



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 28, 2026

Day 61

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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

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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
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Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
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Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)  
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
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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)  
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Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC),  
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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)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
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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)  
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Vacant, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 46

New Democrat: 39

Progressive Tory: 1

Vacant: 1

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| 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                                                         |
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| Brian Jean           | Minister of Energy and Minerals                                                                       |
| Adriana LaGrange     | Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services                                                     |
| Todd Loewen          | Minister of Forestry and Parks                                                                        |
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| Demetrios Nicolaides | Minister of Education and Childcare                                                                   |
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| Rajan Sawhney        | Minister of Indigenous Relations                                                                      |
| Tara Sawyer          | Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation                                                                |
| Joseph Schow         | Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration                                                      |
| R.J. Sigurdson       | Minister of Affordability and Utilities                                                               |
| Searle Turton        | Minister of Children and Family Services                                                              |
| Dan Williams         | Minister of Municipal Affairs                                                                         |
| Rick Wilson          | Minister of Mental Health and Addiction                                                               |
| Justin Wright        | Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services                                                  |
| Muhammad Yaseen      | Associate Minister of Multiculturalism                                                                |

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|                           |                                                                        |
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| Scott Cyr                 | Parliamentary Secretary for Transportation and Strategic Development   |
| Chantelle de Jonge        | Parliamentary Secretary for Affordability and Utilities                |
| Nolan Dyck                | Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous and Rural Policing              |
| Chelsae Petrovic          | Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement                |
| Ron Wiebe                 | Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (North)                       |
| Tany Yao                  | Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development    |

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Johnson  
de Jonge  
Ellingson  
Kasawski  
Kayande  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Wiebe

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

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach  
Boparai  
Bouchard  
Cyr  
de Jonge  
Elmeligi  
Hoyle  
Stephan  
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### **Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries**

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Ganley  
Gray  
Sawyer  
Wiebe

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

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Haji  
Johnson  
Jones  
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Tejada

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Deol  
Hayter  
Horner  
Jones  
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Vacant

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Brar, Gurinder  
Brar, Gurtej  
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Gray  
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Rowswell  
Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 28, 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.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, today I am pleased to introduce Rob Reynolds, a former member of the Assembly staff who many of you know or have worked with during his extensive career right here. Rob joined the Legislative Assembly as Parliamentary Counsel in 1993, became senior Parliamentary Counsel in 1997, and was appointed Law Clerk and director of interparliamentary relations in 2010. He served as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta from 2016 to 2018, appointed Queen's Counsel in 2004. He has also served twice as president of the Association of Parliamentary Counsel in Canada and is a frequent speaker on parliamentary privilege.

Rob is currently senior counsel at Alberta Counsel in Edmonton and is accompanied by one of his sons, Nikhil Reynolds. Nikhil recently graduated from Western University with a degree in political science and is also currently employed at Alberta Counsel. I hear that Nikhil is also quite the football and rugby player.

Rob's other son, Samir Reynolds, is the eldest of Rob's children. Samir followed in his parents' footsteps, completed law school at the University of Toronto. He currently serves as a judicial law clerk at the Supreme Court of Canada after having held a similar position at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. Unfortunately, Samir is working in Ottawa and could not be with us here today.

Rob, I see that you and Ritu have had a very positive influence on your two boys.

Hon. members, Rob and Nikhil are here today to hear an upcoming ministerial statement by the Minister of Justice on the late Ritu Khullar, who was Rob's wife and Samir and Nikhil's mother. Ritu was also the former Chief Justice of Alberta and Chief Justice of the courts of appeal of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Sadly, she passed away on Thursday, September 3, 2026.

Rob and Nikhil are joined in the gallery by several distinguished members of Alberta's legal community. I would like you to welcome the hon. Chief Justice Kent H. Davidson of the Court of King's Bench of Alberta, the hon. Justice Kevin Feehan of the Alberta Court of Appeal, the hon. Chief Justice James A. Hunter of the Alberta Court of Justice, and the hon. Sheila Greckol and her husband Mr. Bruce Hagstrom. They are accompanied by close friends Linda Hughes, the former editor of the *Edmonton Journal*, and Marie Gordon, family lawyer, activist, educator, and author.

Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Ms Fir:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Latino community leaders in the gallery today as we recognize Latin American Heritage Month and celebrate the community's rich and vibrant culture, heritage, and contributions to Alberta. I ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Member Hoyle:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to welcome to the Assembly my children's family: Liz Dolcemore, one of the reasons why I'm an MLA; her daughter Maya Ledesma on her eighth birthday today; and grandmother Sara Singerman, visiting from B.C. Please join me in wishing Maya a very happy eighth birthday. Please rise.

