to draw attention to it so that there was time for Elections Alberta to act to bring it down. When this member was asked that yesterday, he said just what he said here. If you discover a neighbour has robbed the bank, do you tell them before calling the police? This was not us. This was another political party, and only Elections Alberta could have known that because it was a seeded list, and they were the ones who were able to identify that. That's why they launched the investigation. That's why he should have told us.

Mr. Nenshi: Her staff member should have told her.

As soon as I saw, Mr. Speaker, that David Parker was gleefully sharing Jason Kenney's and other people's personal data and allowing it to be published on the web for anybody to see, I knew it was wrong. It didn't matter if the data was from Elections Alberta or Canada Post or a data broker; sharing it openly on the web is illegal. Now, the authorities are there to decide guilt, not the Premier although she thinks she can pardon people. Why didn't the Premier's staff member tell her? Why didn't he tell anybody? And if he did tell the Premier and her chief of staff, why didn't they call the cops?

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 1:59.

The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite should be ashamed of himself. People are sick of his antics. We know that he withheld this data because he wanted to turn it into a political stunt to play some kind of gotcha on the government when he could have told us. He could have told us April 20, April 21, April 22, or April 23 . . . [interjections]

2:00

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. You know what? I let some noise go on, but when I can't hear myself, then I've got to tone it down.

Go ahead, Premier.

Ms Smith: . . . in this Chamber, and because he didn't, we didn't know we were at risk. The public didn't know they were at risk. Victims of domestic violence didn't know that they were at risk. People who were concerned about getting doxed didn't know that they were at risk. He had the information to tell this Chamber and he didn't, Mr. Speaker, and he should answer why. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

We're at the third set of questions, which belongs to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: Look out, Mr. Speaker. She's waving her hands and pointing fingers because she knows she did something wrong.

We have to let the RCMP and Elections Alberta do their work that's true but investigations don't happen by magic. They happen because someone called the cops, and her staff member knew that those victims of domestic violence, those police officers, those judges were at risk and he didn't tell her, or she's telling us he didn't tell her when she didn't maybe tell the chief of staff. So one more time: if the staff member sat through that, why didn't he think it was a problem? Why didn't he tell her?

Ms Smith: I've answered that, Mr. Speaker. He didn't have the letter that the member opposite had, knowing that somebody had made a complaint to Elections Alberta. He had no idea that this data had been retrieved illegally, had no idea to suspect that, but the member opposite knew. The member opposite had an opportunity to raise it so that we could have done something as a government, we could have done something in this Chamber. As I mentioned, Elections Alberta is the only entity that would have known the source of that list. It was up to Elections Alberta to discover that. We should have had this information made public, and he could have done it. [interjections]

The Speaker: I don't remember calling anybody's name yet, but I heard lots of voices. Now let's hear the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: The Premier always says: I didn't know. She didn't know she couldn't let Crown prosecutors drop charges against her

friends. She didn't know that she runs AHS and its procurement processes. She didn't know that Sam Mraiche was in the skybox with her. She didn't know that her staff directed the purchase of Turkish Tylenol over AHS objections. And now she didn't know that her staff members saw Jason Kenney's personal information be doxed. What else does the Premier not know, and why does her staff always keep her in the dark?

The Speaker: What I didn't hear was anything about government policy, but you can respond if you like.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Elections Alberta is required to keep their investigation secret. That's why I think it's very interesting that the member opposite still hasn't told us how he knew on April 17 that a letter had been written in response to Jen Gerson. I think we need to know that because we didn't know that. We didn't know because Elections Alberta did not make it public until they called the police in and until they started their investigation, and that's actually the appropriate order for things to occur, unless somebody had information in advance, like the member opposite did. He chose to keep it secret. He put all Albertans at risk. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nenshi: The Premier just didn't know. She didn't even know what's going on in her own office. She didn't know that her chief of staff insulted a journalist on Twitter. She didn't know that her executive director regularly goes after people who don't share Judeo-Christian values. She didn't know that Happy Mann gave up the government's game by sharing the independent maps independent maps and showing they came from government sources. She didn't know that Aranddeep Sandhu regularly meets with David Parker. She just doesn't know. So if our Premier doesn't know what's going on in her own office and in her own government, who's running Alberta? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, in our party . . .

Mr. Nenshi: Just say: Sam Mraiche.

The Speaker: Order. You know, when you ask the question, especially, you should probably wait to hear the answer.

A fresh 35; go ahead.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our party we understand how precious the information is from the Elections Alberta database. In our party there is only one person who has access to it. Anyone else who accesses it for door-knocking has to have it recorded. And why is that? Because there's one year in jail or a \$100,000 fine for breaching that act. Our members, our staff, our members of our party know how serious this is. This is why it was important for Elections Alberta to find out who gave the list out. It was not this party. It was another party.

Citizen-initiated Referendums

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week separatist leader Jeffrey Rath said, and I quote: we expect our question to be on the ballot this October regardless of what the courts say, regardless of what Elections Alberta says. End quote. The Premier has allegedly promised separatist leaders they'll get the referendum this fall regardless of any serious concerns raised. Can the Premier confirm if separatist supporters have been promised a referendum regardless

of any concerns, be they by the courts, Indigenous communities, or anyone else?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every single Albertan has been promised the same thing, that if a question is of importance to a sufficient number of Albertans, we will look at it; that they can lead a citizen initiative petition or process. That process has multiple requirements. If a citizen-led initiative process is successful in meeting all of its eligibility requirements and having the vetting through Elections Alberta, then it may appear on a referendum question or ballot. That's the way the process works. The hon. member knows full well how this process works.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the validity of the separatist petition was always questionable once this government changed the laws and lowered the bar just for their separatists after their question was deemed unconstitutional. Now we learn those same folks that the UCP government supports have engaged in illegal activity, breaching the privacy of every single Albertan. In light of separatists leaking over 3 million registered voters' personal data, will the Premier now agree that a referendum based on the separatists' petition would be incredibly inappropriate?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, Elections Alberta has developed a very robust process in verifying signatures that come forward in a petition. We've heard from the Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Alberta that they've developed a more robust process for this particular petition, that was submitted just this week because of the data breach .

Ms Hoffman: Cheating.

Mr. Amery: . allegations that were made.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Amery: We know that the CEO has developed a robust process that goes over and above what the normal verification process is. We have faith in that independent office. That's what they do, Mr. Speaker, that's what . [interjections]

The Speaker: Okay. You need to stop talking when I stand up. And I heard the word "cheating." We'll talk about that later, I'm sure, with the point of order that was called at 2:08.

Go ahead with your question.

Ms Hoffman: And I call a point of order as well.

The Speaker: And there are two points of order at 2:08.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, every voting Albertan's personal and private data has been breached thanks to the wilful negligence of the separatists to play by any rules. Albertans expect their leader, their Premier, to defend their personal information, protect the laws in the country we live in and work in, and what we've heard from Elections Alberta is that you cannot find out if your name has been put on a petition and you cannot remove it if it has been put there without your consent. Will this government stand by and commit that due to this data breach there will be no referendum on separation while she is Premier?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said time and again, there is a robust process in place that an independent office of this Legislature has in order to verify whether or not a petition will go forward.

Now, the NDP are making this into a partisan issue, and it is not, Mr. Speaker. This is about the people whose information has been breached: the private details of judges, of police officers, of victims of domestic violence, and all Albertans. Unlike the NDP, who knew of the list two weeks before they even mentioned it to anybody it's inappropriate. We won't do that.

The Speaker: The next set of questions, without preambles on the supplementaries, belongs to the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

2:10

Electoral List Disclosure and Provincial Referendum

Mr. Shepherd: The leak of 3 million Albertans' personal information is a public safety disaster. Thanks to the incompetence of Alberta separatists every police officer, judge, defender, and prosecutor in the province is under threat. Every victim of crime, every person hiding from an abuser, every politician and public figure has had their address exposed. It's a gold mine for organized crime, fraud, extortion, witness tampering, direct physical harm, yet we've heard nothing from the minister of public safety. What does that minister have to say about this threat to 3 million Albertans, and what is he actually doing to help them?

Mr. Ellis: All right. I'm a little disappointed the member opposite didn't watch my press conference yesterday, but I did speak on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that if anybody feels as though they are in an immediate or imminent threat, then, of course, they are to call 911; if it certainly feels as though there is anything else that might be going on where they feel concerned about their safety or anything regarding victims of a domestic violence incident, for instance, make sure you call 211. I can tell you that the RCMP, the Edmonton Police Service, and all law enforcement in this province are on top of the issue.

Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: Given what I heard from the minister is that he is doing nothing despite the fact that this massive data breach, the largest in Alberta's history, isn't just a local threat; it's an open door to foreign interference in the UCP's fall referendum, given experts say that Alberta is already being targeted while this government is utterly unprepared, given a new report identifies overt influence campaigns already being run by Russia and China even as separatists have invited interference from the U.S. and given they now all have the personal information of 3 million Albertans to boost those efforts, again to the minister. This isn't a time to sit on your hands. What are you actually doing about this threat?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, of course . . .

The Speaker: No. I'll recognize you. Very soon, too.
The minister.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this is a very fluid and dynamic situation, as everyone in this House is certainly aware of. Prior to us learning about this breach, I can tell you from the deputy commissioner of the RCMP that there is no credible information that has been received that suggests that the Alberta separatist movement has been subject to foreign interference. However, what I can tell this House is that the RCMP

has the primary responsibility for investigation into criminal foreign interference activities in Canada. Seeing as the RCMP are already thoroughly looking into this matter, we expect that they will consider this as part of their investigation.

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that this government wants to wash their hands of a crisis of their own making, given they've bent over backwards to help separatists force a vote changing laws, undermining the courts, making it harder to investigate elections fraud while they do nothing to prepare to protect Albertans against interference in that vote, foreign or domestic and given that's demonstrated by the fact that separatists leaked the personal information of 3 million Albertans, massively compromising the integrity of any vote and the safety of everyone on that list, will this government just admit it has no ability to protect the integrity of the referendum vote, and would they cancel it until they do?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: I recognize you, then you speak. Go ahead, Minister.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What that member said: nothing can be further from the truth. Let me tell you what . . . [interjections] Yeah, of course. They want to make fun of people when they stutter. That's typically the NDP, right? They just make fun of people.

Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you and what I can tell this particular House is: why did the members opposite not let this government know when they found out that there was a breach? Why did they not let Elections Alberta know? Why did they not let this Chamber know? Why did they put all the information of Albertans at risk?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for . . . [interjections] Order. I guess I was getting heckled while I was saying that.

Let's go with Chestermere-Strathmore.

Provincial Forensic DNA Laboratory

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is essential to maintaining safe communities that our law enforcement and justice systems have the tools they need to bring criminals to justice. Currently Alberta relies on federal forensic services that are facing increasing costs and capacity constraints, leading to delays in investigations and court proceedings. To the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services: why is our government taking action now to establish a provincial forensic DNA laboratory, and how will this investment benefit Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of public safety.

Mr. Ellis: I waited for you to acknowledge me.

The Speaker: Well, you just can't start speaking till I acknowledge you. It's actually helpful if you stand up first.

Mr. Ellis: There you go. All right.

Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. This new provincial DNA lab is going to be quicker. It's going to be cheaper for Albertans. It's going to help all law enforcement, Crown prosecutors and, of course, bring criminals to justice. I can tell you that we've been paying what is known as a federal premium to the RCMP national lab, a cost of \$2,482 per lab cost. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that in Ontario they pay \$782 and \$688 in Quebec for the same DNA sample. We're not going to do that anymore. We're not going to pay that premium. We're going to work on behalf of Albertans.

The Speaker: Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Deputy Premier. Given that costs charged by the federal government for DNA casework have risen by 50 per cent over the last decade and are projected to continue increasing annually and further given that municipalities are seeking more cost-effective solutions to support local policing and reduce the financial burden on property taxpayers, can the minister tell this Assembly what the financial impact of this new provincial lab will be for Alberta municipalities and how it will improve the efficiency of our justice system?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that the DNA lab has certainly hit municipalities and police services in the pocketbook. On average it's about \$7.2 million that we spend on DNA in the province in usually about a year. I can tell you that with these new efforts that we're making in building our own DNA lab, we should reduce that to approximately \$2 million a year. That will be a savings of \$5.2 million to not only municipalities but also to police services to make sure they reinvest in front-line policing.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his great work on this file. Given that addressing crime, particularly property crime, requires timely forensic evidence and given that the national system has struggled to meet service standards, can the minister please provide an update on the timeline for this lab? Specifically, does this mean that our police will only be able to submit one example per case, or will they finally have the flexibility they need to secure convictions?

Mr. Ellis: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly, when we found out that police services can only submit one DNA sample per case, of course, we found that to be extremely unacceptable. This is why we embarked down this road to creating our own DNA lab to make sure that law enforcement have the tools that they need in the tool box to make sure they put offenders in jail. I can tell you that it'll be a staged approach over the next five years. We're going to make sure that we meet all the national standards to make sure that we have the best lab in Canada to make sure we support not only Alberta but maybe even other provinces.

Investigation of Electoral List Distribution and Use (continued)

Member Miyashiro: Mr. Speaker, the RCMP have video evidence of a member of the Premier's staff at an April 16 Centurion Project meeting where the private information of former Premier Kenney was shared as an example of how to search an illegally obtained voters list. A UCP Party president has admitted to knowledge of the database and said that he thought it was illegal but also did nothing. To the Premier: why did the UCP sit on this information for two weeks and still not inform authorities of this unprecedented breach of information?

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

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can see that the NDP continues to push a narrative that is absolutely false. The party president of the UCP was not at that meeting, nor was he at any other Centurion Project meeting. Throwing names out

without any verification, without confirming who those people were is not accountability. It's not a strategy. It's not a gotcha moment. It's a cheap political trick. To try to bring people into this Assembly and drag their names through the mud that had nothing to do with this is highly inappropriate. That member knows better, and he should refrain from talking anymore.

Member Miyashiro: Given that there are multiple high-level connections between the UCP, Republican Party of Alberta, and the Centurion Project, given that the separatist leader Mitch Sylvestre is a UCP riding association president and was meeting in public with David Parker to discuss how to use the tool weeks ago, will the Premier admit that she was aware of the data breach shortly after the April 16 meeting and did nothing or that her own staff and party purposely withheld this information from her in another shocking breach of trust?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again more misinformation from the NDP. You know who knew about the list on April 17? The Leader of the Opposition, of the NDP. You know what the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday at their press conference when they were asked about why they didn't report to Elections Alberta? He said: because we didn't think they would do anything about it. Highly inappropriate to put millions of Albertans at risk, people whose information is now out there, and sit on that information for two weeks while they go and record TikTok videos and Instagram videos to try to score cheap political points. That's what's inappropriate.

2:20

Member Miyashiro: Given that the Premier's response to the data breach is consistently "I know nothing" as she does nothing and given that this is no laughing matter 3 million people had their data breached and given that the Attorney General has admitted as such, the RCMP is investigating, the Privacy Commissioner is investigating, and Elections Alberta is investigating, will the Premier take responsibility for knowing nothing about this massive scandal, or is that someone's fault as well?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When will the members of the NDP hold their leader accountable and ask him to take responsibility for sitting on the information for two weeks before Elections Alberta came forward and notified the public about what was happening? Elections Alberta named the Republican Party of Alberta as the source of the data leak. The NDP are turning this into a partisan issue, and that is inappropriate. This is about the people of Alberta and the information that has been leaked outside of Alberta. They should take a more appropriate stand and stop embarrassing themselves.

Physician Compensation Model

Dr. Metz: Mr. Speaker, this week the minister of health denied that Bill 11 violates the Canada Health Act. The minister ignored a legal opinion based on the 2020 Supreme Court decision which banned dual practice in B.C. because it contravenes the Canada Health Act. A two-tier system will increase wait times in the public system and harm those who cannot afford private care. The minister said that this was just one opinion. Will the minister please share the legal opinions that explain how dual practice is legal in Alberta but not B.C.?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how the members opposite can even comment; we haven't even put the regulations out. But happy to share that the Canada Health Act does not ban private care delivery or privately funded services. It sets the conditions provinces must meet to receive federal funding for their public health care system. The act requires provinces to provide medically necessary, insured services through the public system. We're going to continue to do that, but we're going to make sure that Albertans have choice and can add to that.

Dr. Metz: Given that the federal government is expected to withhold \$1 from health transfers for every dollar spent in contravention of the Canada Health Act and given that the Supreme Court has ruled that dual practice contravenes the Canada Health Act and given that dual practice just rearranges the wait-list so those who can pay have shorter lists and those who cannot wait longer, how does the minister justify mismanaging Albertans' money to give preferred access and no wait times for health care to those who have money?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing of the sort. We have been very clear with the federal minister. I've been in constant communication with her. I will continue to communicate with her that we will be compliant with the Canada Health Act but that we're also going to increase access to for Albertans for much-needed elective surgeries. The members opposite would delegate and relegate Albertans to be able to travel out of the province, out of the country, often on the same flight as their physician to get much-needed elective surgeries. We're going to be able to empower them to have them here.

Dr. Metz: Given that one of the principles of the Canada Health Act is ensuring Canadians get access to care and elective surgeries are medically necessary and given that the UCP government's ideological privatization agenda has already reduced access to surgery, primary care, emergency services, and everything else and given that they've failed for over seven years to ever improve access, why should Albertans trust this government with dual practice when world-wide experience shows the only beneficiaries are big insurance companies and those that can afford to pay their way to the front of the line?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do you know what the record of the NDP was when they were in power? Open heart surgery wait times increased by 50 per cent. Cataract and hip replacement wait times increased by 30 per cent. Knee replacement wait times up 20 per cent. You know what's up while we've been in power? Increases in surgeries overall from 285,000 to over 318,000. That's going to continue to go up and once we have to . . .