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

**Mrs. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three vice-presidents from Red Deer Polytechnic who are joining us in the gallery: Dr. Tristin Brisbois, Jim Brinkhurst, and Blayne Meek. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce my friend and one of my supporters, Chips Reid. Please feel free to rise, Chips, as I introduce you. He has been a pillar in Alberta and particularly the oil and gas community. He's a mechanical engineer and inventor who did a lot to further development in that area, but he's also a hard-core social democrat. He's been a lifetime member of our party, and he and his wife, Liz, received their lifetime memberships recently. They have been committed to fighting for social democracy, for public health care, and for proportional representation. Please receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services.

**Mr. Wright:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce one of my dearest friends, who made a long drive all the way here from Medicine Hat. Jaime Rogers is a trusted friend that I can always count on to speak her mind and say the truth of what's on her mind. Jaime, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there other introductions? The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm here. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly John Williams and Stuart Gale. Now, Stuart Gale's daughter Annalise Gale made Canadian jiu-jitsu history at the age of 14 by winning the ADCC World Championship twice. She's the only Canadian to do so. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

**Hon. Ritu Khullar**

**Chief Justice of Alberta and Chief Justice  
of the Courts of Appeal of Alberta,  
Nunavut, and Northwest Territories**

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the life and legacy of the hon. Chief Justice Ritu Khullar. Albertans and members of

the legal community across our province and country mourn the loss of a remarkable jurist and dedicated public servant.

I want to take a brief moment to recognize her husband, Rob Reynolds, and her sons Nikhil and Samir Reynolds. Thank you for being here today with us. While Albertans knew Chief Justice Khullar as an extraordinary jurist and Chief Justice of our great province, her loving family knew her first as a wife and a mother. To the Reynolds and the Khullar family: thank you for sharing such an exceptional person with our province.

I want to take this opportunity to also recognize Justice Kevin Feehan, who is joining us from the Court of Appeal, Chief Justice Davidson, Chief Justice Hunter, and Justice Greckol, who are all here in the gallery today. Thank you for being here as we remember and pay tribute to a colleague and a remarkable leader in Alberta's justice system. I also want to take the opportunity to recognize Linda Hughes, Bruce Hagstrom, and Marie Gordon, close friends of Chief Justice Khullar, for also joining us here today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Chief Justice Khullar dedicated her life to the pursuit of justice and public service. Before joining the bench, she spent more than two decades in private practice, earning a reputation as one of Alberta's foremost lawyers in public law, in labour and employment law, constitutional law, human rights, privacy, and administrative law as well. She brought remarkable intellect, thoughtful judgment, and a deep sense of compassion to all that she did.

In 2017 she was appointed to the Court of King's Bench of Alberta and the following year to the Court of Appeal of Alberta, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories. In 2022 she received the remarkable distinction of being appointed as Chief Justice of Alberta and Chief Justice of the courts of appeal of Alberta, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories, roles that she considered to be the greatest privilege of her professional life.

1:40

Now, through her distinguished legal career, Chief Justice Khullar earned the respect of colleagues, lawyers, and judges alike through her fairness, her integrity, and her unwavering commitment to the rule of law. She understood that justice was not merely the application of legal principles but the application of law to the real lives of people. She never lost sight of the human impact of the decisions before her, and she approached her work through both intellectual rigour and profound empathy.

As Chief Justice she worked tirelessly to strengthen public confidence in our courts, improve access to justice for all, and uphold the independence and the integrity of Alberta's justice system, and she encouraged everyone who serves within it to earn and maintain the public's trust through diligence, professionalism, and service. Mr. Speaker, her leadership and her dedication have left an enduring mark on Alberta and the administration of justice across Canada and throughout the north.

As Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor reflected in a statement, Chief Justice Khullar combined exceptional legal intelligence with a deep understanding of people and life. Now, she demonstrated that wisdom time and again, and she said that wisdom and empathy are as important to the pursuit of justice as the knowledge of the law, in fact, was. Alberta lost a remarkable jurist, a respected leader, and a public servant, yet her influence will continue to flow through the institutions that she strengthened, the profession she inspired, and the many lives that she touched through her service.

On behalf of the government of Alberta I extend our deepest condolences to her husband, her sons, her family, friends, colleagues on the bench, members of the legal profession, and all those who had the real privilege of knowing and working with her. May we all honour Chief Justice Khullar's memory by continuing

to uphold the principles that guided her life: fairness, integrity, empathy, and, last but not least, an unwavering commitment to justice.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** From the Official Opposition the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Brilliant, thoughtful, kind: those are the words that I would use to describe Chief Justice Ritu Khullar but also a fighter who pushed the edges of the law. She was heavily involved in the landmark Vriend decision, the McKay Panos decision. She fought very consistently with her colleagues at what is now Chivers Carpenter for the rights of nurses and of firefighters. She was appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench and then, very shortly after, to the Court of Appeal and became Chief. She rocketed to that position, and one can absolutely see why.