The Speaker: You've got to stop.

Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. [interjection] That's what it says here. I don't write the list. I just read the list; I don't write it.

Mr. Getson: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. We had a little heckling going on. I thought you were calling me on that.

Supports for Seniors

Mr. Getson: With that, Mr. Speaker, seniors across Alberta are the pillars of our communities, and we're forever grateful to the contributions they've made to our province of the strong and free.

However, with the price of goods and services increasing over the past decade, largely due to the federal policies of the federal government and their out-of-control spending, many seniors are facing challenges to make ends meet. To the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services: what supports are available for Alberta seniors to help ensure that they're able to age well in place in their own homes and communities?

Ms Renaud: Tell them to get a job.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP just heckled to tell seniors to get a job. We aren't doing that here in Alberta. In fact, we're investing \$6.6 billion this year alone in supporting seniors, over a half a billion dollars in direct supplements to seniors' households, maintaining the highest threshold in the country and also maintaining our low-interest loan programs to be able to help seniors renovate homes with a half a billion dollar investment in that space, making sure that seniors who want to remain in their community can remain in their community and not be forced into a lodge prematurely. Looking forward to the next question.

The Speaker: Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that many seniors are feeling the massive pressures of inflation when it comes to affordable housing that fits within their own budgets and further given that cost can sometimes be a barrier to seniors transitioning into assisted living facilities, to the same minister: what housing and assisted living options are available for Alberta seniors looking to live with dignity and with care? [interjections]

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the Member for St. Albert heckling to tell them to get a job is not the strategy that we're taking. We actually inherited a lodge program from the NDP that had not been properly kept care for years. In fact, the Auditor General called out the former government for their lack of care when it came to that space. We made decisions as a government, that the NDP have voted against each and every year, to invest in capital maintenance and renewal, including in this budget over \$200 million to be able to make sure that not only are we building record amounts of continuing care spaces but that we're renovating and keeping care of the continuing care spaces that we have.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister, and hopefully the Member for St. Albert will stop heckling as well. Given that ensuring the safe environments for seniors and care are the priorities of families across the province . . . [interjections] They just can't stop. And further .

The Speaker: Just hold with the preambles and get your question asked.

Mr. Getson: Yes, sir. Further given that the seniors deserve to live with dignity and peace of mind and their own personal safety will always be a priority, to the minister: what safeguards are in place to protect seniors who live in care homes, and what measures are in place to protect seniors across the province from those who may seek to take advantage of them?

The Speaker: The minister of social services.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, the United Conservative Party government actually legislated care hours, almost four times the

amount that the NDP had in that space, to make sure that our seniors can be kept care of. We also have brought in an inspection division so we can go out and inspect facilities and make sure that challenges are addressed as they come up, and we have invested significantly in helping elders that are facing elder abuse, something the NDP really should have done. One thing they did not do was open up lodge spaces to help elders facing domestic violence. We did that, again fixing the NDP's mess.

Domestic Violence Prevention

Member Batten: Mr. Speaker, this massive and illegal data breach by separatists has exposed survivors of domestic violence, their phone numbers, even where they live, putting them at serious and immediate risk of being located by their abusers. Their personal information remained publicly accessible for a month. We now know that government officials were aware of this breach weeks before it was taken down. Had proper legal reporting steps been taken, the exposure could have been significantly reduced. To the minister: where are the emergency supports for survivors now unsafe in their own homes?

2:30

The Speaker: The Minister of Children and Family Services.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. It's clear that the member opposite is upset. I am angry as well. I'm pissed off. I'm angry at the fact that there are survivors of domestic violence in this province that are looking over their shoulders and are concerned about their safety and well-being and not just for them but for their kids. I've travelled and visited almost every women's shelter in this entire province. I've met with survivors, and we continue to support sexual assault centres, programs that prevent domestic violence, as well as women's shelters to keep women and children safe.

Member Batten: Given that the status quo is unacceptable and given that it takes seven or more times before a survivor can successfully leave their abuser and given that survivors with children face heightened risks and given that Alberta consistently has one of the highest femicide rates in the country and given that survivors' voices are clearly not being reflected in this government's actions, how is the minister responding to these realities and the immediate threat caused by this government's inaction?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for that question. I continue to meet with sexual assault centres and women's shelters as well as survivors of domestic and sexual violence in this province to look for additional ways that we can help support them. There are avenues so that anyone that is concerned for their safety or for the safety of their children can call. One of those numbers is the family violence info line, 310.1818. As well, they can call 211 and they can access additional services that way. Of course, they always have the ability to call the RCMP or local law enforcement.

Member Batten: Given the rising rates of domestic violence and the increasing pressures on Albertans and given the affordability crisis and the privatization of public health care and the instability brought forward from talks of separatism and given that current legislation has proven insufficient to keep Albertans safe and given that the minister responsible clearly is unable or uninterested in

taking the necessary steps, will the minister pull himself up by his bootstraps and actually do the necessary work, or will he step aside and let those of us who are actually responsible take the reins?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for that question. Our government continues to help and fund programs that support women and children that are fleeing domestic and sexual violence. That's why in the budget, that was approved by this side of the House, funding for women's shelters continues to increase. Funding for sexual assault centres continues to increase. We meet our mandate commitments. At no point in Alberta's history have as many programs, supports, and investments gone to support women and children that are going through their darkest days. On this side of the House we are actually showing action on this file.

The Speaker: The next question belongs . . . [interjections] Gee, I thought I was getting heckled again there.

Alberta in Canada

Mr. Bouchard: Mr. Speaker, the province of Quebec has long exercised significant provincial authority over taxation, immigration, administration, pensions, policing, and even international agreements. Albertans continue to show interest in greater autonomy like such practical approaches as Quebec. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration: what practical approaches is our government working towards to strengthen Alberta's constitutional voice and autonomy?

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to that member for the question. Everyone in this Chamber knows that there is no strong Canada without a strong Alberta, and we disproportionately contribute to the economic growth and job creation, and that is why we are fighting for the same level of control like other provinces have like Quebec. Job creation like 100,000 new jobs year over year: that's what winning looks like. Immigration, for example, is a shared responsibility but something the federal government has failed to manage and in turn is putting massive pressures on core services like health care and education. Legislation like the Immigration Oversight Act is going to take care of that.

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

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Quebec has successfully administered its own pension plan for decades and given that Alberta has strong demographics, sustained employment growth, and continues to explore alternative retirement options and further given that Albertans continue to show interest in a discussion around greater autonomy, to the Minister of Finance: what are the potential benefits of an Alberta-run pension plan, and how might it improve accountability while better reflecting Alberta's economic realities?

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have asked whether their retirement savings are delivering real value for their hard work. Our government heard their concerns and passed the Pension Protection Act. This legislation guarantees that if any

government pursues an Alberta pension plan, Albertans must first vote in favour of it in a referendum, contribution rates must be the same or lower than the CPP with equal or better benefits, and every dollar transferred must be used only to build and operate the plan. Fundamentally, these are Albertans' pensions, and it's their choice.

Mr. Bouchard: Given that Albertans depend on fairness, balance, and meaningful engagement with the federal government and given that our province is the key driver of Canada's economy and further given the growing desire among many Albertans to take greater control over provincial affairs, to the Minister of Justice: can you outline how this government is firmly asserting Alberta's jurisdiction, defending our constitutional rights, and ensuring Ottawa does not continue to undermine the voices and interests of Albertans?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, we know full well that Albertans have legitimate grievances with the policies of the federal government, and they'd like to see areas of provincial jurisdiction respected. That's exactly why we've announced that Albertans will go to the polls on October 19 so that they can have a direct say on important constitutional questions that help protect provincial sovereignty. Our government will always stand on behalf of Albertans. It's why we advocated to the federal government on things that we'd like to see changed. It's why we'll stand in court every single time when we don't like what we see. We'll protect Alberta. Full stop.

School Construction in Southwest Edmonton

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, my riding of Edmonton-South West is one of the fastest growing communities in Alberta. Children in the neighbourhood of Edgemont regularly travel an hour by bus to attend school because it is one of the many neighbourhoods in my riding that doesn't have one. The Edgemont K to 6 was announced back in 2023 with an opening date of 2027 but was delayed last year, citing additional geotechnical work. Since then there has been no news from Alberta Infrastructure or the ministry or shovels in the ground. Can the minister tell us when the Edgemont school will finally be open?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. It's shocking to me that the NDP want to talk about school projects, but I'm glad that they do. The Edgemont school site, as the member knows, is the only school site that we had an option to build on in his constituency. Unfortunately, we are waiting on geotechnical results to be done. We do plan on doing mitigation on that site this summer, but unfortunately we don't have a timeline for when the school will be opened at this time. [interjections]

The Speaker: Let's be less funny, and let's hear the member for Edmonton not that he's not funny. He can be.

Mr. Ip: Given that the so-called school accelerator program, ironically renamed schools now, is touted by this government as a process that will speed up the construction of schools but has been anything but speedy or predictable, given that the Hamptons high school should have progressed from preplanning to planning stage last year yet it does not appear that this has happened and that students in Edmonton-South West urgently need a high school and residents in Keswick and Glenriding are also waiting for schools previously announced, can the minister explain why his government is great at reannouncing schools but not very good at actually building them?

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

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to talk about the schools now program, that is investing \$8.6 billion to build and modernize 200,000 spaces across the province. As a direct consequence of the schools now project we have approved six projects in the member's riding, including a new high school in southwest Edmonton, a new 7 to 12 school in Glenriding Heights, a new elementary school also in the same neighbourhood, a new K to 9 school in Edgemont, a new K to 9 school in River's Edge, and a new K to 9 school in Stillwater. These are six out of the 161 projects under way.

2:40

Mr. Ip: Given that when the Alberta NDP were in government, we built 244 schools and modernizations with an average construction time of three years, including the planning process for new builds, given that under the UCP schools are now taking a minimum of five years from planning to construction or longer and in some cases postponed indefinitely and further given that reannouncing schools two or three times doesn't actually solve the school space crisis, Alberta families are tired of waiting. Where are the schools? When are they being built? Why is it taking so long, Minister?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP were in office, they didn't have to worry about building schools, and you want to know why? Because they told Albertans to leave the province. They drove out investment, they scared investors, and they told people to leave the province. Our government has reversed that trend, and Alberta is a place of opportunity once again. We're making sure that every student will have the schools that they need in order to succeed. That's why we're building 161 school projects that are under way right now in the province, including six in the member's riding, to make sure that every student has access to world-class facilities.

Affordability Measures

Ms Wright: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are worried because they're putting in more effort but can't get ahead. Utility costs are up 47 per cent, auto insurance 45 per cent, and grocery prices are through the roof. Albertans want relief, not excuses. My NDP colleague from Calgary-Currie has offered some concrete answers for them in Bill 209, but the UCP is refusing to listen. No help with utilities or gas prices either, so why won't the government stand with us, help us pass Bill 209, and do something that will help make sure things are actually more affordable?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, Bill 209: two out of the four amendments were duplicative in nature and were just attempting to replace amendments that are already in place in the Consumer Protection Act, and they're already working. I would advise the member that next time they want to do a consumer protection bill, reach out to my office. Make an appointment. I'd be happy to work with you on that very closely.

Ms Wright: Given that seniors on fixed income struggle with rising grocery prices, utility bills, and housing costs, given that, whenever possible, aging in place is the best option for seniors' health and dignity, given that seniors' advocates like my constituent Deborah worry that the seniors she supports will no longer qualify for important household supports due to the planned July cuts, what does the government say to Deborah, who fears these seniors will be unable to stay in their homes and the communities they helped build, and will the minister agree that reversing these planned cuts is not only necessary but the right thing to do?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, this government in this budget increased the senior benefit. The members need to take some time to actually read the budget. What's shocking is that that member and her party voted against that increase to seniors. They voted against the \$6.6 billion that were in this budget to help seniors. They voted against supports for housing for seniors. They voted against supports for continuing care investments. They vote against Albertans each and every time because all they want to do in this Legislature is stand up and complain. This government disagrees. We deliver for Albertans each and every day.

Ms Wright: Given that this UCP government is always ready to help out wealthy friends, including waiving environmental assessments for projects like data centres, given that Albertans are being nickelled and dimed everywhere they turn what with all the increased and new fees, property taxes, and levies and with health care costs soon to be added to that list, Albertans are asking a simple question: whose side is this government on? Why won't this government lower those everyday costs and help working people get ahead instead of leaving families to carry the burden alone?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's awfully rich, for the NDP to talk about affordability when they literally ran on raising taxes. They ran on increased taxpayer costs to phase out coal. They ran on bringing the renewable energy program in, which raised costs for every single Albertan. They support a fertilizer tax, the plastics ban, net-zero power regulations, everything driving up costs for Albertans. But you know what we did when we were in power? We ran on protecting Albertans. We cut taxes. We lowered electricity prices. We're lowering interest rates, and we put up . . .

The Speaker: When I stand, you've got to stop talking.

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

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I will be raising a point of privilege regarding the failure of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to inform the Assembly of his knowledge of the recent unauthorized distribution of the list of electors by which he has compromised the right of the individual members of the Assembly to be free from obstruction, interference, intimidation, and molestation.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: We have tablings. Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an Instagram post from Three Seasons Landscaping in Ardrossan. They put up a sign, and it's a picture of it, and it says, "We hope our new sign is a smash hit like the 222 bridge."

The Speaker: Okay.
Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tabling five copies of an open letter regarding: "Alberta's music action plan needs fiscal

transparency, governance clarity and real music-industry investment.” There you go.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to table the requisite copies of an article from the St. Albert *Gazette*, Redraw of Electoral Boundaries [Could] Present Challenging Timeline: Elections Alberta, to be referenced in later debate.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings? Oh, okay. Sorry. There are a lot of people standing that aren’t doing tablings, so it took me a second to catch you there. Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have copies of an article from *Western Standard* titled Alberta’s Bill 25 Isn’t Removing Politics from Classroom It Is Redefining Them, written by Jennifer, a constituent of mine.

The Speaker: Any other tablings? Okay. Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings.

The first is an *Edmonton Journal* article dated May 6. It says City meaning Edmonton Likely to Lose in Electoral Boundaries Chicanery: UCP Has Shown . . . Few Democratic Norms They Aren’t Willing to Vandalize.

Second tabling, also May 6, *Edmonton Journal*: Elections Alberta Investigating Possible Misuse of Electors List.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, an *Edmonton Journal* article, May 6 as well: Arrest Made after Muslim Man Beaten, Subjected to Racial Slurs in St. Albert.

The Speaker: Are there more tablings? I see none.

That takes us to points of order, of which there are several. The first one I think was at 1:57 p.m. by the government side.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise on the point of order noted at 1:57-ish. At the time the Leader of the Opposition was speaking and said, with my unofficial records: interfere with investigations; that’s what the Premier does. It has been established many times in this Chamber that you cannot accuse another member in this Assembly of breaking the law. In this instance, the Leader of the Opposition clearly identified and singled out one member, in this instance, particularly the Premier, and suggested that the Premier interferes with investigations. It’s absurd. The member opposite knows that. This is a point of order, in my opinion, under 23(h), (i), and (j).

2:50

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m surprised by this point of order. I believe this is a matter of debate, and I will enter into evidence previous points of order. As well, allow me to refer to the May 17, 2023, allegations involving the Premier of Alberta Danielle Smith report by Ethics Commissioner Marguerite Trussler, who on page 6 says:

The allegations are that Premier Smith sought to influence the prosecution of Artur Pawlowski who was facing charges relating to the Coutts border crossing blockade and, [therefore], improperly tried to interfere with the administration of justice.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to go to page 16. In the conclusions and recommendations the Ethics Commissioner wrote:

In my opinion, Premier Smith contravened s.3 of the Conflicts of Interest Act in her interaction with the Minister of Justice and

Attorney General in relation to the criminal charges Mr. Pawlowski was facing.

Specifically, the Premier was found to have broken the law on October 31, 2023.

This exact point of order was brought here. The language then was more specific. In this case I do not have the benefit of the Blues but, trusting the Government House Leader’s reading, “interfering with investigations” was used. On October 31, 2023, the point of order was around the language that the Premier broke the law, and it was found not to be a point of order specifically because the independent Ethics Commissioner has found Premier Smith contravened section 3 of the Conflicts of Interest Act, Mr. Speaker.

I believe very strongly that this is a matter of debate because of past point of order debates that we’ve had in this House, and there are other references that I will not enter in. I hear the Government House Leader, who is impatient, and that is fine. Truly, I believe this is an important matter of debate and not a point of order because of the history and because of the very specific instances that we have, that we can reference to, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. So this is what I have from the Blues that was said. “It’s not interfering with an investigation; that’s what the Premier does.” So this isn’t, in my mind, about past behaviours, saying that the Premier is currently interfering with investigations. That’s kind of the suggestion. That’s accusing someone in this House of breaking the law, which makes it a point of order.

The other things you talked about again, if you want to talk about historical rulings and judgments, it’s not been done in this place, and it can’t be done. When you say that someone is breaking the law now, you just can’t do that. So it’s a point of order.

Ms Gray: On behalf of the member I will apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: At 1:59, again by the government side.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). An established precedent in this Chamber, by you as well, Mr. Speaker, you cannot assume, presuppose what another member is thinking. In this instance the Leader of the Opposition said: the Premier thinks she can pardon people. I don’t know how he would have that knowledge. He’s not in her brain. I leave it at that. Point of order.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I disagree with the Government House Leader. Again, I’m surprised by him raising this point of order specifically because it has been a matter of debate here in this Chamber. I will refer you to a video that was posted in 2022, the Premier at her 2022 AGM in October, when she said, quote: I’m getting legal advice on who I’m able to issue pardons for. End quote. Again, a CBC article from around the same time: “Soon after being sworn into office, Smith announced she would pursue pardoning noncriminal violators of health restrictions.”

The Speaker: You just don’t get to use members’ names here.

Ms Gray: Oh, I apologize, Mr. Speaker. It catches us all as we are reading things.

In this case, assuming that the Blues are correct and that the Government House Leader’s recollection of what was said is accurate, the Leader of the Official Opposition was bringing back into debate the language that the Premier has used herself about wanting to pardon people. I have multiple CTV, CBC, and other headlines about the Premier exploring pardons for various people.

I do believe it is a matter of debate and not a point of order, and I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: Well, again, unfortunately, we get a lot of stuff like this. Here's what it says. It says, "Now, the authorities are there to decide guilt, not the Premier although she thinks she can pardon people." It's a point of order. You know what? If the hon. member had said, "Seems to think she can't," I realize to those at home it sounds ridiculous, but we have rules here, and that's the way we sort it out. You can't say what's on somebody else's mind. You can say what they seem to think. You can't say what they actually think, so it's a point of order.

Ms Gray: On behalf of the member, I apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: I think we're at 2:07 although I'm looking for paper on that, and it may be here but I'm failing to find it.

Pardon me? 2:08. Yes. Okay, by the government side again.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). At the time noted, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was speaking from a sedentary position while the hon. Minister of Justice was commenting, answering her question. In behaviour that is common for the member, finishing a sentence of the member, using the word "cheating," which would insinuate in the context that the member is cheating.

Again, this goes back to a ruling from earlier this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, that you cannot accuse someone of breaking the law, especially a member of this Chamber, so under 23(h), (i), and (j), I think this is a point of order and the member should apologize and withdraw.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I disagree with the Government House Leader because, as I recall, the context and what the Minister of Justice was talking about was the data breach, was separatists leaking 3 million Albertans' personal addresses, phone numbers, names, and private information. The member referring to that as "cheating," I think, would be appropriate because we were talking about the data breach and not accusing an individual member.

Certainly the Minister of Justice is not taking credit for that data breach. We know that was something that happened outside of this place. I don't believe that this was an insult or accusation to a member based on my read of the room and the conversation at the time, Mr. Speaker. I do not have the benefit of the Blues. I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: Here's what I have. The minister is saying, "We've heard from the Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Alberta that they've developed a more robust process for this particular petition, that was submitted just this week because of the data breach," and then it has Edmonton-Glenora saying the word "cheating," and then, "Allegations that were made."

Here's the problem. When you speak out of turn, which clearly is what happened here and then you're leaning on context, you're in a weak position. This could go either way in my opinion, so I'm just going to ask the hon. member to apologize and withdraw. You're talking out of turn and depending upon context. Sometimes it's a bridge too far, sometimes it's not, but when you're speaking out a turn you take that risk. Today you didn't win.

Ms Hoffman: I am happy to apologize for speaking out of turn, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The next one is sorry 2:08 again it looks like.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At 2:08 the Official Opposition called a point of order because the Government House Leader was talking out of turn, and he said to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora: you talk too much.

The back and forth in this place can be helpful or unhelpful in many different ways, but telling someone they should be talking less in this place can rise to breaching somebody's privilege. Talking about freedom of speech, I think, is language we need to be really careful about. I would also point to you, Mr. Speaker, that this language was not while the member had the floor. He was from a seated position speaking out of turn. I think it's incredibly unhelpful. Certainly the member on my side of the House took it as not well intended, to be told that they talk too much in this place when elected here to represent their constituents. It's unhelpful to the dialogue. I believe it rises to a point of order, particularly given your last ruling, and I look forward to your ruling here.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your previous ruling, I think, speaks to the importance of context, and in this instance I was making a comment to the member opposite about throwing insults, particularly ones that are accusing members of breaking the law across the aisle.

3:00

We are elected by our constituents to come in this Chamber and represent them. I do not believe that I was elected by the good people of Cardston and area to call the members opposite cheaters. I was elected by the good people of that constituency to come here and represent them.

Now, from a sedentary position we do say things sometimes that are offensive to the members opposite, depending upon what caucus you represent. But in this instance this is a matter of debate, whether I think someone does or does not do something. Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's a point of order. I said what I said.

The Speaker: It better be new.

Ms Hoffman: It is definitely new.

The Speaker: And helpful, please.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to add additional context, which is that . . .

The Speaker: Short and brief.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah.

. . . many women are told that they speak too much, and I think that's additionally . . . [interjections] It is important context, I think, for us to have in the context of this debate and how people respond when they're told to not talk. That is something that I think is important for all members to reflect on when we're in this place, duly elected to speak up on behalf of our constituents.

The Speaker: Well, the . . . [interjections] Order. This is the part where only I get to talk.

The hon. Government House Leader has acknowledged that he said something of that nature, and he certainly said it out of turn. We know that as well. It doesn't show up in the Blues, but the comment has been acknowledged. Based on the fact that it could cause disorder in the House and that you don't get the benefit, necessarily, of context because you were definitely speaking out of turn, I'd just ask you to withdraw it.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: At 2:25, I think. Was there that's it? That's all. Okay. I made a mark unnecessarily on my piece of paper.

That takes us to the question of privilege. Okay. Let me say to the Opposition House Leader that the government made the complaint of a question of privilege. They will state their case, their evidence, what they want to say, and you will have the choice to answer immediately, or if you choose, you can delay till tomorrow whatever answer you may choose to give. Do you understand that?

Ms Gray: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Pardon me. Apparently, I missed something here. I'm going to get help.

All right. This is in consideration that the . . . [interjection] Order. We don't need more of it. Even if it's friendly, we don't need it now, okay?

Just in case the member in question is not here to hear the arguments: that's another reason why there's going to be a chance to wait till tomorrow for a return, a rebuttal, or whatever else you want to say or someone wants to say.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Privilege Obstructing Members in Performance of Duty

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to raise a point of privilege regarding the failure of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to inform the Assembly of his knowledge of the recent unauthorized distribution of the electoral list and his misleading and inaccurate statements in the Assembly regarding this matter, by which he has, I believe, compromised the rights of the individual members of the Assembly to be free from obstruction, interference, intimidation, and molestation. The appropriate notice has been given to all relevant parties under Standing Order 15(2).

I now wish to give a brief statement of the nature of the matter pursuant to Standing Order 15(2.1). In doing so, I would first like to provide some relevant background information that is particularly pertinent to this issue and then present arguments and citations from the authorities as to why this matter constitutes a point of privilege.

Members of this Assembly are very well aware of the situation involving the potential data breach from the electors' personal information. This is a serious situation, Mr. Speaker, and protecting the personal information of Albertans is something our government takes very seriously. Those responsible should be held accountable under the law. Full stop.

On April 30 Elections Alberta made public that there was an inappropriate use and distribution of the list of electors. Later we found out the timeline of events. Elections Alberta says that on April 27 information was obtained suggesting that a third-party group may be in possession of the list of electors by the Republican Party of Alberta. On April 28 the Chief Electoral Officer wrote to the individuals using the list of electors that they must cease and desist, and on April 29 representatives from Elections Alberta and the Edmonton Police Service went to deliver the cease-and-desist

letter to the third-party group. Finally, on the morning of April 30 an injunction was granted to prohibit any further access to or use of the list of electors by this group.

Since Elections Alberta has made this information public, the Leader of the Opposition has tried to score cheap political points. He claimed yesterday at a press conference that Rob Smith, UCP president, attended the meeting of the Centurion Project. Only moments later the United Conservative Party issued a statement making it clear that, quote: Rob Smith was never at that meeting, nor has he been at any Centurion meeting; it is a flat-out lie. End quote. UCP party president Rob Smith was actually in Red Deer on April 16 at the UCP Central Alberta Leaders Dinner, with over a thousand UCP supporters in attendance.

Now, the member opposite said on May 4, "I myself found out about it on April 17," which is page 1662 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. He further said, "I immediately informed the relevant authorities" but then yesterday admitted that while he reported what he knew to the RCMP, he did not report it to Elections Alberta, one of the appropriate authorities to investigate this matter given that it was the breach of the list that they distributed to the Republican Party. Not only did the member opposite not report this to Elections Alberta; he also didn't report it to the Legislative Assembly. The member has been very enthusiastic about this issue today and other days. Why did he not bring it up earlier? Mr. Speaker, shame on that member.

This leads us to an important question. Why did the Leader of the Opposition not report what he knew about the inappropriate use of the electors to the government or to the Legislative Assembly? If he knew on April 17, he had four sitting days on the 20th, the 21st, the 22nd, and the 23rd of April where he could have informed the Assembly. He chose not to. Members of this Assembly and Albertans would like to know why.

When asked by a reporter yesterday why he didn't inform the government when he learned this, in the spirit of being nonpartisan he said: if you discover that your neighbour has robbed a bank, do you tell them before calling the police? What did he mean by that when he said that, Mr. Speaker? He's trying to place blame on the UCP, and he's trying to mislead Albertans into thinking the UCP was complicit when Elections Alberta already named the Republican Party of Alberta. The member opposite doesn't care. In fact, he seems to be only interested in politicizing this matter even at the expense of the safety of members of this Assembly and all Albertans.

While this point of privilege deals with members being put at risk due to the inaction of the Leader of the Opposition, let's not forget that this also includes victims fleeing domestic violence, human trafficking survivors, seniors, and other vulnerable Albertans, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition intentionally kept the information to himself while the personal information of each member of this Assembly was exposed online for weeks, all in hopes of scoring a cheap political win and jeopardizing the safety of members but also of all Albertans.

I will end my background remarks, Mr. Speaker, by highlighting that although the NDP put politics ahead of member safety and did not notify the members of this Assembly for well over a week since all of this had become public on April 30, the NDP have continuously asked us to interfere in the independent investigations of Elections Alberta and the RCMP. We will not do that. We will be letting those independent bodies continue their investigations because we expect justice to be served and we want those responsible to be held accountable under the law. Any political interference could jeopardize that. We just won't interfere, despite what the NDP is asking us to do.

Given the context, Mr. Speaker, it may be obvious how the conduct of the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, the Leader of the Opposition, constitutes a point of privilege, but in order to promote clarity, I would like to take a moment to highlight the fundamental arguments under which this point is being raised. It is being argued that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, by his cavalier, irresponsible, and disingenuous actions or, more accurately, inaction, has put in jeopardy the right and privilege held by members of this Assembly to carry out their duties free from obstruction, interference, intimidation, and molestation.

3:10

This is a long-standing privilege of this Assembly and is, in fact, fundamental to our democracy. How can Albertans have confidence in their representation if they cannot be confident that their representative has the guaranteed right to carry out his or her duties? In order for a point of privilege to be found in relation to a particular privilege, “the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the member’s claim that they have been impeded in the performance of their constitutional functions and that the [member] is directly related to a proceeding in Parliament.” *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, fourth edition, 3.72.

Failure of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and Leader of the Opposition to inform the Assembly when he became aware of the unauthorized distribution of the list of electors, which, for the record, contains every member’s home address, represents a grave breach of privilege, and his continuously inaccurate claims regarding the matter did nothing but exacerbate this issue. By his inaction he has put members and their privacy and their families at risk by making them vulnerable to threats, attacks, insults, and intimidation.

Let’s be clear. This job comes with stress and plenty of interactions with anxious and even sometimes dangerous people, so it is important to ensure that members are protected and kept safe in order to carry out their duties effectively. This includes security systems installed in offices and homes, security training and services, and numerous other protections. By failing to inform the Assembly of the unauthorized distribution of this information, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the Leader of the Opposition has completely contravened these security efforts.

At the very least, Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand why the member wouldn’t have forwarded the information to you on behalf of all members. With so many ways to do this right now, how could he have gotten this so wrong? It’s something a decent human being would just do, inform members of the Assembly and their workplace of potential breach of data and, in this case, a real breach of data. Furthermore, by not providing the Assembly with the important information he possessed, he damaged members’ ability to properly represent and communicate transparently with their constituents about the issue.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter, and I am more than willing to provide any additional information that you may require in making your rulings.

In conclusion, a final thought. Because this matter pertains to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to think it would be entirely appropriate for the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing to review, and I trust that you will treat this with the severity it requires.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader. Deferred. Okay.

We will come back to this tomorrow at the same time in the procedure. I will give some context tomorrow on what a serious matter a point of privilege is and the high bar that one needs to get

over to argue that. That settles that for today. We’ll come back to it tomorrow at the same time.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 26

Immigration Oversight Act

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill 26, the Immigration Oversight Act.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I want to thank all members for the debate we’ve had thus far. It’s even more clear today than it was before, when this bill was introduced over a month ago, that the federal government has lost control over immigration in Canada. Just this week the federal minister admitted that they have no clear knowledge of how many temporary residents have remained in Canada after their permits have expired. That alone should cause concern for every member of this House. But, Madam Speaker, it does not stop there. We have seen massive cuts to the provincial nominee program, which is one of the few areas of control that we currently hold. We have seen broad increases to temporary foreign workers instead of targeted sector-specific solutions. This is concerning, and it is management like this that is having a real impact on our country and core services.

Now, Madam Speaker, our government’s position remains that immigration should be economically focused and address legitimate labour shortages. Further to that when someone uproots their life and chooses Alberta, we want to give them assurance that there are real opportunities here rather than exposing them to bad actors who would take advantage of them or worse, mislead them. Too often that has been the case. We continue to hear about newcomers being charged illegal recruitment fees, being promised jobs that do not exist, or arriving to find work conditions are far different than what they were told.

At the same time provinces are left without the data they need as the federal government has not been transparent or timely in sharing critical immigration information. Immigration has always been and will continue to be part of our province’s success story. We are growing our economy with industries that need a strong workforce. It is my belief that Canadians should always have first crack at Canadian jobs, but if the talent that we need right now is not here right now, then we look to immigration and potentially bring that talent from out of country, but that should never be option A. I would hope every member could agree with that, especially given the challenges we have seen with youth unemployment and the oversaturation of the entry-level job market in many of our communities.

Now, I hope, through debate, that the members opposite have taken the time to read section 95 of the Constitution Act because if they did, Madam Speaker, they would have received some clarity that immigration does, in fact, fall within both provincial and federal jurisdiction. What we have seen with this is that the federal government cannot and should not be trusted to manage this on their own. They should be listening to the provinces. There have been egregious situations, even right here in Alberta, where newcomers have been forced to pay for job placements or illegal fees just to secure employment. That is why this legislation will require employers who hire temporary foreign workers to register with the

province. Further to this, immigration consultants and international recruiters will need to be provincially licensed.

Everywhere I go, my job is to highlight Alberta and what we have to offer, particularly under the United Conservative Party and the leadership of our Premier. We have a strong reputation, and that reputation needs to be protected. It was one that was damaged between 2015 and 2019, but, Madam Speaker, we have brought it back, and we are once again Canada's powerhouse. The last thing we want is for Alberta to become a place where people feel uncertain about coming to work because of exploitation, because of fraud, or lack of oversight. On the other hand Albertans want an immigration system they can trust: one that is fair, one that is transparent, and one that is aligned with our economic needs.

Bill 26 is about restoring trust. It will increase both transparency and accountability, and it will ensure Alberta has the tools it needs to protect both newcomers and the integrity of our labour market. Madam Speaker, it is critical that members of the Assembly, all members of the Assembly, vote in favour of Bill 26, because it will protect Alberta's best interests. It will protect our reputation as a premier destination to live, to work, and to raise a family.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 26, the Immigration Oversight Act.

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

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 26, the Immigration Oversight Act. Alberta is strongest when the people who live and work here, no matter where they come from, are treated with dignity and given a fair opportunity to succeed. That's not just a value statement, but an economic reality for our province. Our province has always depended on people, workers, entrepreneurs, and newcomers who bring skills, ideas, and energy to our communities and our economy. When we get that right, Alberta prospers, but when we get it wrong, we all pay the price. That is why we cannot support this bill.

Given the UCP's track record, Albertans have a right to be concerned that these provisions could be used by the UCP to target foreign workers and other newcomers. While it is presented as an oversight measure, Bill 26 does not actually solve the problems it claims to address. It duplicates existing systems, adds unnecessary red tape for businesses, and gives this government sweeping new powers over immigration without the accountability and clarity that all Albertans deserve.

3:20

This bill creates a new provincial registry system that would require employers to register with the province before hiring foreign nationals. It introduces a licensing system for immigration consultants and recruiters, outlines a series of protections for foreign workers, and establishes a new enforcement regime, including significant penalties and investigative powers.

On paper, though, some of these elements sound reasonable, but much of what this bill claims to do already exists. The federal government already regulates immigration consultants through a national licensing body and already uses labour market impact assessments to determine whether hiring a temporary foreign worker is appropriate, not to mention that both federal and provincial laws already prohibit many of the exploitative practices listed in this bill.