I will quote Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. "Dissent speaks to a future age. It's not simply to say, 'My colleagues are wrong and I would do it this way.' But the greatest dissents do become court opinions and gradually over time their views become the dominant view." And I believe that Chief Justice Khullar absolutely embodied this in both her legal practice and her decisions.

In the gallery we are joined by her husband, Rob, with whom I had the honour of working, and her son Nikhil. Her son Samir is clerking at the Supreme Court and was unable to join us today. She was the daughter of two teachers who immigrated to Canada, and I think in this moment, for someone who wound up in such a position, it is warranted that we say that because she fought for the rights of every marginalized group every day.

I will read a quote from her.

I do not think any one experience can prepare someone to be a judge. Judges come armed with a compendium of their varied life and work experience. To be a judge, one must draw on everything; not only one's intellect and understanding of the law, but also an understanding of people and of life. That is why it is so important to have judges with different experiences on the court. It helps to reflect the diversity of the society in which we live.

I think that that quote is emblematic of her attitude to life.

Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, I would like to add that when I first found myself a minister in this place, somewhat to my own surprise, Ritu Khullar was incredibly kind and open with me in terms of discussing the role and the community and all the many and varied things that I would need to know. As it turns out, I found out from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora just recently, she shared a deep love for the wisdom of Kermit the Frog. [Standing ovation]

## Members' Statements

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

## 2026 Provincial Referendum

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's genuinely understandable why Calgary voters might have stayed home during the referendum that took place one short week ago. After all, no one asked for this and no party ran on it. But wait, that's not entirely true. An ever-present minority in Alberta with a very special place in the Premier's heart and a much bigger place in her party did ask for it. Actually, the only party that's ever run on separatism hasn't broken 3 or 4 per cent in any general election in recent memory.

So let me correct my opening statement. The government fabricated the demand for this referendum to appease a vocal minority and to save

the Premier's political skin, and though it was not in the UCP's 2023 campaign platform, the majority of UCP members are separatists. Only 15 members of their caucus would stand up for Canada, 32 of them were silent, and one of them: well, a full-throated separatist.

Calgarians showed up in droves. They voted in the referendum like their country depended on it because it did. Eighty-two per cent of them voted to remain in Canada. Calgarians rejected all but one of the referendum questions. That means that Calgary UCP MLAs will have a lot of explaining to do in the year ahead. Oh, to be a fly on the wall to hear them claim to be fiscal hawks when we all know they spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the referendum, not to mention a \$4 million propaganda campaign.

Calgarians want solutions, Mr. Speaker. They want reasonable class sizes, supports for the kids who need them, an ambulance that shows up when they are called, and safer streets. They want decent jobs and the possibility of home ownership for their kids. Instead they get a fool's errand. They get waste, distraction, and scapegoating, and in the next election in October I trust they will reject the Premier.

### British Columbia Provincial Election

**Ms de Jonge:** Mr. Speaker, this week Albertans have reason to be optimistic. Our government is building Canada's strongest economy and making real progress on a pipeline to the west coast that will strengthen Canada's energy security and drive economic growth for generations.

On that same coast last weekend British Columbians delivered a clear verdict to David Eby's obstructionist, antidevelopment NDP and sent its government packing. Instead, they elected a strong Conservative government that says yes to building major projects and developing its resources, yes to creating jobs, attracting investment, and creating a strong economy, and yes to working with the rest of Canada to strengthen our shared prosperity.

That's right, Mr. Speaker. British Columbians have rejected years of NDP delays, uncertainty, and opposition to development in favour of a common-sense Conservative government. Led by Premier-elect Lorne Doerksen, the Conservative Party of British Columbia has earned a clear mandate to move their province toward a stronger, more prosperous future, and for Albertans that is welcome news. For way too long the NDP's ideological opposition and political gridlock have stood in the way of projects that would benefit workers, families, businesses, and communities on both sides of the Rockies. Finally, a government in Victoria that understands that prosperity comes from building, not blocking; from developing resources, not opposing them; and from working with other provinces, not fighting them.

1:50

Together Alberta and British Columbia can help deliver the infrastructure, investment, and access to global markets needed to strengthen our economic future. We can work together to unlock new opportunities for energy, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, trade, and transportation, and that means more jobs for workers, greater certainty for investors, and a stronger economy for future generations.