So the question we have to ask is: if these rules already exist, what is this bill actually adding value to? The answer is not for clarity or protection, but duplication, to add yet another potential layer of bureaucracy. It allows the minister to exempt individuals from key requirements, for directors who have been appointed by

the minister to make decisions about who can and cannot operate in Alberta, and allows for certificates to be refused, suspended, or revoked based on vague criteria like public interest or perceived lack of integrity. It allows for investigations to be launched without a complaint, with broad powers to enter the workplace, examine records, or question individuals. These are significant powers that are not accompanied by clear limits, clear criteria, or clear oversight. That should be a concern for every member of this Assembly.

Over the past several months we have seen a pattern from this government. The Premier and the UCP government continue to make life harder for newcomers. We have seen and heard this divisive rhetoric. We have seen newcomers blamed for challenges that are a result of poor planning by this government. We have seen discussions about restricting access to services to certain immigrants. When the same government asks for sweeping new authority over immigration, Albertans have the right to ask: how will these powers be used? Will they be used fairly and ethically?

The UCP have been very vocal about their desire to take more control over the immigration system and to take whatever legal means necessary to achieve this. How can Albertans trust that Bill 26 won't be used to target certain groups, to create barriers, or to advance a political narrative? It allows the government to change who is included, what is excluded, and how the system operates without coming back to this Legislature, with no transparency. This certainly is not how we should be handling something as significant and important as immigration, both to our society and our economy.

Madam Speaker, I want to address the issue of worker protection. There's no question that exploitation exists in the temporary foreign worker program. There are numerous reports of abhorrent working conditions and very low pay. But the root of the problem is not the lack of rules; it's the lack of enforcement of the rules.

We already have laws that prohibit withholding passports, misrepresenting job opportunities, or threatening workers. We have employment standards that set minimum conditions, yet those abuses still happen. Why? Because workers are afraid to come forward. They fear losing their job, losing their status, or deportation. This bill does not even attempt to fix that. It creates a complaint process, yes, but it does not clearly outline protections against reprisal, address the power imbalance between workers and employers, or meaningfully strengthen enforcement capacity. Bill 26 does nothing to effectively or substantially address the concerns around existing poor labour conditions for foreign workers.

Two industries that heavily rely on TFWs are agriculture and tourism. We've had the minister previously mention that he had conversations with agriculture stakeholders, saying that this won't affect agriculture. But how about the tourism industry with their many thousands of small and medium-sized businesses and stakeholders who are also greatly impacted? At a time when Alberta industries are facing shortages, when our economy depends on attracting talent, we should be sending a message that Alberta is welcoming and fair and open to opportunity. Instead, this government continues to focus on division. It has chosen to frame newcomers as the problem to be managed rather than as contributors to properly be supported in all of this. Through this bill the UCP seems to suggest that there are people working unlawfully in Alberta as well as businesses who are hiring ineligible workers, by mandating employers, recruiters, and consultants to provide the government with information on their business and their workers.

The reality, Madam Speaker, is that Bill 26 is not actually about oversight. Rather the UCP are trying to carve out more authority on something they do not have constitutional jurisdiction over. This is inherently political and will help push their anti-immigrant rhetoric to further divide the province. It sends a message to businesses that

more red tape is coming. It tells newcomers that they may be subject to shifting rules and increased scrutiny, and it tells Albertans that this UCP government is more interested in control than in solutions. Alberta's strength has always come from its people: from those who were born here; from those who chose here as home; from those who built businesses, filled jobs, and contributed to our communities.

We should be building a system that reflects that strength. We should be focused on practical solutions, strengthening employment standards enforcement and making it safer for vulnerable workers to report abuse, supporting employers who are trying to fill real labour shortages. We should be working with communities, settlement agencies, and industry to build a fairer system that actually works, but that is not what this bill does. Instead of fixing the gap, this bill creates new layers of provincial control. Instead of giving workers more confidence, it creates more uncertainty. Instead of helping businesses plan and hire, it risks making the process slower, more complicated, and more political.

Immigration policy should not be used as a political tool. It should be about people, fairness, economic growth, and the future of this province. Bill 26 does not do any of that.

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

Member Boparai: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in strong opposition to Bill 26, the so-called Immigration Oversight Act. Let me be clear from the outset: this bill is not about oversight. It is not about efficiency. It is not about protecting workers or supporting employers. This bill is about control. It is about politics, and it is about a government that is increasingly determined to poke its nose into every corner of people's lives while making those lives harder in the process. Albertans believe in fairness. We believe that people who come here to live and work deserve dignity and opportunity. We believe businesses should be supported, not buried under layers of unnecessary bureaucracy. Yet here we are again, debating a bill from the UCP government that does the exact opposite.

Madam Speaker, Bill 26 creates a brand new provincial registry system for employers hiring foreign workers. Let's call this what it is, and it is duplication. Employers are already going through a rigorous federal process. They already provide detailed information. They already comply with the labour market impact assessments, so what does this bill add? More paperwork. More approvals. More delays. More costs. At a time when businesses, especially in agriculture, hospitality, and construction, are already struggling under rising costs, inflation, and labour shortages, this government has decided to pile on yet another administrative burden. The Alberta Hospitality Association has already warned us that this bill will add red tape. It will slow down hiring timelines. It will make it harder, not easier, for employers to fill critical vacancies. What happens when hiring slows down? Restaurants reduce hours. Hotels cut services. Construction projects fall behind. Crops go unharvested. This bill does not solve labour shortages; it makes them worse.

3:30

Madam Speaker, this is particularly troubling because this government has spent years talking about cutting red tape. They have made announcements, they have held press conferences, they have promised efficiency, yet here we see the reality: a brand new registry system that duplicates federal processes, new licensing requirements that overlap with existing systems, broad sweeping powers handed to political appointees. This is not red tape reduction; this is red tape expansion, plain and simple.

Let's talk about cost. Every additional form, every delay in approval, every new requirement all translate into real dollars for businesses: small businesses, family-run operations, employers who are already operating on razor-thin margins. Madam Speaker, this government is adding costs while claiming to support the economy. That contradiction is impossible to ignore.

Beyond the red tape and the cost, there is something even more concerning in this bill, and that is power. Bill 26 gives sweeping authority to the minister and to government-appointed directors: authority to approve or deny registrations based on vague criteria like public interest, authority to launch investigations without a complaint, authority to access records, enter workplaces, and make decisions that can shut down operations. Madam Speaker, perhaps most troubling of all: authority to change the rules through regulation at any time without meaningful legislative oversight. Five pages of regulation-making power. Five pages of blank cheques.

Albertans should be asking: what will this government do with that power? We have seen the pattern. We have heard the rhetoric. This government has repeatedly blamed newcomers for economic challenges. They have used divisive language. They have suggested that immigrants are responsible for unemployment. Such a shame. Instead of addressing the real issues economic diversification, job creation, and workplace development they are choosing to scapegoat, and now with Bill 26 they are giving themselves a tool to act on that rhetoric. That should concern every single member of this Assembly.

Madam Speaker, the government claims this bill will protect foreign workers, but the truth is that many of the protections listed in this bill already exist under federal and provincial law. Exploitation is already illegal. Withholding passports is already illegal. Misrepresentation is already illegal. The problem has never been the absence of rules. The problem is enforcement, and this bill does not meaningfully address enforcement. It does not provide clear mechanisms to ensure protections are upheld. It does not protect workers from retaliation when they come forward. What are we left with? A bill that duplicates existing protections without strengthening them. A bill that creates new bureaucracy without solving real problems. A bill that centralizes power without accountability.

Madam Speaker, we must also consider the broader impact on our economy. Alberta's industries rely on workers, local and international. In many rural and remote areas temporary foreign workers are not a luxury; they are a necessity. They keep farms running. They keep businesses open. They contribute to our communities. When you slow down hiring timelines, when you create uncertainty, when you add costs, you're not just affecting employers; you are affecting entire communities. Labour shortages will worsen, projects will stall, and economic growth will slow.

Madam Speaker, all of this because this government is more interested in political control than practical solutions. Immigration is a shared responsibility between the federal and provincial governments. The federal government has clear jurisdiction over who enters the country and under what conditions. This bill attempts to carve out provincial control in ways that raise serious constitutional and practical concerns. Instead of working collaboratively, this government is choosing confrontation as a past record of this government. Instead of improving co-ordination, they are creating duplication. Instead of focusing on outcomes, they are focused on optics, and all Albertans will pay the price.

Madam Speaker, I also want to address the issue of trust. This government has introduced a referendum on immigration. They have launched panels questioning whether newcomers should receive services. They have consistently used language that divides

rather than unites, and now they're asking Albertans to trust them with sweeping new powers over immigration-related processes. Why should they? Why should businesses trust that approvals will be fair and timely? Why should workers trust that they will be protected, not targeted, by this government? Why should Albertans trust that this bill will not be used for political purposes? The truth is that there is no clear answer to these questions because this bill does not provide that assurance.

Albertans deserve better. They deserve a better government that reduces barriers, not creates them, they deserve a government that supports businesses, not burdens them, they deserve a government that brings people together, not drives them apart, and they deserve a government that focuses on real solutions, not political theatre. Bill 26 fails on all these fronts. It increases red tape, it adds costs, it slows down hiring, it risks worsening labour shortages, it centralizes power, and it opens the door to decisions driven by politics rather than labour market needs. Madam Speaker, this is not the direction Alberta should be heading. We should be building an economy that is inclusive, competitive, and forward looking. We should be supporting employers with efficient systems, not duplicated ones. We should be protecting workers through strong enforcement, not symbolic legislation.

For all these reasons, I cannot and we cannot support Bill 26, and I urge all members of this Assembly to think carefully about the real impacts of this legislation on businesses, on workers, and on the future of our province. Let's reject this unnecessary, costly, and divisive bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd just like to take this opportunity to remind all members of this House, particularly the hon. Member for Red Deer-South, that if he would like to have conversations in this Chamber, perhaps take it outside. When I can hear what you're saying from such a far distance, it's too loud. It's too loud.

The hon. Member for oh, my gosh; I was distracted with all the talking in this Chamber Calgary-Klein.

Member Tejada: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for reminding us of the seriousness of this Chamber and what we actually have come here to do.

I'm honoured to rise and speak again on Bill 26, the so-called Immigration Oversight Act, and I would offer that, like in many other cases with the bills that we see presented by the government side, what this might actually be is the Immigration Overreach Act and duplication of effort, in fact, because everything that is covered under this bill where there are attempts to I think it's really like a performative measure on how we regulate things here.

What this is is duplicated effort. It covers measures that are already covered by the federal government, and in general I would say, really, that what this bill is about is less about actually governing in terms of immigration where we have a shared jurisdiction and more about overreach and definitely about political messaging to a base and, I think, also sort of really tapping into what we know is increasing anti-immigrant sentiment that we can see even as recently as this week, where we see what the impacts of anti-immigrant sentiment are.

When you are broadcasting that message to the public, what it becomes about is targeting immigrants and making them less safe. In all of the proclaiming of wanting to keep workers safe, I would say that this bill is also a big fail on that front because we have labour standards that this government should be focusing on in terms of enforcement and collaboration that they could be doing with other orders of government rather than really sort of beating that separatist drum and not collaborating with the feds.

3:40

We know that this is a 12-part bill, that one of the focuses is on a licensing regime for immigration consultants and recruiters, and again I will say that this is an area that is already regulated federally, so in terms of adding another layer of red tape, you know, surprisingly, from the government that wants to reduce red tape, what they are doing is increasing it. We're hearing from folks that work in that industry across the country that it'll actually decrease interest in working with Alberta cases because it just becomes more complicated to work here, just like we've seen on the separatism file.

We know that a lot of this talk about isolationism with Alberta, about the grievances against Ottawa is not anything that actually solves any problems. It doesn't create any jobs for people that are already here. I don't see any concrete plans to actually do that. What it does is actually scare investors away, scare people away from Alberta if they want to work here, if they want to have businesses here. It also creates broad authority for the minister to create regulations on the fly, exemptions for whoever they so choose in the future, especially in terms of, you know, who the bad actors might be. So my question is: is this a bill that actually targets bad actors, that actually looks at our existing labour laws and does better enforcement, or is it one that picks winners and losers and also just creates exemptions in order to facilitate more bad behaviour and make workers less safe?

I need only to look at the example of COVID-19 and the risks that were taken by workers in some places here in Alberta, in meat-packing plants, where the then agriculture minister actually went as far as telling workers that their workplace was safe. They were sent back, and they went to their deaths. So I think that if we're talking about keeping workers safe, that is definitely not what this bill does.

In terms of the 59 points of regulation that can be changed later, I think my colleague before me from Calgary-Falconridge spoke well to this, that this is, again, legislation by blank cheque fill in the blanks later and that's a big concern because there is an issue of trust with this government that we see over and over again, scandal after scandal. Do I trust them to properly govern in terms of the immigration file? No. I think most Albertans don't.

I'm concerned that in terms of being able to investigate, the added powers there, the wording of the bill where it says that, you know, someone can be sent in to investigate where someone is believed to be a foreign national what that tells me is that it opens businesses up to random investigation based on what? Based on what? If we believe that they're foreign nationals, what exactly leads whoever is investigating to believe that? Is it an accent? Is it that someone can just randomly say that that person might not belong here, so you get to investigate? It doesn't make workers safer; it makes workers more afraid, and I think that in times that are so divided, that are so polarized, we need to turn the temperature down on this anti-immigrant rhetoric because it is costing people in terms of safety right now and every week. It's a growing problem.

What I will say is that Bill 26 does not actually achieve any of the goals that it wants to. It creates red tape. It makes it harder to do business, I think, in Alberta. It does not make workers safe. It makes immigrants and racialized people more afraid, and for that reason I urge all members of this Assembly to vote against Bill 26.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 32

Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2026

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm certainly pleased to rise and move second reading of Bill 32, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2026.

Now, if passed, this bill is quite simple. It would increase the number of electoral divisions by two, from 89 to 91. Madam Speaker, a fair distribution of electoral divisions is essential to the democratic process, and we must ensure that Albertans continue to receive strong and effective representation in this Legislature. Now, as noted by the Electoral Boundaries Commission, the report of the commission believes that it would have been able to provide Albertans with more effective representation in this Assembly if it were provided with an additional two electoral divisions, bringing, of course, the total of proposed electoral divisions to 91. In fact, as we read in the report, the commission lamented the loss of two rural seats and stated that Alberta's seat count did not keep up with population growth.

The Legislature recently passed a resolution that established a select special committee of the Legislative Assembly to engage an independent panel of advisers to review and incorporate the recommendations of Justice Dallas Miller in his addendum to the majority report. Now, in carrying out this work, the independent advisory panel will divide the electoral boundaries of Alberta into 91 proposed electoral divisions and incorporate the recommendations provided in recommendation 5 in the addendum to the majority report, subject to any modifications, of course, that the independent advisory panel deems necessary. This is all to ensure that effective representation in Alberta's electoral boundaries is guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Effective representation, Madam Speaker, means strong and accessible representation no matter where Albertans choose to live.

Now, Madam Speaker, this is a straightforward amendment to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act. It is the one recommended in the report of the commission. I hope that all members will support the amendment proposed in Bill 32.

Once again I move second reading of Bill 32, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2026.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Bill 32 is a bill that is a weak justification. It's a weak justification for disrespecting Albertans' right to vote. It's nothing but a poor excuse for throwing out a legal process, throwing out the results of a UCP-dominated-but-apparently-too-independent committee and setting up a process for MLAs to engage in picking their voters. This isn't how democracy is supposed to work. Democracy is supposed to involve a fair distribution of seats and voters picking their politicians.

In our representative democracy once every four years the people we represent get to have their voice. They get to have their voice. They get to pick who goes and represents them in this place. That is a duty I take incredibly seriously. The UCP want to take that away from people. They want to take away that voice and that vote, and they want to redraw the riding boundaries so they pick who's voting

for them rather than the other way about. We have seen the results of the erosion of democracy in the United States, which is south of us. I really think that we would like to see better here.

3:50

This is gerrymandering. That's what it's called. Gerrymandering has been imported from the U.S. It is part of what makes people so skeptical of their democracy down there, that, well, it's had the outcome that it has had, which I think any thinking person can see is not great as an outcome. That's what's happening here.

The process that this bill is meant to justify is illegitimate, and I wanted to say a little bit about why my colleague and I have chosen to participate anyway. I mean, it couldn't be less legitimate and participating in it feels sometimes like it could send that signal to people, but we participate because we were sent here to represent Albertans, so we must witness this abuse of process, whether we like it or not. We will fight with everything we have to minimize the harm that the UCP will do to the rights of Albertans, as we always have and as we always will. We will try to make the bad things less bad than they otherwise could be.

I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, that, honestly, I am exhausted. I am exhausted from bearing witness. I am exhausted from bearing witness to the violation of people's rights, to the destruction of our health care and our public education, to a government that scapegoats the weak and the vulnerable to gain cheap political advantage. I am exhausted from bearing witness to a government that changes the gift rules and then accepts gifts that would previously have been outlawed, that says, "Trust us," while they do nothing to earn it. Now they are coming for democracy.

Madam Speaker, democracy was the justification they gave when they invoked the notwithstanding clause four times in a month. For the first time it wasn't the first time. It's been used once before in Alberta history, and they used it four times in a month. It is supposed to be something that is used in exceptional circumstances, but apparently the UCP think "we've woken up and had a feeling, and we feel like we might be able to scapegoat someone about it" is sufficient justification.

The excuse they used was democracy. Ministers stood up in this House, and they used a series of legal and democratic terms incorrectly for the most part, and they claimed that it was okay that they took away people's individual rights, that it was okay that they ran over the rights of teachers, that they ran over the rights of girls, that they ran over the rights of trans children because democracy. You know, Madam Speaker, I actually stood up and I spoke against that. I gave a statement that turns out to have been a little too foreshadowy. I said at the very end of it that the right to vote was also a right. Here we stand, and they have come for that right, too.

I am exhausted from witnessing this government, but I will continue to do it because I have a duty to Albertans. This is the government of: "Look over there. What in the world can that be?" I don't know if anybody remembers that scene from *The Princess Bride*, but essentially what's happening is that he has supposedly poisoned one cup. It turns out it's two. It's supposed to be, like, a trick of mental fitness, right? He's trying to determine which cup is poisoned, and then he yells, "What in the world could that be?" and switches the cups and then watches to see if the other person drinks. It's a distraction technique used to change the field, and that is this government's whole agenda. Their whole agenda is to throw out distractions while they trample the rights of Albertans, while they take away their access to health care, while they violate their right to education, and while they slowly change this province in big and small ways that violate the rights of Albertans. Albertans are people who believe in fairness, and this isn't fairness. This is the UCP rigging an election.

What was actually recommended? The government likes to say that they are acting on a recommendation of the majority of the committee, and because I like to employ what philosophers call the principle of charity and try to make someone's argument as strong as it can be, I'm going to go ahead and assume for a moment that the UCP and other people claiming that this is a recommendation of the majority are merely badly mistaken and have difficulty with reading comprehension.

Page 66 has an addendum, an addendum to the majority report. What the majority report is and the legislation, incidentally, in a very short provision in a very short act, defines what the decision of the committee is. It is the decision of the majority, and the majority in this case recommended maps. It is incredibly clear. They recommended a certain set of maps. Anything else that is in the minority report, that is in an addendum: none of that forms part of the decision. It is like a court decision. That's the decision. Doing anything but implementing that decision would constitute cheating, and that is the end of it.

In the majority report and I will read a passage which I have read before, but it seems the UCP did not hear me.

Due to my deep concern regarding the unconstitutionality and administrative law problems of the minority report, I find it necessary to make one further recommendation that my fellow Commissioners cannot consent to.

It's just so clear. It's so clear. He goes on to say:

My majority colleagues do not agree with me on this point. That is why I am alone in making this recommendation.

This fifth recommendation is formulated for the express purpose of dissuading the Legislature from accepting the minority report.

Earlier in the report, when the majority speaks to the minority report, they say, "First, the minority's approach violates the principles of procedural fairness, and, relatedly, the values underlying [section] 3 of the Charter." They go on to outline in excruciating detail that the minority report is a violation of the Charter, that it is a violation of Albertans' right to vote or probably will be because a court has yet to make this determination. They also point out that there was a unanimous interim report, and then the majority report looks a lot like that interim report because that's what they went to consult on, and the minority report looks like nothing. It doesn't look anything like the interim report, and it doesn't look anything like any of the submissions on the record. I think that that part is critical because it's like it fell out of the clear blue sky, like these commissioners woke up one day and decided to redraw maps based on no submission made by anyone despite a year of consultation. Now, that's pretty peculiar behaviour, and peculiar behaviour demands an explanation.

Well, we've seen hints of the explanation. We've seen the fact that a member of the Premier's staff was circulating the minority maps before the minority report came out, wanting to run in that riding. "Where," one might ask, "did he get those maps?" We have seen submitted portions of the minority maps submitted before the report came out that are protected marked in a way that makes it clear that they are protected under the government of Alberta's authority. Those are pretty questionable. I'm pretty slow to conclude intent, but I would say the case here would meet a pretty high threshold. It's way, way beyond balance of probabilities and probably rapidly approaching beyond a reasonable doubt, I would say, Madam Speaker. It's incredibly problematic.

4:00

What was recommended was maps. The legislation is clear. Some folks over there seem to be suggesting that because once upon a time five different commissioners recommended five different things in 1992 and it had to go to a committee, somehow this is the

same scenario. This is not the same scenario. It's not the same scenario because in that instance there was no outcome. The legislation defines what an outcome is. If there is a report of a unanimous committee or a report of a majority, that's the outcome. So this is a violation of norms and principles, the standard process, and probably Albertans' right to vote.

I think, just to explain what's really going on here and I think this is deliberate on the part of the UCP, right? They could have done what the normal thing is. This report was tabled in the House, as it always is, and the normal course of business would be for there to be a motion to concur in the Legislature so all MLAs, all of us, who are representing constituents it's not about us; it's about the people we represent would have the opportunity to debate that, and then after that motion it would be turned into an act. The act would come into the House, and again all MLAs, representing their constituents, which is what we're meant to do in here, not picking our constituents representing them would have a chance to debate that again. But that didn't happen. Instead, we went to this side process, and the side process is a committee the likes of which has never been seen, with an advisory panel that reports to the committee maybe on the record, maybe in private. It's not really clear. It seems like the UCP wants it to be in private. All of this is specifically designed to obfuscate what is going on.

For anyone who's watched sort of lawyer procedural shows, you will see that if a lawyer is behaving incredibly unethically and wants to hide a piece of information they are required to disclose to the other side, they send it over in 500 file boxes of documents, right? "The relevant piece of information is in there. I've disclosed it. I've met my obligations," but it's buried. That's exactly what this committee is. It's an attempt to bury the truth. It's an attempt to obfuscate it in process so that Albertans are confused.

What is going on here? Well, I'll use a cute example, my daughter. When she was about five, we had started trying to play board games, and she was really into this. She started wanting to make up her own board games, so she would get pieces of paper, and she would, like, draw out little squares, and she'd make little people, and she'd make up a set of rules. But the rules weren't written down because she couldn't write at the time, and the rules seemed to shift. Now, a charitable reading of this would be that she simply didn't remember the rules, but they seemed to shift in such a way that she had a tendency to win the game on more instances than would normally be probable. You know, this is typical development for kids, right? As they are learning and as they are growing and as they are coming to understand sort of the values that we collectively hold as society such as the same rules applying to everyone, they kind of test those boundaries a little.

That's exactly what the UCP is doing. They are changing the rules a little and then a little more and then a little more and then a little more to see how much they can get away with. They don't seem to have any ethical concerns about what they're doing. It's just a question of: what can they get away with without the public noticing? It's incredibly problematic. I think, again, that we can conclude intent based on action even if they're not willing to say it.

In this Legislature the Premier has said repeatedly that they're just adding two seats in the rural; they're not going to change anything else up. In the committee we asked the chair to confirm that, basically, to confirm that what the Premier had said was correct. Her hand-picked chair was unable on five separate occasions to confirm whether she was correct, whether what she said in this place was accurate, and that's pretty troubling to me, Madam Speaker. I think that if you're telling the truth, you should just know that. I mean, that's what's easy about telling the truth. This is how they catch people who aren't doing so, because of

cognitive load, right? If you're telling the truth, it's just the truth, so it's easy to do.

I think, you know, had the UCP just wanted to add two more seats, they wouldn't have voted down every one of our motions at that committee, they wouldn't have voted against transparency, they wouldn't have voted against a chair that everyone agreed on, and they certainly wouldn't have voted not to have the advisory panel required we tried to make the advisory panel be required to report any sort of intervention. There's a big difference between required to report and ought to report, a difference which I think has been highlighted very clearly in this place today as we talked about a member of the Premier's staff who was required to report and did not do so.

If this was about what the bill purports to be about, which is to say two more seats, then this whole rigamarole wouldn't be occurring. We would have gone through the normal process. It would have come into the House. They could have changed the legislation. We could have looked at redrawing them. But that won't happen. They could have gone back to the original commission and said: "Hey, we're going to do this thing. Could you tell us what you'd do in that instance?" But they didn't go back to that commission because they don't like that commission because that commission went ahead and took its independence seriously.

You know, at the end of the first Harry Potter book Neville Longbottom is awarded points at one point for standing up to his friends. They say: it's one thing to stand up to your enemies, but it's even harder to stand up to your friends. I would say that that happened in this instance. I think it's important, and it's worth recognizing. The fact that the UCP, yeah, look on that badly says a lot about them. It says a lot about them.

In closing, I think that this bill is an incredibly weak justification for something that should trouble us all deeply. It is politicians picking their voters.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Sorry. I'm scrolling through my stuff and lost my spot. Give me a second. I should have just written it out. Oh, here we go.

Madam Speaker, MLAs should not draw constituency boundaries. Period. As my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View stated, after the first select special committee meeting they, the UCP, decided that MLAs should redraw the boundaries, which is a clear conflict of interest, something we should never ever be in charge of doing. This bill amendment is another transparent attempt by the UCP to circumvent the independent process of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. It is part of a set of undemocratic actions that the UCP is taking such as with the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. In addition to failing to allow a vote on the recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, the UCP passed Government Motion 37, which actually created the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries and called for legislation to add two seats, which really is the focus of this amendment.

The select special committee's process is full of uncertainty since the government is creating a new process rather than just adopting the majority report. It is populated with a majority of UCP MLAs and excludes public input, so we can be assured that the results will be unbiased and objective to benefit all Albertans, but I think not. I think we can expect the opposite. The results will be biased and subjective and will only benefit those that the UCP feels should benefit from this process. This process adds two new ridings

irrespective of the recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

4:10

You know, Madam Speaker, we need to ask ourselves and the UCP: is this process even legal? Well, a recent Supreme Court decision in Quebec ruled against an attempt by politicians to protect a pair of ridings. The Quebec Legislature passed Bill 39, which protected two ridings that were being removed in a map redrawing. Last year Quebec's Court of Appeal struck it down as unconstitutional, arguing that it violated section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Madam Speaker, section 3 of the Charter guarantees democratic rights, specifically that every Canadian citizen has the right to vote in federal and provincial or territorial elections and the right to run for public office. It ensures the right to vote and applies to the House of Commons and Legislative Assemblies. Further, section 3 ensures that Canadian democracy is represented by its citizens, ensuring that the right to take part in an electoral process is protected.

In April of this year an appeal from Quebec's Attorney General was rejected by the Supreme Court in a 7-2 decision. An advocacy group said: we're proud to observe that electoral parity is maintained in Canadian electoral jurisprudence and that political majority or even unanimity can't resist a Charter test in respect of the right to vote entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Perhaps, Madam Speaker, the UCP needs to heed this warning as they cannot use the notwithstanding clause to circumvent the Charter on electoral boundary issues such as they have done in the cases that my colleague just pointed out. If there's a question of legality, why is this government venturing down this path? Could it be another naked power grab, as with so many other bills introduced during their time in government? Could it be that the overwhelming desire to maintain power has led the UCP to knowingly violate the Charter? Could it be that the overwhelming desire to maintain power has led the UCP to disregard the democratic rights of Albertans? I guess we can only speculate all we want on why, but only the UCP knows for sure.

How did we get here, even? Well, in the fall of 2024 through Bill 31 the UCP raised the number of seats to be looked at from 87 to 89. That's important, and we'll come back to that. The UCP then struck the Electoral Boundaries Commission the following spring with Justice Miller appointed by cabinet as the chair. The commission's interim report was released on October 23, 2025. That was unanimously approved by the commission. The commission published their final report on March 23, 2026.

This all seemed pretty straightforward, Madam Speaker, as every Electoral Boundaries Commission since 1991 had implemented the recommendations of the commission. In fact, in 2017 the commission's report had the Alberta NDP losing the seats of four cabinet ministers and the Speaker. Obviously, the government of Rachel Notley had many issues with the redraw but called for and passed a vote on the recommendations of the report.

But this UCP government could not respect the work of the commission and would not respect the input from thousands of Albertans on the boundaries redraw. The recommendations of the commission did not align with this government's wishes for electoral boundaries, so they had their appointed members on the commission insist on the inclusion of an unprecedented minority report, the UCP's pipe dream of boundaries for our province. Not only did this government not call for a vote on the recommendation of the committee; they decided to focus on an addendum by the chair that increased the seat count from 89 to 91 to put back rural ridings that were removed in the majority report. However, very

clearly at the end of the addendum the chair made the following statement clarifying that the addendum was not part of the majority report. “Lest there be any confusion about this issue, my writing this Addendum in no way detracts from the majority report representing the views of a majority of the commission.” Madam Speaker, very clearly, the sole point that the UCP has used to create this committee, which I even forgot what it’s called now, is right there saying that this is one person’s opinion.

When we look at why we even look at determining electoral boundaries, we want to look at proper representation for people that live there. We need to place a high degree of emphasis on population. The UCP, in fact, wants to base it on electors, which is a whole other issue. We also need to emphasize areas of common need and common issues. Some ridings in Calgary have populations well over 60,000, and Edmonton has some over 80,000. To most people it makes sense that those cities would receive the new ridings, which would allow for, once again, better and more fair representation. But it seems that the UCP would prefer an inordinate amount of rural-urban ridings that actually water down representation for rural and urban people.

Just to give you a brief example of this, in the redraw we’re looking at things around Lethbridge where you would separate Lethbridge into four, where Lethbridge actually disappears from the electoral map because Lethbridge now goes all the way to the Trans-Canada highway and goes all the way to the B.C. border in two spots, goes all the way to the U.S. border. This is something no one wants, and this is something, Madam Speaker, that people spoke against at the public hearings.

You look at all of this information in its totality, and this legislation and the modified UCP process could have been avoided if the UCP actually looked at our population demographics and included 91 seats way back in 2024. Then the directions given to the Electoral Boundaries Commission would have been 91 seats. They could have maintained some of the seats that were in the rural areas, and they could have ensured that some of the very large ridings that we see in rural areas because of lack of population could have been minimized. But that didn’t happen. And we know that some of the seats that were even created in 2017 weren’t the best seats. The Member for Cardston-Siksika can probably talk about that the best of anyone. There’s no way a riding should go from the B.C. border all the way to the Trans-Canada highway. I think in this new redraw in the in the commission’s recommendations that riding went back to what used to be Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Madam Speaker, the majority report or the actual report of the of the commission was one that was based on the most fair possible. This redraw that we’re looking at by the UCP with their select special committee on boundaries is nothing more than a window dressing on an idea that the UCP has had already since they saw the interim report. This is something that I think is a waste of time. It’s a waste of money, and it’s going to come out that the UCP is just going to once again do whatever they want. They’re not going to think of the best interests of the people of Alberta. They’re going to look at the best interests of the UCP. I cannot support this, and I’m hoping other people in this House look at it very well.

There are people in this House who are looking at the minority report where Red Deer is split into four. I’m not sure if the members from Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South think that’s a great idea, where the four Red Deer ridings include splitting Blackfalds in two, where the four Lethbridge ridings include splitting Lethbridge county into two what is the point of that? and the MD of Taber into two.

4:20

We need to look at a rational process, again, at what happened. There’s not enough time for this new committee to actually redraw

91 boundaries and make it fair unless they use the majority report’s recommendations of maps as their base and then try to fit two more into that one. That is the only way this will be fair, and that would be the only way that we could support that position on this side of the House.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise quickly just to say that it’s interesting to hear the members opposite try to redraw the map in the Chamber, which I would certainly disagree with. We’ll leave that in the very capable hands of the upcoming committee.

With those comments, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 27 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

The Chair: Are there members that wish to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Member Irwin: Here we go.

Member Kayande: Yeah. Here we go.

Committee of the Whole on Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, which I’m not permitted to use props but is about this amount of thickness of a bill that’s about this amount of thickness on insurance, which is really, really interesting because the government has now for oh, gosh years now been proposing a no-fault, privately insured, privately delivered insurance scheme that exists nowhere else in Canada. Lo and behold, the first act that they passed around this and of course, as is this government’s wont, the act although having a lot of words in it was basically: “Push it to regulation. Push it to regulation. Push it to regulation.” The first round of regulations came back, and it’s like: oops; missed a bunch of stuff.

So here we have now, in an insurance scheme that has never been tried before in Canada, has never been attempted, has only been tried in a few places in the world and has failed, they are now less than oh, my gosh. We’re in May, so we’re talking about seven months from actually writing premium on this, to actually having the insurance system in hand, and are still making amendments to the act. What could possibly go wrong? What could possibly go wrong here? But here we are, right?

Of course, the best time to get this right would have been a couple of years ago. I guess the second-best time is right now, so here we are talking about insurance again in this House. So let’s talk about insurance. Let’s talk about the massive increases in premiums that Albertans have borne the brunt of. Now, the insurance companies blame lawyers for those increases, so what the Minister of Finance has done is he has taken lawyers out of the value delivery chain. He’s taken the lawyers out of the business, which is fine one way or the other. Like, I have no loyalty to trial lawyers, but I do understand that they perform an important social function.

See, it is possible for insurance companies to put the trial lawyers out of business themselves. They can do it tomorrow. They could have done it yesterday. They could have done it five years ago. They could have done it 10 years ago. All the insurance companies needed to do to put the trial lawyers out of business was pay claims. That's it. That's it, yet they don't. They offer to settle at 10 cents on the dollar, and a small number of those people who get these 10-cent-on-the-dollar settlement claims, who have been hurt by someone I just want to talk about that a little bit. I'm not sure how it's a conservative value that when somebody through their direct act or through their direct omission of an act causes harm to somebody, that harm gets socialized. I'm not sure how a true conservative can vote for that.

The simple fact is that the concept of tort the concept is an ancient, ancient word. It predates the 800-year history of this House. It predates our entire legal system. It predates democracy and parliamentary government. It's almost one of the oldest contracts that exists, that when you do harm to somebody, that person is responsible to make it right.