Congratulations, Premier-elect Lorne Doerksen and the Conservative Party of B.C. on your clear and resounding victory. Let's get to work.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Citizen-initiated Petition Requirements

**Mr. Nenshi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier now claims to have always been a champion of Canada. When she was asked by the media earlier this week about whether or not she got her job because of separatist support, all she could muster was a very nervous laugh. She said that these people are now her enemies. Can the Premier today confirm that she has never worked with the separatists even when she changed the law three times to help them and that she did not co-ordinate the timing of the petitions or referendum with them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite will know that we introduced changes to the referendum legislation shortly after the federal election was over in April of 2025, so there was a period of time where the old rules applied while we were writing the regulations. From time to time people would ask me, if they were interested in putting petitions forward, at what point the new rules would apply and, yeah, I answered some questions at that time.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Nenshi:** That's, like, the worst episode of *Dancing with the Stars* I've ever seen. No stars and very bad dancing.

We all know that the Premier got her job because she thought she could use the separatists, and in fact they used her. I have in front of me text messages, which she knows about, between the Premier and Jeffrey Rath, the self-appointed separatist leader. In those messages she's not answering questions. She is instructing Jeffrey Rath on how to handle his referendum, his petition, and the timing. How much more did the Premier collude with these separatists?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the first time the member opposite is acknowledging that question 10 came about because of two competing citizens' initiatives. The first one, put forward by the forever Canada campaign, happened before we changed the law. That's why they were under the old rules. The second one came forward after the new regulations came in, which is why they had different periods of time and different rules to follow. We had passed that legislation in April. It took a couple of months before it came into effect. And those who made their decisions made their decisions on their own and had to follow the rules at the time.

**Mr. Nenshi:** "I told you and Mitch to wait until [your] new rules came in." That is not answering a question, and no Albertan would believe that. That is the Premier, in writing, telling the separatists that she changed the law for them, and she's telling them how to manage their separatist position for their maximum success. How dare the Premier say that she's always been campaigning for Canada when she was running the separatist side.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, he's wrong. First of all, I was pointing out that because the forever Canada petition got submitted . . .

**Mr. Nenshi:** "I told you . . . to."

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Smith:** . . . before the new rules came into place . . .

**The Speaker:** No. Sorry, Premier.

You did ask the question. Let's hear the answer.

**Ms Smith:** As the forever Canada petition got filed before the new rules came into place, they had to operate under the old rules. The new rules applied to anyone who came after. I even met with Corb Lund, Mr. Speaker. He wanted to understand a little bit about the process. I will talk to anybody who is trying to understand the citizen initiative process and let them know how the rules apply.

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** Except, of course, she told them what to do before the law was in place.

### Immigration Policies

**Mr. Nenshi:** Now let's talk about immigration, similarly incoherent for the Premier. The Premier's first referendum question specifically talks about decreasing immigration after two years when she talked about increasing immigration until she saw her mentor Trump blame immigrants and thought: oh, great idea. Now she's talking again about increasing immigration, about getting more provincial nominees, about having better paths for temporary workers to get to permanent residency, which caused the problem in the first place. Should Red Deer still have a million people?

**The Speaker:** Order.  
The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, we have always been a province that welcomes newcomers. The question is: how many newcomers are we able to absorb? How quickly can we build schools? It takes us four years to build schools. It takes us 10 years to build a hospital. It takes four years to build an acute-care centre. We had 600,000 people, a city half the size of Calgary, come into our province in five years. That clearly was too many too quickly, and we weren't able to keep up and almost collapsed our health care and education systems. That's why we were seeking a mandate from the people to figure out a way to moderate those numbers, and I'm glad we got a mandate.

**Mr. Nenshi:** She got no mandate, Mr. Speaker. None whatsoever. The Premier's position on immigration, as always with this Premier, can most generously be called incoherent. She's never focused on what's right for Alberta but always on what she thinks is right for herself politically. The referendum was designed to get newcomer communities to vote for the UCP, and it has failed badly. It has soured immigrants on coming to Alberta and permanently damaged the UCP brand in the immigrant communities she was aiming for. Is that why suddenly she's pro immigration again?

**Ms Smith:** You know, Mr. Speaker, election denialism is a very serious problem in the rest of the world, and to have election denialism being spouted by the Leader of the Official Opposition is irresponsible and shameful.

He should go and look at the results, Mr. Speaker. We accept that the people passed judgment on the four constitutional questions we put forward, and they said: no, not at this time; not our priority. But go and look. It says that on those first five questions we actually did get a mandate, from about 53 per cent up to 58 per cent, and we will be acting on it.

**Mr. Nenshi:** A 1 per cent . . .

**The Speaker:** I will recognize you. You've just got to let it happen.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Sorry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Nenshi:** A 1 per cent mandate is no mandate at all. Losing badly on all the questions in all the urban areas in Alberta is no mandate at all.

Now, look, Manitoba and Quebec, as the Premier often reminds us, have better immigration deals with the federal government. But here's the thing: neither of those provinces wasted 200 million bucks on a divisive and wasteful referendum. What they had was leadership in the Premier's office sit down and make a deal, regardless of political advantage. The Premier never regrets anything, but does she at least regret not making a deal?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have a mandate from Albertans to go and negotiate a Quebec-Alberta style agreement. Quebec has had an agreement since 1991 where not only do they choose the temporary workers who are able to get permits, but they also have a pathway for permanent nominations so that they can become permanent residents, and they also have the ability to have some control over family class as well as other categories. That's the kind of deal that we need. We need to orient around the jobs that we're going to need. We're going to be building a lot of things, and we're going to need people to fill those jobs.

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

### Electoral Boundaries Committee Review

**Mr. Nenshi:** In the spring, Mr. Speaker, the Premier swore up and down that she wasn't about to gerrymander the electoral map. She swore that her government would not cheat to win. She said that she was only following recommendation 5 to save a couple of her MLA seats and make minor changes. Recommendation 5, remember, said: don't touch anything south of Airdrie. The map that we will soon have before us is a fully gerrymandered plan to cheat in the next election. Will the Premier go back on her promise to not cheat to win?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should be ashamed of himself. I have to question whether this question is even in order or if it's a matter of privilege. The members of this Assembly have not seen the report that he's talking about. It sounds to me like he has seen the report, and I have to question why he would have received the report in advance of the members of this Assembly. We're supposed to receive it on November 2. In addition, he is already prepositioning another election denialism, trying to preframe the results as if it's going to have an impact on the next election. He should apologize to this Chamber. [interjections]

2:00

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.  
The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Perhaps the Premier should watch her own committees because it's all public record now. I'm sorry she didn't know that.

That said, Lethbridge: wiped off the electoral map. The community of Springbank: carved up in two to help two UCP cabinet ministers win their marginal seats. A report that literally says that they got instructions from the government too late to change northeast Calgary the way the government wanted. Nothing about this was independent. The Premier should have known that because she was behind it. Everything about it

violates every democratic norm in Alberta. Why is the government so scared of fair elections?

**Ms Smith:** What a disgrace [interjection] . . .

**Mr. Hunter:** Point of order.

**Ms Smith:** . . . calling into question the integrity of our justices, calling into question the integrity of Justice O’Ferrall, an esteemed member of the higher court, calling into question the integrity of Judge Miller, who very clearly, on the recommendation of several members opposite and the two members of their initial committee said: increase the number of seats to 91. That was in the report, that was the marching order, and that’s what the new committee did.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:01.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Mr. Speaker, the government is going to ruin all their pearls by clutching them that hard. I lost five bucks because I bet that the Premier would actually be as good as her word, but Albertans have really lost big under this UCP government’s gerrymandering plan: urban voters having their voices diluted, rural voters being taken for granted, the people of Lethbridge being wiped off the map. I would say to the Premier that that’s the disgrace. No other Premier has ever cheated this way to win an election. How can the Premier think this is legal, acceptable, moral, or constitutional?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, no one is ever fully satisfied with what they see on the maps. I wasn’t satisfied that the committee arbitrarily changed the name of my riding from Brooks-Medicine Hat to Medicine Hat-Brooks. It didn’t seem to be necessary, but those are the kind of things that you just accept. What happens is you have to put on your big-boy pants, you’ve got to quit complaining, and you’ve got to start campaigning and stop trying to undermine the results of a report that hasn’t even been released in this Legislature yet. I think what we need to do is wait and see what the justice has recommended, and then we can debate it in this Chamber.

### 2026 Provincial Referendum

**Ms Pancholi:** Last week in one of her softly lit prerecorded videos the Premier said that the referendum gave her, quote, direction to ensure temporary residents pay a portion of the cost of public services used by themselves and their families. End quote. Except that’s not what the voters of Calgary-Bow said. They voted against charging temporary residents fees for health care or education. The people of Calgary-Bow deserve to know: will their MLA, the minister of education, respect their vote and oppose fees for education and health care, or will he support the Premier?

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

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I mean, as somebody who sat on the committee that developed the citizen-led initiative, very supportive of the opportunity for Albertans to have a say in things that matter to them, things that affect their lives. It is the truest form of true democracy, and we will continue to welcome individuals and newcomers to this province. We will prioritize that around economic immigration. We really know how impactful they are to building our economy as we continue to be the province of economic opportunity and growth.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, to quote the Premier, it looks like the minister of education needs to put his big-boy pants on.

It’s puzzling, Mr. Speaker. Why would any UCP MLA feel worried about publicly disagreeing with the Premier? The MLA for Red Deer-South openly defied her, and he is still a proud member of the UCP government caucus. That UCP MLA voted in favour of separatism, contrary to the Premier’s claims that all of her MLAs would support Canada, yet there he sits. No consequences at all. The minister of education should be able to confidently ignore the direction of the Premier and instead represent his constituents. Will he?