Albertans have no choice but to look at a government that puts that sort of system in abeyance, that tells people that when you do harm to somebody, it's not your fault anymore. Albertans have a real right to ask: is this even a conservative government? What does conservatism mean if a government that has that name can actually say, "No, no, we're just going to no-fault now; we're socializing all of the harms of driving, and we're socializing all the harms of people who do harm to other people?"

Here we are. We have a privately delivered no-fault system of trains coming down the track, and the track is not yet built. Sounds awesome. "Don't worry," the government says. "Don't worry. We're going to actually use this to lower premiums." How is that going to happen? Well, we ought to cut the Auto Insurance Rate Board, of course. You know what? I did some digging through the Auto Insurance Rate Board filings, and I found roughly no. It's not roughly. Exactly 20 per cent of premium goes to marketing expenses every year, year after year, year after year, like clockwork. Claims: they go up and down. Marketing, though: that stays solid.

What is marketing? Why does that matter? Well, you know what? Marketing is brokerage, right? So 12 and a half per cent goes to brokers. A number of insurance companies are actually direct writers. They don't have a broker channel. I myself if you use Desjardins, if you use TD Insurance, you're calling an office in Toronto.

My reasonable question that I asked in this House is: is that 20 per cent actually just embedded profit built into a transfer pricing scheme where that direct writing insurance company has an affiliate organization that's responsible for all of the marketing that clips that 20 per cent? It's a common way that regulated entities can push more profit into the business than they're regulatorily entitled to. Sadly, I did not get a response to that. I've never had a response to that question no matter who I've asked. It seems to me like that 20 per cent can come off right away.

The thing that I want to leave you with, the thing that I want to leave Albertans with: this government has raised the cost of insurance. It's raised the cost of insurance on Albertans. It's putting in an untried and untested scheme that's going to prevent people from getting damages for the injuries that they have received at the hands of other people. It's a bad bill, and we should reject it.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will be quick. I just want to address the same bill that we're talking about

here briefly, Bill 27. I want to say, you know, that Albertans at this point in time in our province's history and with the economy need help with many things: high cost of utilities, insurance, groceries. Housing is unaffordable for many, many, many people in our society, and they're not getting any help with this government.

4:30

An Alberta NDP government, when we were government, helped on all of those topics, and we will again. We had practical solutions suggested to this Legislature through private members' bills for groceries, utilities, and auto insurance, but the government has not listened to any of that. They've continued to waste money and cost Albertans a great deal. Life is getting a lot more expensive under this UCP government.

I want to address particularly the egregious things done to seniors with the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. Particularly, Madam Chair, I want to say that, you know, saving money in this budget and subsequent budgets on the backs of seniors is the wrong thing to do. It's often said that they helped build this province, and that's not a trope; that's a real thing. This government will be saving \$23 million from their actions in the Financial Statutes Amendment Act this year, and going forward, every year it'll be \$31 million. Now, seniors currently make up about 16 per cent of our population, and that is going up to 20 per cent within the next 20 years. We need to look at the benefit levels for seniors and ensure that those are helpful for seniors.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The things that aren't helpful that are being done in this bill, Mr. Chair, are cuts to, for instance, the seniors' benefit threshold. That is going to be lowered, so more seniors will not qualify for seniors' benefits. The cuts to the Alberta caregiver credit will cut 35,000 Albertans from being able to qualify for that credit when they look after someone who is aging. I'll just point out that in that area that's really cutting off your nose to spite your face. When people are looking after seniors in the community, in their own homes, supporting perhaps not their own home but going to their grandparents' home to support them or parents, they're really helping this province out, helping our treasury out because those people are not going to more expensive care for themselves. They're not going to hospitals. They're not going to lodges. They're not going to those places.

I bring that one up because my wife has done a lot of research in the area of dementia care, and what she calls the kind of thing that the Alberta caregiver credit is is upkeep. It's helping keep people where they want to be, which is usually their home. If we don't have programs like this, as I said, then it makes it more difficult for those loved ones who are caring for their loved ones. And in the area of dementia care I can tell you that, knowing a little bit from experience, my own dear mother, knowing other people in the community that I'm friends with, it is a struggle.

If the Alberta government's caregiver credit now is removed from those helping out, then what are they left with? They're left with costs on their own that they are not able to get credit for in their taxes. They're left with looking at the situation disintegrate, often, for people who have dementia. If they don't have government support around upkeep, if they don't have that recognition that they are doing a good thing for Albertans who are either aging or, in a lot of cases, aging with dementia, if they don't have that support, things fall apart.

The other things that this government is doing away with are things like the seniors' home adaptation repair program. When I was a social worker many, many, many years ago, there was that kind of support for families in the community, and we often used to

apply together, sit down with families and apply for that kind of support. Doing away with that is a problem.

Now, since 2019 this government has cut support for seniors across this province. The copay increased by \$10 for each prescription for seniors. The drivers' medical exams are no longer covered for seniors in this province. We know that the office of the Seniors Advocate was eliminated by this government. My colleague from Edmonton-Riverview has stood up repeatedly in this House and said: no, government of Alberta, you are not now doing better for seniors.

Special needs assistance was cut by \$9 million. Alberta seniors' benefits were deindexed. The seniors' drug insurance program: 40,000 people on that program were kicked off, and that was people that were under 65 years of age living with a senior. Sometimes it was a grandparent, sometimes it was a younger spouse. Those people were kicked off seniors' drug insurance, making life more difficult, more costly for Albertans each and every day. That's what we're getting from this government. That's what we'll continue to get from this government until there's a change in government and the Alberta NDP is government again.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Happy to rise today to speak on Bill 27. Thank you, Member for Edmonton-McClung. I appreciate that extra support. It gives me the energy I need.

You know, more broadly, Bill 27 to me is about the responsibility that all members of the Chamber have, the responsibility to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used wisely, transparently, and in the best interest of all Albertans, because at its core, this bill is not just about governance structures and technical amendments; it's about trust. It's about whether Albertans can trust this government to steward billions of dollars with care. Can Albertans trust this government to make life more affordable in this province? Or whether we're seeing a pattern of risky decisions, weak oversight, and costly mistakes that cost vulnerable Albertans with cuts to programs for low-income and disabled seniors, that were so well highlighted by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, the evidence seems to be mounting with this government. Too often it chooses the latter. It chooses risk. It chooses, I'd say, boondoggles. And then with Bill 27 we see seniors are going to have to pay, because the UCP always makes people pay more after they've spent money in a mismanaged way with poor accountability.

Investment does matter. Economic diversification matters, but also it matters whether those investments are actually delivering value. Here, Mr. Chair, we don't have to speculate. There are some good examples this government has provided in the last few years of poor investments that they have made.

The Auditor General has done work, and what's interesting the Auditor General has done work on Alberta Innovates and the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, which are covered with changes in Bill 27, and noted a few years back that due to the UCP's governance there were ineffective processes for measuring whether their spending was actually generating value for taxpayers. Let me repeat that: millions, even billions of dollars flowing through to these entities, yet systems in place could not clearly demonstrate what Albertans were getting in return. That is a real problem that is created by the UCP. It's not a minor administrative issue. It's a fundamental failure of accountability led by this government.

Now, to be fair, it's important to note that both organizations have been working to implement those recommendations. We are seeing improvements and we are seeing better reporting. It's interesting to note that just this week the Minister of Environment

and Protected Areas rejected recommendations by the Auditor General on flood mitigation measures in the province. This government seems to choose when it's going to hold up independent offices as a shield and when it's going to actually implement the changes that are recommended by the independent officers that help us with our democracies.

4:40

You don't have to imagine some of the mistakes and what they look like. We have very real, very expensive examples that we can highlight. The largest one, I think, was early on in the UCP mandate with the Keystone XL pipeline. I guess the Premier at the time was really jonesing for a pipeline, so he built one from Hardisty, about a 150-kilometre link. That pipeline is laid in the ground, sitting idle; \$1.5 billion of taxpayer money into a 150-kilometre stretch of pipeline.

Member Ceci: Billion.

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah, \$1.5 billion, that sat idle since 2020.

Now, at the time they put it into the ground, there was no guarantee of a connection to the U.S. In fact, it was the U.S. presidential candidate's promise, Joe Biden, that they would not get approval to connect that pipeline into the U.S. Then Joe Biden won presidency, and that pipeline sat idle. Now, we're starting to hear maybe possibilities of a connection but not a connection to market, just a connection that will allow us to get into the United States. Still, \$1.5 billion that has sat idle, with no return, no benefit, no clarity of how Albertans were ever going to be made whole for this investment.

That cost becomes real when you look at cuts to seniors' benefits. Every dollar tied up in a failed or stalled project, like the \$1.5 billion put into that pipeline let's do the math. One point five billion dollars. If they would have even taken that money and put it into the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, which we all value so much, that money would be worth \$2.1 billion today for Albertans, a gain of \$630 million. Instead, we've had pipe lying in the ground, with no transparency or accountability to this government.

They could have taken that money and for an \$80 million project built elementary schools, probably built 18 new schools. You know, 18 schools would have helped students get out of portables. It would've helped students get out of crowded classrooms. It probably would've helped 10,000 Alberta students have new schools that they could be in today, but instead we have pipeline laying in the ground.

There's real cost to poor decisions. It's not abstract. It's not theoretical. It shows up in places like overcrowded classrooms. It's going to show up in cuts to seniors' benefits. It's the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability that the UCP government is willing to take on and willing to accept that leads to boondoggle investments that they chase after. Those cuts correspond to reductions in special needs assistance for seniors, cuts to seniors' home adaptation and repair programs. The failure of the UCP to manage money effectively, failure to invest effectively with transparency and accountability is leading to cuts to programs for seniors. You know, changes to the Seniors Benefit Act, which are a key part of Bill 27, are unfair to low-income and disabled seniors. That's why Bill 27 matters.

If we're going to continue to invest in organizations like Alberta Innovates and Alberta Enterprise Corporation, we need to make sure we have good oversight and are making smart investments. Those investments, if done well, if managed well by a thoughtful, pragmatic government, like an Alberta New Democrat government, lead to results that mean seniors get more benefits. That's key, Mr.

Chair. It's an important thing to keep in mind. We're dealing with all of these changes that are being brought forward in this economic bill, that is mostly going to mean cuts for seniors. It is led by the fact that they have failed on smart investment over the last seven years.

Mr. Chair, I don't know if this is an appropriate time, but I think I will adjourn debate at this moment.

An Hon. Member: No. Just stop.

Mr. Kasawski: I'm just going to stop speaking, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to continue.

The Deputy Chair: Are there others?

Ready for the question on Bill 27, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026?

[The clauses of Bill 27 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

[Motion carried]

Bill 31

Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The Member for Calgary-Klein. [interjections]

Member Tejada: It gets so excited around here.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise today to talk a little bit about Bill 31, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. Just at first glance I can see that there are very many ministries that are touched by this bill, looks like around eight ministries, and changes to 18 pieces of legislation.

I would say just that we are well aware that we're living through an affordability crisis. You know, on the doors every week the concerns that I'm hearing are focused largely around how folks are able to pay their bills, whether or not they're able to see a doctor, whether or not they're safe in an emergency room. That was just a little bit of a reference to one of the motions that I brought up last week. We know that Albertans' priorities are around how they are able to survive, how they're able to stay safe, how they can get their good health care, and what we're seeing overarchingly is that this government and their priorities do not align with those of Albertans.

I would say that one big example of this would be around focusing on changing the provincial time zone. Of all the burning issues, when what we know that we're seeing week after week, day after day is a new scandal that erupts from this government, whether it be around electoral boundaries and manipulation of democracy and basically throwing out the findings that were based on broad consultation, thousands of hours from community members, basically throwing out all of that information and deciding that MLAs can draw their own maps, whether it is around the corrupt care scandal, which we are still dealing with it's kind of like the gift that keeps on giving, isn't it?

Scandal after scandal, news headline after news headline of really not good news with this UCP government. People are asking me now quite in a panic around their personal information and how that may or may not be used and who might have access to it and what this government has done to facilitate the conversations around separatism. It seems like time after time this government is flooding

the zone with bad news, with manipulated media to distract folks from the fact that they're still just not doing their jobs.

Again, time changes: this is also an example. You know, when we know that we have referendums on the horizon, in the fall, and whether or not this government will actually respect the result of a referendum, we can say with confidence that they will likely not, depending on if they like the result, and proof of this is around the time change. We know that there was a referendum in 2021 where Albertans voted overwhelmingly. Like, 52 per cent of Albertans said that they did not want to change time zones. What we're seeing in this seemingly out of nowhere decision to change the time zone, in opposition to what an Albertan referendum has already given them, is that this government might not necessarily respect the result of a referendum.

Now, I know that the argument around the time change and why they were making that decision was let me see if I've got this right claiming that the question was unclear and that Albertans didn't understand the question, which is pretty rich given the fact that we have a possible separation referendum on the horizon. Right now, you know, although the Forever Canadian referendum got the prescribed number of signatures in a much longer time frame and then this government magically and efficiently changed the rules to grease the wheels for the separatists and their petition, it's interesting that they would be concerned about the lack of clarity in terms of a referendum question. Increasingly, what we see from this government is a lack of clarity around that referendum question and what might actually end up as the question in the fall.

4:50

My question especially around the time change is: who did they consult with? Like, if we know that 52 per cent of Albertans voted against keeping permanent daylight savings time, who did they consult with on that? How did they make that determination that the question was unclear and that Albertans didn't understand?

Further to that, when they're talking about concerns around what Albertans do and don't understand, we have a very clear example recently around the changes from AISH to ADAP, where I'm still getting constituents asking me how they will be impacted, how they are affected, and a government that's not giving them any relief for any answers or any clarity, information. It would serve them well to let us know how they came to that decision. Again, it makes me wonder what they will do with a referendum question in the future and if it is the result that they don't like, if they will handily change the rules quickly, like they have in other cases, to suit their own aims.

Now the changes introduced around iGaming Alberta. What we're seeing is that the iGaming Alberta Act establishes regulatory oversight for online gambling sites, which is not necessarily a bad thing. The point that causes me to pause is that the minister himself said that this was necessary in case they needed to sell Play Alberta although he did not say that that's what they were planning to do. If that is in the plans and then if there is a planned sale of iGaming Alberta, the question that I would have around that is what steps this government would take to protect personal information and if they would actually get consent if the purpose of gathering that information changes, especially with a sale.

The reason that comes up for me is, of course, that we have a data breach on our hands right now, and people are rightfully questioning who is getting their data. Now, I know that there's been a lot of shifting of blame about who knew what and when, but it has to be said that this government has created the conditions for this data breach to have happened. It has facilitated the talk of separatism. It has greased the wheels for the separatists and their

petition question, which was to get out of Canada rather than the one for remaining in Canada. That's a big concern.

Now, another concern that I have around Bill 31 that gets kind of rolled into, again, an omnibus bill is around the Energy Regulator. The Energy Regulator has come under fire for being a little bit too close to industry. I think that makes sense, that wherever you have an industry and its regulation, the regulator should not be that close to industry. I have questions about: if they can't initiate inquiries or conduct them, who will ultimately be responsible? Lots of questions around that.

Those are just some of the concerns that I have around Bill 31, that all of us should likely have. For that reason, I will not be supporting Bill 31, and I encourage all members of this House to also oppose it.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 31, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, this afternoon and start off by saying that the question was raised in the House this afternoon, earlier in debate, as to who actually was in charge of government policies and priorities of this particular government. That is a very good question, especially when you see, in the light of this bill, questions remaining about: what is the motivation behind many of these pieces of the bill? What tail is wagging the government dog? Who are they actually listening to in terms of creating priorities in government policy when Albertans are facing a huge cost-of-living crisis and many can't find a family doctor?

People are talking to me in my constituency, saying that they are just about maxed out on their credit card, and they don't know if they've got enough to actually top up their tank. They're getting five, 10 bucks' worth of gas at a time when it looks like we may be going over \$2 a litre for fuel. It's astronomical. And what does the government come up with for priorities? Things like changing the time zones, and even in so doing, Mr. Chair, they failed to respect past decisions of the electorate in the province of Alberta.

In 2021, of course, we had a referendum on where Albertans wanted the time zone to be, and they refused. They didn't want to change time zones. They wanted to stick with what they had, and they rejected going to a year-round daylight saving time. Now what we see is the government and the Premier somehow responding to outside influence and suggesting this is what they want to do.

I have had some response from constituents, Mr. Chair, that maybe is a little bit of a different angle than others have expressed in this House about this matter. I had one constituent who recently wrote to me and said: I'm writing to express my very deep concerns about the proposed legislation regarding daylight saving time. He went on to say some things that affected faith communities in this province regarding the changes to daylight saving time being proposed.

He appreciated not having to switch back and forth but suggests that it would be better to keep the winter hours year-round instead of switching back and forth. The letter goes on to say:

The height of the winter sunrise is at 8:50 a.m. With the proposed change, that would make it 9:50 and would have the overwhelming number of Albertans going to work and school while it's dark.

Point taken.

Secondly, in the height of summer sundown, this letter goes on to say,

is at 10:08 p.m. By keeping winter hours, that would bring it back to 9:10 p.m. Needless to say, with many children going to sleep at 7 or 8 p.m., an earlier sundown would be much more beneficial.

Finally, the interesting point here for faith communities, in particular Jewish and Muslim faith communities who are in practice keeping very early prayer times, and many Albertans of different faiths: it's imperative to pray at dawn. At the height of the winter it's approximately 7:30 a.m. Now, with the proposed change, Mr. Chair, these groups would not be able to pray before 8:30 a.m., which is a major problem, I'm told, for those having to be at work or school at that time.