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

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, we asked Albertans their position. They had a resounding yes. They want to remain in Canada. As a proud Canadian, someone that wears the poppy every single day, along with every single member of this caucus we know the path forward is a united Alberta within Canada. It is really beyond the member opposite to be disparaging to individuals’ personal commitment to patriotism. We’ve been very clear that we believe in Canada. We love our home, we love our country, and we also love our province of Alberta. I hope members opposite can say the same thing and we can do so together.

**Ms Pancholi:** How awkward for that minister that not every member of his caucus can say that they actually do love Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this was the direct democracy that the UCP have been crowing about for years. I mean, sprinkled with a healthy dose of misleading and loaded questions and taxpayer-funded propaganda, but in that direct democratic exercise the people of Calgary clearly rejected the Premier’s agenda. They voted no to eight out of nine of their referendum questions, so do any of the Calgary UCP MLAs have the courage to stand up and promise their constituents that they will represent their wishes, not the Premier’s? Don’t worry. She won’t do anything to you. She’s already proven that.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, what Albertans . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Let’s let the answer start, and we’ll hear it.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, what Calgarians and Albertans have chosen was to say that they want to remain in Canada. They’re very proud of that. What they’ve said is that they want reform when it comes to immigration. We have a mandate for that. What they’ve said over and over and over again is that they do not want members opposite anywhere near the levers of power. They say it time and time again, and if members opposite think that they feel better suited than us, they’re welcome to go to the public with their position. We will have this conversation in an election. We’re very proud of the record we ran on for the past 18 months while we’ve had this conversation as Canadians. We’ve continued to see growth happen in this province and in this country. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. We only need to hear at this point from the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

### School Construction in Calgary-Shaw

**Member Campbell:** Mr. Speaker, Calgary-Shaw voters sent me here to be their advocate for their priorities. On every doorstep they told me to fight for and actually build the schools their kids need. They’re sick of seeing empty fields in their neighbourhoods where there should be schools, but in Walden, Legacy, Pine Creek, Wolf Willow, Yorkville, Silverado, and Belmont those fields still sit empty. Why has this government forgotten about Calgary-Shaw families who need schools for our growing communities now?

**The Speaker:** Congratulations to our newest member for this question.

The hon. Minister of Education and Childcare.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased to be able to continue to talk about the incredible success that we're having with the schools now program, a truly historic program to build and modernize 100,000 student spaces across the province. We're accelerating that plan, including projects in the member's riding and across the city and, in fact, across the province. Alberta has welcomed 90,000 new students in just four short years, and we've developed the schools now program to be able to accommodate that growth and build schools as quickly as possible.

**Member Campbell:** Given that 78 per cent of citizens in my riding voted in favour of staying in Canada and given that in the by-election voters told me they want schools, not wasteful, divisive, and expensive politics, but given that the UCP used government footage in that by-election from a school in north Calgary to try and trick people into thinking they were building schools in Calgary-Shaw, will the minister admit he's failed to build the long list of public schools that the children of Calgary-Shaw need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to talk about school projects that are under way in Calgary-Shaw. A new K to 9 Catholic school in Walden is under way. That's currently in the design phase. That will have capacity for 505 students. A new K to 5 school, also in Walden, is under way. That's also in the design phase. That'll have capacity for 590 students. And a new junior high school is under way ... [interjections]

2:10

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Hon. members, I can almost touch him — he's so close — and I can't hear what he's saying.

Minister, you've got 10 seconds left. Use it whatever way you want.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, just on brand, Mr. Speaker. The NDP is always angry.

Coming back to it, we're also moving ahead with a junior high school that's in the planning phase as well.

**Member Campbell:** Given that trying to destroy our country is the wrong set of priorities for Calgary-Shaw voters and a use of taxpayer money that didn't lay a single brick and given that the UCP tried those same tired talking points in the by-election and voters said, "Enough waiting; they want results" and given that the so-called approvals aren't actually physical classrooms our kids actually need, when will Calgary-Shaw parents get shovels in the ground on new schools in their communities, not designs?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it may come as news to the NDP, but of course before you can actually put shovels in the ground and start a school, you have to plan it. You have to design it. You have to ensure that the site is ready. You have to ensure that everything is in place, and then you can proceed. The planning, design, and construction phase that we have for school construction was recommended by the Auditor General to ensure that there is transparency and consistency over school projects, the distribution of funds, and to ensure that they're allocated properly. And we're following that. The NDP, though, wants to take a bizarrely different direction to build schools.

## Grande Prairie Police Service

**Mr. Wiebe:** Mr. Speaker, October 21 marked a historic milestone as Grande Prairie Police Service officially assumed command as Grande Prairie's city police service. The Grande Prairie Police Service has become Alberta's new municipal police service in over 70 years. Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services share how much Alberta's government has provided to support this transition and what this historic milestone means for local accountability and public safety for our residents?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It truly was a historic day in the city of Grande Prairie. I can tell you that Alberta's government was very proud to support the transitional funding to the tune of \$19 million to make sure that they have what they need to build something that is very strong for their community, something that is community led and focused on their local priorities. We're proud to support a tailor-made police service for the people of Grande Prairie.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his response. Given that building a municipal police service from the ground up requires substantial planning, collaboration, and a robust civilian governance through the Grande Prairie Police Commission and given that Alberta's government has been there every step of the way to help, can the minister tell us how this transition will enhance local specialized resources, increase community responsiveness, and maintain unwavering safety for our residents.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I was very proud of them. They were able to build this right from the ground up through planning and design. It really focused on the community priorities for the people of Grande Prairie, making sure that they had all the specialized services such as K-9 units, organized crime teams, and they're focused on, of course, the community response. Working alongside their RCMP in the county, I'm proud to say it really, truly was a collaborative effort between everybody involved.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that the provincial government's total financial backing has now reached approximately \$19 million, which played a critical role in advancing the transition and supporting of key capital operational milestones and including the integrated dispatch centre, and further given that this funding also helped to mitigate financial pressures and ensure the project remains on track towards completion, can the minister please explain how this ongoing partnership ensures that Grande Prairie families are protected today, tomorrow, and well into the future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Safe communities are really, truly the foundation of a strong Alberta within united Canada. I can tell you that the city of Grande Prairie established a very modern and accountable localized policing service. It's going to provide, really,

the foundation of community policing. It's going to provide local decision-making, which will be crucial as they move forward with the development of the Grande Prairie Police Service. Our government was very proud to support Grande Prairie on this journey, and I thank them for all the work they have done, including both MLAs within this building.

Thank you.

#### **Citizen-initiated Referendum Proposal Lawsuit**

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's attempt to abandon her separatist dance partners isn't fooling anyone. Since separatists helped sweep her into power, she's bent over backwards to help them, changing our laws three times, and then when the courts blocked them sending taxpayer-funded lawyers to argue in the separatists' favour. They're still there arguing on the public dime that we should be having a second referendum on separation, so to the Premier: if she's truly done with the separatists, prove it. Will she drop the case and stop forcing Albertans to pay to defend the separatists in court?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've said time and again that we are proud and relieved to hear that Albertans have chosen to remain in Canada. The message is clear that Albertans want a strong Alberta within a united Canada. We've also said time and again that we will do everything we can to protect and preserve our legislation, and certainly that includes when we need to defend that legislation in court. We'll continue to do that. We will continue the appeal because we need to correct the law. We think that there was an error, and we'll continue to appear to defend it.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, given that if the Premier is not in court to support the separatists, she must be doing it to fight First Nations given she's challenging the ruling that says they're constitutionally owed consultation before putting their rights to a vote and given that this weekend she'll happily share a stage with the leading lights of the separatist movement, but she couldn't be bothered to attend the historic First Nations first ministers' meeting this past Monday, it sure seems clear who the Premier favours, so will the Premier listen to Albertans who voted to remain in Canada alongside record numbers of Indigenous people and stop wasting their money to support separatists in court?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Justice minister.

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the member heard my first response to his question. The answer is yes. We support a strong Alberta within a united Canada. We support the outcome of the referendum, but let's be absolutely clear. The citizen initiative petition process needs to be simple, it needs to be streamlined, and it needs to allow for citizens to band together to bring important questions to their fellow Albertans. That was the purpose of the act. That's what we're defending in court, making sure that it remains available to Albertans to have important questions heard.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given that the process needs to be constitutional and given that it's crystal clear that no one in our province can trust this Premier given she claimed a Cherokee heritage when it was convenient but now disrespects First Nations at every turn and uses public dollars to fight them in court and given that after separatists helped put her in power, she bent over backwards to support them, also with public dollars, now she turns and betrays them, too. But, hey, she's also claimed to be a freedom-loving conservative, but she's utterly betrayed all of those values as well, so will the Premier

just be honest and admit her only government policy is to look out for herself?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to take this opportunity to talk about the fact that the government of Alberta since 2019 has invested more than \$1.8 billion in Indigenous communities within the province of Alberta, oftentimes filling the gap that the federal government should be taking over. Obviously, everybody knows about the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation and the incredible work that they're doing, and I can tell you this as well. The Pacific link pipeline is incredibly popular with Indigenous communities in this province, and they are looking forward to their participation.

#### **Emergency Medical Services**

**Ms Hoffman:** When you or someone you love is sick or injured, knowing that help is on the way when you call is the one thing that gives you hope; an ambulance with qualified paramedics who are trained to save lives. This summer Elaine Warren-Blais needed help. Her husband, a doctor, called for that help. It should have arrived within 12 minutes, but it took nearly 90. What does the minister responsible have to say to the Warren and Blais families for the chaos that the UCP have caused in health care and that ambulance delay?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of hospitals. No. One of the ministers of health. Sorry. You know.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, to any family that has suffered in any way, we have to give our hearts to them because it is – we have to make sure that we are doing everything we can. It is the instructions I've given to emergency health services to make sure that we have the most responsive ambulances going as quick as possible. We have seen improvements, but I'm not happy until they're even faster than they are currently. Since 2022 in Calgary we've gone from 4.7 hours to 1.6 hours in EHS crews ...

2:20

**The Speaker:** I apologize to the minister for not saying your title correctly.

**Member LaGrange:** That's fine.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. Given that in the middle of an emergency 12 minutes feels like a lifetime and 90 minutes could cost you one, given that the UCP wants Albertans to believe that new org charts and logos on the side of ambulances will solve the problems that they have caused in the health care system, will any of the health ministers over there admit that this government hasn't fixed a single thing but has made things far worse for families like Elaine's and that the government finally has to apologize and do things properly?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the members opposite, when they were in this position, actually drove hundreds of thousands of people away, so it was easier for them to provide health care. We have added over 700,000 people to our province. We're continuing to improve our systems. We added \$900 million in operating funding for our emergency health services. We've added more ambulances, more paramedics than

ever before. We've got \$145 million over three years for targeted ambulance deployment improvements, and that is working.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that Albertans have been very clear that better public health care is their priority, not a divisive referendum or American-style health care, and given that Alberta paramedics report that the number one reason for their sick leave right now is mental injury, one of the causes being showing up too late knowing that you might have been able to make a difference if you got there earlier – maybe you could have done more to help – will any of the health ministers over there admit that the chaos they have caused doesn't support workers and that it's one of the things resulting in increased sick leave, decreased morale, and an extremely strained group of paramedics?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is incorrect. Our paramedics, our first responders, stepped up in a big way at CFB Wainwright. They were there. They took responsibility. We saved lives. They saved lives. I can absolutely say that we have seen improvements in our emergency management services. We have added more ambulances, more paramedics. We are continuing to educate more, and we're going to do more. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

#### Health Care Services in Fort Saskatchewan

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government recently announced a \$12.5 million investment to expand surgical capacity at the Fort Saskatchewan community hospital, helping ensure more patients can receive care closer to home. This project will modernize key hospital spaces, increase capacity to meet the needs of a growing region, and support thousands of additional procedures per year. To the Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services: please share details about this important investment and how it will improve access to surgical care for residents in Fort Saskatchewan and surrounding communities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is making a \$12.5 million investment to expand surgical capacity at the Fort Saskatchewan community hospital, helping more Albertans get the care they need closer to home. That means, once complete, that these improvements will increase surgical capacity by nearly 50 per cent. That means there'll be an additional 3,000 surgeries being performed at that hospital. With renovations currently under way we're delivering on our commitment to expand access to surgical care, and we're going to reduce wait times for Albertans because that's what they deserve.

**The Speaker:** Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Albertans expect timely access to surgical care and given that reducing wait times and increasing capacity remain important priorities in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and across the province, to the same minister: can you please explain what the Alberta surgical initiative is and how it will benefit residents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and what actions our government is taking

to increase surgical capacity, reduce wait times, and improve patient outcomes and access to surgical procedures?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta surgical initiative has a clear mission. It's really about getting patients off wait-lists and into operating rooms much faster. In Fort Saskatchewan we're upgrading hospital spaces and expanding surgical capacity so more patients can get the care they need sooner. We're doing this right across the province. We're investing \$284 million over three years to modernize operating rooms, upgrade surgical facilities, and purchase new equipment because Albertans deserve timely access to the surgeries that they need. We are seeing those surgeries increase. We were at roughly about 285,000 pre-pandemic. We're at 330,000.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Given that access to family physicians and primary care providers is essential to keeping Albertans healthy and given that growing communities such as Fort Saskatchewan continue to seek increased demand for primary care services, to the Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services: can you please share what our government is doing to attract and retain more primary care providers in Fort Saskatchewan and help ensure residents can access the care they need close to home?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services.

**Mr. Wright:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to that member opposite for her strong advocacy for her home riding. You know, every Albertan does deserve primary care when and where they need it. That's why our government has taken decisive actions to ensure primary care is delivered in our rural and remote communities just like Fort Saskatchewan. We've invested in our northern Alberta medical program to ensure we're training physicians to service rural Alberta, and I can tell you that Fort Saskatchewan right now has primary care practitioners accepting new patients. There are 1,100 providers across Alberta that are delivering and accepting new patients when