Keeping those facts in mind, the constituent of mine who wrote the letter respectfully requests that if switching back and forth is the issue, we choose winter hours all year-round, which would be much more beneficial to the majority of Albertans. I think that the writer, my constituent, makes some very, very good points that I don't think have been properly considered by the writers of the legislation, by the government when they drafted Bill 31, and by the minister of red tape reduction. I think the government would be well advised to take that under consideration.

Not only that. There's a second part to this that I wanted to talk about that really has not been mentioned all that much in the debate. It may be lost on some Albertans, but the Premier has indicated that she wishes to call this new time zone Alberta time rather than mountain daylight saving time. It would also be concurrent with what is actually Pacific Time.

5:00

If one looks, in a simple five-second Google search, at the North American time zone maps, one will find that the maps are running north-south with a width of a full province or a couple of states in the United States. They run from the Arctic Ocean all the way down to Mexico. With two exceptions, Mr. Chair, they're not called Alberta time or Arkansas time or Georgia time or Florida time. They are called Mountain Time, Pacific Time, Central Time, Eastern Time. In Canada we have Atlantic Time and Newfoundland Time as well, but they are not necessarily named after the jurisdiction that passes a referendum to change the time zone. The exceptions are Alaska and Hawaii. As yet we're not an appendage to the United States. We're not a 51st state as yet although some in the separatist movement, which the government supports, would like us to become that given their antics and their actions.

It seems odd, from an international time zone standpoint, a naming standpoint, a nomenclature standard, to have the time zone designated as Alberta time when, in fact, if you look globally at naming time zones, they are run vertically, following lines of longitude and various different criteria. The names, with very few exceptions, are named to be generic, as we have across North America, where I mentioned Pacific, mountain, central, and eastern time zones. It seems odd, Mr. Chair, that the Premier and the government would want to name this time zone Alberta time. I'm not sure what benefit that would be. In fact, I think it may end up creating confusion. Perhaps airlines would be wanting to comment on this as well. The international air traffic association, headquartered in Montreal, probably has some comments on this.

It struck me as odd that we would want to be calling this time zone Alberta time when, in fact, it contradicts the nomenclature standards that we see right across North America with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii having their own time zones named after their states. I would hope, Mr. Chair, that we don't get into a situation where we set a new precedent here in Alberta saying that this time zone in this province, that we name, is going to be formerly mountain daylight saving time; we're going to call it Alberta time.

I can only imagine the confusion that it may end up causing when you're looking at schedules, airline schedules in particular but any type of schedule or stock trading schedules or any business schedule globally, that relies on time zones. You're going to have

everybody globally take a look at Alberta time as they wonder “What the heck is that?” compared to Mountain Standard Time or Pacific Time. You know, we’ve got Greenwich Mean Time, which is the beginning point from which all the other time zones are measured. Then people are going to be looking: “Okay. Well, from Greenwich Mean Time, what’s Alberta time? Oh, it’s actually mountain daylight saving time. Okay. Now we understand.” It just creates a totally unnecessary piece of confusion.

That nomenclature change, Mr. Chair, seems to me to be born out of an insecurity in this province. It simply does. No other reason why the province would want to do this. It’s not born out of strength, a position of strength. It’s something that a province which is feeling insecure would want to sort of salve its own conscience with by suggesting that it should name an international time zone after itself. There’s an individual with blond hair south of the border that I think would be probably one who would do that type of thing. I can imagine what American time zones would look like if the current President had his druthers as far as naming them was concerned. I can only dream what things he’d come up with as names. You know, Alberta time doesn’t seem to be a good idea as far as a name is concerned.

Those are two of the issues that I’ve got. I mean, the major theme of my remarks today, Mr. Chair, has to do with the absolute lack of vision when it comes to priorities of Albertans versus the priorities of this government when everybody is looking to try to make ends meet on a monthly basis and having to struggle to do that.

I think there are others who may wish to add to the debate, and I will cede my time, but I really think that this tail that’s wagging the dog is motivated by somebody other than good reason.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Calgary-Currie.

Member Eremenko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Very pleased to be able to stand, though it’s always a tough act to follow from the Member for Edmonton-McClung. I’m not going to be talking about daylight saving time or time changes because I think that many of my colleagues have raised some very important comments. Certainly, I know, always more to say on that subject. Of course, Albertans had an opportunity to have their say on whether or not we should be changing our time zone here in Alberta. It was a referendum in 2021, I believe, and the majority of people who participated in that referendum said: “No, thank you. We will keep it as is. We’ll maintain the status quo.”

I think it begs the question. When we hear the members opposite and the Premier talk at great length about direct democracy, in fact, there was direct democracy in that referendum concerning the time zone. Albertans said no, yet here we are, and the Premier is going ahead anyways. I’m a bit less concerned about the minutiae of the decision and much more concerned about the extent that this government does in fact respect the process of a referendum and that opportunity where Albertans have a chance to voice their opinions directly and whether or not that voice will be respected moving forward.

Of course, come October, we will have some very important referenda. I don’t mean to dismiss the importance of time zones, but I would argue that these are referenda that are of perhaps greater gravity than the time zone question, and I think it is absolutely fundamental that Albertans can understand whether or not, depending on the result of that referendum, they will be heard and respected or if the Premier is simply going to do what she was always going to do, as it seems to be the case with the time zone.

On Bill 31, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, I would actually like to focus my comments for the next little while on changes that are being made to the Gaming, Liquor and

Cannabis Act. It begins on page 26 of the bill. Essentially, this section will allow the sale and subsequent disclosure of personal information if government approves. I want to repeat that. If government green-lights an offer to buy Albertans’ personal information related to iGaming, online gambling, Bill 31 will allow for that. The bill goes on to say that this can take place only if government “is satisfied that . . . reasonable measures [are] in place to protect the personal information after . . . [it] has been sold.”

Mr. Chair, in real time we are currently having to navigate the largest breach of personal data potentially in Canada’s history. Seventy-two hours ago, a little bit longer than that, maybe a week ago now, is when the RCMP gave an injunction, a cease-and-desist letter, to an organization with, I would argue, malintent to push through a separatist agenda and to tear apart our country. To help facilitate that, they got their hands on what appears to be the voters list. They posted that online and have made it searchable. A searchable version of 3 million people’s personal information was online. Not only was it posted; it was promoted, and it put 3 million people’s lives at risk.

5:10

It is rich that in Bill 31 we are now seeing a government who is facilitating the sale of personal information. Listen, it will come as no surprise to anybody in these Chambers or anybody watching at home that personal data is a real commodity right now. This is for advertising purposes, for marketing purposes. Some of those purposes are legitimate, some of them are not, but there is a market that is alive and well for the information for you, Mr. Chair, for everybody in this space, for judges, lawyers, police officers, family members, anybody. That information can be used for ways that I don’t think any of us can even imagine.

I am deeply concerned that Bill 31 seems to be ignoring the tremendous risk. I would wonder given the circumstances of the last week that I think should make every Albertan very, very angry and very concerned about the integrity of the referenda that are six months down the road from now: have their signatures been used? Have their names been forged? Unfortunately, because of changes from the Minister of Justice to the rules around this process, they can’t even find out, and even if they did find out, they can’t take their name off this petition. It absolutely shakes the process to the core.

I’m dwelling on this much, much more than I would have a week ago, and I think every single person in this room should seriously reconsider whether this component that allows for the sale and disclosure of personal information is actually something that we want to make. Do we want to see more of that, or should government actually be giving that a sober second thought?

When it comes to government requiring reasonable measures that the information sold will not be used for purposes other than the way that it had originally been intended, I think that’s terribly naive, to think that any government any government could ensure or enforce that reasonable measures are in place once that information has been sold.

In Alberta, of course, we have our Privacy Commissioner, whose job it is to ensure that these types of regulations and legislative changes are held up to scrutiny, but in the Legislative Offices Committee that is led by the majority UCP, they have absolutely eroded the budget of the Privacy Commissioner. They are increasingly unable to meet the demands of increased volume, the increased complexity, and the increased demand on that service.

It’s great that you can put it in writing, but if you can’t enforce it, it means nothing. They are utterly, utterly hollow promises from this government to say: well, we’ll check to see if reasonable

measures are followed, and then we can sell your data. Oh, well, I apologize; I don't have a great deal of faith in that process.

In the last two minutes I want to also talk about changes to advertising related to online gambling. As shadow minister of Mental Health and Addiction I don't think we talk about gambling addiction enough. It shatters families. It devastates communities. I have really had the honour to hear stories from people who have lost everything as a result of gambling and online gambling.

Now, I would really like to hear the bill does take some of the rules around who is allowed to advertise and the nature of that advertising out of section 49.1(4) and (5), and then it moves it into 49.4 and 49.5. I'd love to hear from the minister about why that exactly is. What is this trying to correct, and does it in fact reflect the very serious nature of online gambling in Alberta?

In closing, I think it's important to quote a couple of references here just to really reinforce that I plead from the minister that he is taking gambling addiction seriously. From the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* they say that

the legalization of online gambling . in Ontario, which really precedes in 2022, but our new iGaming really replicates in many ways,

turned any smartphone into a betting platform, compounding existing epidemics of technology and social media use addiction. Although youth are theoretically banned from iGaming, advertising influences young people to start gambling and to gamble more, and it likely makes recovery from problem gambling more difficult.

It continues.

Problem gambling has been associated with increased risks of suicide, substance use disorders, crime, and broader social harms.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction found in their 2024 report that the increase in opportunities to legally gamble and the increase in gambling advertising have resulted in increased gambling participation, types of play with greater risk of harm, and normalization that is especially a concern for youth.

As I mentioned, I am begging for the government to take this issue very seriously, to reflect those considerations in the regulations pertaining to advertising, and that in future legislation I would keep my fingers crossed increased funding is provided as meaningful interventions to help people who are struggling with gambling and possibly dealing with a gambling addiction. I really worry for the young people who are exposed to this and who are feeling like it's really normal to be doing it. Ninety-nine point nine per cent of the time the house always wins, and that is not what is communicated in the advertising.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any others wishing to provide comment?

Ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 31 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? That is carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the committee rise and report bills 27 and 31.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Mrs. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 27, Bill 31.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. That is so ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

(continued)

Bill 28

Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

[Adjourned debate April 23: Mr. Kasawski]

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 28, the Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. Another suite of policies, decisions, new directions by which this government is extending its reach, by which this government is continuing to extend its tentacles. Getting into colourful analogies here. Let's just say this. This is another example of incredible government overreach from this government's ministers, where they seem to want to take over every aspect of every part of Albertans' lives. We've seen this particularly with municipalities, where this government has continually reached into their affairs and continues to interfere.

5:20

One of these particular ones in Bill 28, Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Municipal Affairs' decision to grant himself new sweeping powers over public libraries. Now, he has a, shall we say, novel but certainly incredibly disingenuous argument about why that's necessary. He says that it's absolutely necessary that he gives himself these sweeping new powers to keep, and I quote the minister here, pornography out of the hands of children. Now, every one of us in this place, I think every adult in the province knows that libraries don't carry pornography. There are no copies of *Playboy* or *Penthouse*. There's no adult-rated video section. What we have in libraries yeah, there's a wide range of books, DVDs, audio recordings. Some of those do contain references to sex. There are varying levels of description in all of that material, materials that are carefully categorized, curated, and supervised by librarians.

I think it's very clear what the minister is attempting to do with his language. He's choosing to encompass all of those materials with the most emotionally loaded language he can find, and I can only imagine he's doing so in an attempt to shock parents, shock Albertans. If they're shocked enough, Mr. Speaker, he's hoping they don't look at what he's actually doing. It's not the sign of a particularly strong argument. Certainly, a sign of an argument that perhaps should be filed in the section of creative fiction.

Let's set aside that question of definition, the minister's hyperbole, and let's look at what he actually claims to be a problem. The minister says, in his view, to be generous, that there is material in libraries that he feels is inappropriate for children to access, and he needs to take action to prevent that. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's look

at the actual data. In the last 10 years, since 2017, you know how many times Albertans have registered a concern about the books available to children or youth in a public library? How many times? Eighty. Eighty in 10 years. Now, our libraries see currently about 38 million visits a year. Thirty-eight million; 80 complaints. That's 80 complaints about books available to children and youth. That's a fraction of a fraction of a per cent, okay? That's the problem the minister wants to solve. You would think the Minister of Municipal Affairs would have some bigger things to focus on, some bigger concerns, but this is the one he's chosen.

Let's take a look at what the minister is actually doing. What is his solution to the problem? Is the solution that he's putting forward does it balance with what the size of the problem actually is? Well, the minister's solution is to require libraries to actually physically separate any such material, and let's be clear again, Mr. Speaker. There is no pornography in libraries. So it will be whatever the minister decides he wants to define. We don't know what that's going to be. He's going to tell us later. He's going to say: that material has to be separated physically. So put behind the counter, locked room. Then anybody that wants to take it out: librarians have to demand parental approval or they have to see ID before any children aged 15 and under can access it. They're going to have to screen out who can get to it. Again, those details: we don't know what they are. The minister is going to tell us later.

It also gives the minister some really, really broad powers to respond to complaints and order inspections for "any matter relating to the management, administration or operation of a public library." Part of the minister's solution is to create a whole new bureaucracy, an army of public library inspectors. Sounds like something out of Monty Python. Nobody expects the library inspector, Mr. Speaker.

Again, for a problem of 80 complaints over 10 years, millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions of visits, the minister is going to demand that they change the layout of absolutely every library, create sections where people have to ask for permission to access material, show ID, and he's going to create his whole army of library inspectors that can act on anything that he decides he wants them to inspect, Mr. Speaker.

That's the language of the bill. It gives him unilateral authority to override any local board policy, any public library decision regarding the management, administration, or operation. Basically, he can come in and overrule any decision in a public library, anything they've decided. He doesn't like the location of the gumball machine? He can issue a ministerial order and make them move. That's the level of control he is giving himself, again, for a problem that is a fraction of a fraction of a per cent. He gives him the right to make any order that he considers appropriate, displace any decisions that have been made locally. Again, he has offered no evidence of a problem significant enough to give the minister one hundred per cent total control over every decision of any public library. Instead, we get this massive imposition of government red tape, interference, bureaucracy, arbitrary control.

[The Speaker in the chair]

To quote Keith Gerein, municipal affairs columnist with the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald*, in his words: "That's a massive and unaccountable sledgehammer to hold over public libraries." I agree, Mr. Speaker. The minister is using a wrecking ball to smash a fly. Now, Mr. Gerein goes on, and he notes a couple of other things. He notes that

library collections by their very nature are curated meaning carefully organized and presented by professionals and overseen by boards who already take steps to ensure dodgy materials, to what extent they exist, are not easily accessible to those who shouldn't have them.

He notes, Mr. Speaker, the significant costs that the minister is imposing to solve this nonexistent problem. He says that public libraries have been . struggling. They don't have an easy way to pay the extra costs of building [these new] "restricted sections" and then staffing them.

He that says that

covering that bill . either [is going to] have to come from increased tax dollars, raising user fees or cutting other library services [and] none of [that] serves low-income families who are particularly dependent on [those] libraries.

Indeed, the costs being imposed by the minister are one of the top concerns of the Coalition of Alberta Public Libraries, a group that did not exist until they got wind of the minister's Bill 28. They heard that was coming down the pipe. Every library in Alberta every library, Mr. Speaker banded together to raise their concerns about this minister's imposition of this sweeping new bureaucracy, this massive new level of control for a problem that measures to a fraction of a fraction of a per cent.

The Coalition of Alberta Public Libraries, or CAP, said that there are a lot of unanswered questions here that are going to drive a lot of costs. They said: how are we supposed to handle these privacy protections of individuals? The minister is giving himself the power to go in and demand anybody's library record. "Let me see what John Smith in Edmonton took out." I want to make sure he's not reading something that the minister feels is inappropriate. "Mr. Smith, show me your child's library record. I want to make sure they didn't sign out anything inappropriate." The minister is giving himself that power.

What are the acceptable forms of identification? People who don't have government-issued ID, including people that don't have fixed addresses, newcomers: how are they going to access that? Of course, maybe that'll be part of the referendum in the fall, whether we should deny library services to newcomers, Mr. Speaker. The government seems to be fond of that.

That said, how are they going to retrain staff as age verifiers? They're going to have to figure out how to administer these parental consent processes, going to have to redesign all of their service points. They're going to have to modify every single digital platform. And then they have to figure out how they're going to handle the minister's provincial inspections. Those will be daily? Monthly? Weekly? We don't know because, of course, nobody expects the provincial library inspectors.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, think about it. Again, we go back to what the minister was arguing. He's saying: there's pornography in our libraries and we must make sure children can't access it. Hyperbole. Creative fiction. There is no pornography in our libraries. There are materials, yes, that we want to think about who has access to them. We have professional librarians and folks who curate them. We have 80 times – 80 times – in hundreds and millions of visits in 10 years where people have had any concerns with how that system is working. In response to that, the minister is installing this sweeping bureaucracy, this army of library inspectors, and massive new costs for libraries and municipalities.

Now, of course, we know it's the minister that loves spending other people's money, particularly on the basis of conspiracy theories. I mean, we just look at the situation with vote tabulators. Again, no evidence of any significant level, a fraction of a fraction of a per cent, of actual issues reported by Elections Alberta. But on the basis of conspiracy theories the minister banned vote tabulators at a cost of millions and millions of dollars to every municipality in the province.

When it's a cost to municipalities, Mr. Speaker, it is a cost to individual Albertans. At a time when Albertans are struggling to get by, this government does nothing to make their life more

affordable, but they're doing things like this that make it a lot more expensive. The minister loves to spend other people's money. He also loves demanding more money by raising taxes for Alberta taxpayers. Of course, every Albertan is paying more municipal tax, property tax, thanks to that municipal minister.

It goes beyond just that, Mr. Speaker. Really, it comes down to a concern about the erosion of freedom of thought. Now, we've got a Premier here who says that she believes in freedoms. She was once a libertarian. We don't know what to call her now because this is the most authoritarian, most interventionist government we've ever seen in the province of Alberta, that has stripped more rights from Albertans than any other government before it.

In the words of Mr. Gerein:

Remember that one of the foundational ideas behind libraries is that they are meant to be open, non-judgmental educational venues that operate largely free from top-down control and political influence. They are public spaces, not government spaces.

He says,

When a government imposes something like Bill 28, it starts to eat away at that principle of intellectual freedom.

Something this government claims they support. He says that it [eats] away at that principle . . . by raising the question of what process [is going to] be used to determine which materials have to go behind the counter.

What we have right now, Mr. Speaker, is that we know it's going to be at the whim of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

You know, I have my favourite graphic novels. I don't know if the minister shares my taste. Maybe he doesn't like Spider-Man. Maybe he's going to take that out. Maybe he wants to ban all books by authors he doesn't approve of. Maybe he wants to ban any book that refers to anybody from the 2SLGBTQ-plus community. He's giving himself that ability and that freedom, Mr. Speaker.

He's not telling us what he's going to set it by, and he's not bound by it because he gets to just make the regulation. If he decides he wants it to be different the next day, he just gets to go and change that criteria, and it never sets foot in this House to do it. Zero accountability to Albertans for restricting their access to materials in their public library.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. There is no problem for the minister to fix. Even if we considered this minuscule fraction of a fraction of a per cent to be enough of a problem to take action, it doesn't need this wrecking ball that the minister is swinging to swat that fly. That's why I will be voting against Bill 28. Far more important things we need to be doing on behalf of Albertans, things this government continues to ignore because they would rather fight a trumped-up culture war.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to continue on the thread that my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre started by talking a little bit about libraries at the beginning of my remarks. I am going to paraphrase a joke from one of my favourite Edmonton comics, Adam Dyck, who talks about driving by and seeing a little free library and thinking, "Boy, that's what I really needed: a free library."

I am so proud to be in a city where you don't have to pay a penny to get a library card. Mine says: I'm an information ninja. You can get lots of different types of access to library materials for anybody in Alberta. I spend a lot of time signing out audiobooks and listening to them on the highway when I'm commuting around our beautiful province.

If people are concerned about what's happening in their libraries, and some may very well be, there is a great resource through readalberta.ca that talks about how you can join and become a member of your local library board. It is one of the great ways to get involved in your community. I know growing up in Kinuso, a small town, rural northern Alberta, we were always keen to find people to serve on the FCSS or the library board or ag societies. I do want to say that anyone who has a personal interest in getting involved I encourage to go to readalberta.ca and find out how they themselves can become involved.

For the government to come into this place and change legislation, giving themselves broad, sweeping powers, I just wish some of the MLAs – if that's what they want to do, spend their time focused on libraries, there are lots of ways to do that without having to come in and bring such aggressive and overreaching legislation into this place. If they really wanted to help, one of the things that I know libraries could benefit from is a little bit more funding to be able to hire more librarians, whether it's a school library or a hybrid library that's a school and a community library or a straight-up community library.

You know, I was just at a retirement banquet for CSU 52 here in the city of Edmonton, and some of the people who are retiring were Edmonton public librarians. I want to say to every librarian: the spaces that you create, that third space that's not work, not school, not home, but a third space, is one of the only places where you don't have to spend any money, where everyone is welcome. I know that there are libraries, including in the community of Airdrie, where there aren't any emergency shelters, and the library board stepped up and kept their library open on the coldest days last year so people didn't freeze on the streets. It is one place that some folks who don't have a home to live in, don't have a safe place or a warm place to be can go and get out of the cold.

Libraries provide tremendous supports to our communities. They open doors and the imagination for so many. We're here talking today about books, and that is something certainly that libraries provide, but at the Edmonton public library you can access a 3D printer and you can bring your ideas to life. Maybe your family can't afford a 3D printer but your local library has one, and you can book some time to be able to come and use it.

I think that we should be growing the types of supports and opportunities that everyone can find in public libraries instead of trying to find ways to villainize them and demonize the work that they do. I also want to say that this idea of library inspectors, I think, is so draconian and really has no place in our public libraries.

I also want to talk a little bit about municipal issues. It's a beautiful time of year to be out door-knocking, and I'm sure many of us are. Often when I'm door-knocking, people want to raise municipal issues with me, whether it's potholes or infill. I am very happy to hear what their thoughts and concerns are and to navigate them to the appropriate body to be able to raise those concerns.

Why this government would choose to try to take on authority from a separate, distinct order of government – like you, Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of being elected to a local order of government prior to this. For me it was the Edmonton public school board. I know that for others being elected municipally has been a great way to serve. I'm very happy to have a defined sandbox and to have roles and responsibilities. I know that those folks who were elected to those other orders of government achieved that through a democratic process. I don't want to play in their sandbox. I want to make sure that I do a good job in mine, that they have the resources they need to do theirs, and that we all come together to support our broader community.

For example, one of the things this bill is doing is allowing cabinet, not even the Legislature but specifically cabinet, the ability to transfer ownership of a municipally publicly owned utility to a public utility entity. So watch out, those of you who have locally owned utilities. That could no longer be the case if the majority of folks in cabinet make the

decision to change that. I don't think that's something – I know it's not something – that I ran on, and I don't think it's something that anyone on the other side of the House ran on. Taking over EPCOR, Enmax, or any other locally owned utility isn't something that was in our mandate, so why is it in this bill? Who knows, Mr. Speaker?

5:40

The minister also will have discretion on whether or not a municipality should be dissolved. I'll say, having grown up in Kinuso – and I still say Kinuso because even though it's now the MD of Big Lakes, we were our own. I think we were a village when I was growing up, even though our population was hamlet population, because it was better for tourism. We were our own municipality, and the folks in the region made the decision to dissolve the municipality and to be absorbed into the MD, and that was up to them to make that decision. I will say that it helped when the MD did some beautification efforts in their very first summer after taking over. People felt pretty good about that decision, but they knew it was their decision, and they didn't enter into it lightly.

Why the government would choose to be the ones that have the discretion on whether or not a municipality should be dissolved behooves me. I don't think that is, again, something that any of us ran on or something that comes up as an issue that people want us to address ourselves. They have every right to go to their local municipality and to run for office and to campaign on that if that's something that they so choose.

There are just a number of very specific, nitpicky things in here, like that municipalities with populations over 15,000 will be required to publicly report development permit activity and timelines. Again, we have the ability as citizens in this province and living in municipalities, whether they're towns, cities, MDs, counties, or what have you, to be able to vote for people who will uphold good processes, including expeditious timelines when it comes to development and building permits. That's something that they should be held accountable to, and I don't know why the province is trying to interfere in that space. I don't see why this is a priority for the Minister of Municipal Affairs or the Premier, given that this is a government bill.

Another change that's happening is around acquisition of lands that are considered surplus, around municipal school reserve land for example, so charter schools being able to access that municipal school reserve land. Again, I will say that I know many people who choose charter schools for their children and do that with a variety of reasons in mind, and I respect their decision to make that choice. I am confident that there are people in this Chamber who've made that choice and did so knowing that they were choosing a school that wasn't necessarily the newest school on the edge of town but had a number of programs and focuses that they really cared about.

Typically the surplus municipal reserve lands are in developing areas. Again, if our intention with charter schools is to offer programming that's not available in the public, Catholic, or francophone divisions, those usually aren't in the areas of great development around the edges of the city. They're often near to the core and are considered magnet programs. I think that has been a balance that has been struck, particularly here in Edmonton.

I will say that there were times when I was on the public school board where the minister would call and say: "You know what?" I won't use my name.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

"We really need you to release one of your schools that you're not using as an active school because we have a charter that needs

to have the opportunity to grow." We have the ability to do a little bit of a negotiation, I will say, even though it may not have been a negotiation. We had the ability to say, "You know, we really need five new schools in these suburban neighbourhoods, and that would go a long way to addressing our growth pressures," and we were able to have a bit of a conversation around that. We did absolutely release school sites that we didn't need, but we were also able to use that as a bit of a bargaining chip to get much-needed infrastructure in new and growing areas of the city. Taking away that ability for school divisions to be able to manage their own real estate portfolio, taking it away to impede those relationships I don't think is beneficial to the people of Alberta.

Here's another one that I put a star beside: allows the minister to establish community design codes and impose them on municipalities. That is a significant shift in how we do land-use planning and the authority of municipalities being taken over by the province. Again, I will say that I think we have more than enough in our sandbox. We have a large area of responsibility. We have relationships when it comes to environment, energy, health care, education, law enforcement, environment. Maybe I said "environment" twice. We have sports and rec. Like, we have massive areas of responsibility that are actually our mandate. I would much rather we focus on doing those well than taking on responsibilities of other orders of government that have every right to make their own decisions whether we like them or not. Let's focus on what we are actually responsible for in the province of Alberta. Taking that on to impose design codes – again, I would love it if the government was just open about the problem that they were trying to solve, the issues that they were actually trying to address here. If they want to run to be, you know, mayor of Edmonton, they have every right to do that and to make that their sandbox.

We know that in the last municipal election the UCP cabinet brought in legislation around having parties run municipally and was very overt about who some of the candidates were that were being backed by that party. It didn't result in the outcomes that they wanted necessarily, particularly in the two largest cities. I think that there's some frustration with that. But those were democratically elected governments, and they have the responsibility to make decisions around design codes and implement them for the constituents that voted for them. These are the same constituents who voted for us. They just voted for us to do our job and voted for them to do their job.

There are a number of areas that the legislation says will be dealt with in regulation after the fact. I'm just going to raise a few of them here. Again, this is about us delegating our authority as elected MLAs to the cabinet to take on this work. Some of the areas are the councillor accountability framework. Again, this is something that city councils used to do. They used to be able to develop their own code of conduct and impose their own code of conduct on one another. Then government got rid of their ability to do that, and now the government is taking it on themselves. They want to within regulations be able to develop an accountability framework. It seems like there are other things that cabinet could be using its time for. When I'm door-knocking, it's usually around affordability, the price of gas, and it's usually around health care, major health care concerns here in Edmonton.

On automatic yes for development permits, whatever that means. I'm not saying that delays are warranted, but an automatic yes is – there are reasons why we have to apply for things, and it's to have checks and balances. I'm a little nervous about what the automatic yes is going to look like. We're being asked to trust cabinet to come up with that and implement it on their own.

Nonstatutory studies related to development. Okay.

Community design codes. Again, this I think is about some members of the government not loving the densification efforts that are

happening in our largest cities. This isn't our sandbox. Whether you like it or not, this isn't our area of responsibility. Now cabinet is saying: let us be in charge of that instead of the Legislature. If you want to take it on here, so be it. It's not our sandbox, but at least it would be done openly, publicly, through three readings in the Chamber. Instead it's going to be delegated over to cabinet to do, just outside of the Premier's office down the hall in a closed-door meeting.

Assessment of designated industrial property is another one, and then the last one is the governance of utilities. Again, these are major shifts in taking things away primarily from municipalities and putting them into the responsibility of the Premier and her chosen cabinet members. Mayors and councillors are democratically elected officials no matter what municipality they're with. There are ways to hold them to account, whether it's through the Premier's imposed recall legislation or through the every-four-year going out. It's the most public job application process we have in our society, for all of us to go out and ask our friends and neighbours and strangers and foes to please consider us for service of them in this place or whether it's in council for those who are running for council. There are lots of ways that we can hold one another accountable.

I will just lastly say that 82 per cent of Albertans trust their public libraries to make appropriate decisions.

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

5:50

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 28 is another example of this government's increasing control over municipalities and other democratically elected authorities. We have seen this time and again, that the UCP has shown a lack of respect for local governments and local decision-making. We have seen this clearly over and over, over the past couple of sessions. In every single bill that has been tabled in this House, you can see the power centralization as a central theme that cuts across the bills that we have seen in this House. Bring a bill that is a framework, consolidate the powers within the minister's office or the cabinet through regulations.

I wouldn't even go that far. Bill 25, which is still in discussion, removes the authority from school boards by requiring ministerial approval before a superintendent can be appointed. It's the sole responsibility of the elected school board trustees to hire the only – the only – staff that they are able to hire. In this case, that is going to be taken away.

As someone who has reported before to a board, your responsibility as a board is to hire the CEO, the executive director, the superintendent. The rest of the operation is done within that. The reporting responsibility and the hiring ability between the school board trustees and the superintendent: once that is gone, the elected representatives who are on this, trustees, have no authority to manage direct performance, plan performance, manage the superintendent. It's this wave of power that we see in bill after bill.

Back to Bill 28. The government continues this same approach, concentrating power in the minister's office at the expense of local autonomy. In this case, a good example is the libraries. Albertans have been clear. They do not want the UCP eroding the independence of municipalities, the school boards, or any other elected, democratic, or appointed democratic institutions.

Albertans deserve thoughtful, well-crafted legislation from the government that they have elected. Legislations that address affordability. Legislations that address crises in our schools. Legislations that address crises in our hospitals and our ERs. Mr. Speaker, you can go through all the bills that have been tabled in this House by the government and try to find the word "affordability;" it's not there. It's the single thing that we hear day

after day at the doors, in our e-mail boxes, on our voicemails, and on our calls. The government has a bigger fish to fry: the libraries.

Instead, they are seeing a revolving door of rushed bills, patchwork amendments, and overreach that create uncertainty for communities across the province. Bill 28 amends four major pieces of legislation, but I will focus on a few and speak to that within the time limit that I have. Recent polls show that 82 per cent of Albertans trust public libraries; 46 per cent trust the government of Alberta; 69 per cent prefer decisions to be made locally, not centralized in the cabinet or the minister's office; and 60 per cent oppose provincial laws and regulations restricting access to library materials. Mr. Speaker, these are not fringe opinions; these are clear public views.

The Coalition of Alberta Public Libraries, that consists of 324 public library service points across seven regional systems, serving 99 per cent of Albertans: they have not seen a significant number of formal complaints about inappropriate materials. It has been extremely rare. The Member for Edmonton-City Centre has already articulated that in terms of the numbers. The coalition has raised significant concerns. There are unanswered questions on privacy on this bill when it comes to the libraries: acceptable forms of ID and how people without government-issued identification such as unhoused individuals or newcomers will access library services.

Mr. Speaker, I came here as an immigrant. I have accessed the libraries. I grew up as a child without seeing a public library. I was an adult sponsored through a scholarship in a university the first time that I saw a public library. It's so important to think about the value that it has. When I came, it was the first place that I visited. It was my place of connecting with people, re-establishing social capital. It was my place to access information. It was my place to print documents. It was my place to get books to read. It was my place to learn from other people, who can point out to me in terms of navigating to a new world that I have landed. It's because of that that, after I had realized the value of the libraries, I have fund raised and delivered 45,000 books to places that have no access to libraries.

Mr. Speaker, it is so important to consider the importance and the values and not see the libraries as a place where the government can come and interfere without having the grassroots understanding and the public opinions of what happens within the libraries. I challenge the minister to provide the number of e-mails, the number of phone calls that he has received around library concerns compared to – [interjection] I don't have enough time; we can talk about it – policing, compared to affordability, compared to all of those key challenges that exist.

Mr. Speaker, the other element within the limited time that I have is in terms of banning books and materials to read. Nelson Mandela is my icon. When he was in prison, he enrolled to study, but he also was wanting to learn what was happening around the world politically. He was told that: "You can't read. You can't receive journals. You can't receive newspapers, so you can't know what happens around the world. But you're allowed to study." I wonder how the minister is going to manage this, but I will leave the minister with this story. [interjection] No, I don't have enough time. We can talk about it.

Mr. Speaker, Mandela subscribed to *The Economist*. The prison guards thought that it was part of his study materials. It doesn't seem like a newspaper, right? It says *The Economist*, so they let him read. That's how he got to know what was happening around the world politically until down the line they figured it out and they stopped. The minister is going to use that type of approach to institute . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to the standing orders of this place it's 6 o'clock p.m., which means we are now adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers.....	1725
Statement by the Speaker	
Alert Ready Emergency Alert System Test.....	1725
Introduction of Visitors	1725
Introduction of Guests	1725
Members' Statements	
Provincial Forensic DNA Laboratory.....	1726
Electoral List Distribution and Use	1726
Member's Reflections on Party Membership	1726
Educational Curriculum.....	1727
Government Accountability.....	1727
Seniors' Benefits	1727
Oral Question Period	
Investigation of Electoral List Distribution and Use.....	1727, 1731
Citizen-initiated Referendums	1729
Electoral List Disclosure and Provincial Referendum	1730
Physician Compensation Model	1732
Supports for Seniors	1732
Domestic Violence Prevention	1733
Alberta in Canada	1734
School Construction in Southwest Edmonton	1734
Affordability Measures.....	1735
Notices of Motions	1735
Tabling Returns and Reports	1735
Orders of the Day	1739
Government Bills and Orders	
Third Reading	
Bill 26 Immigration Oversight Act.....	1739
Second Reading	
Bill 32 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2026	1743
Bill 28 Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.....	1752
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 27 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026	1746
Bill 31 Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.....	1749

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca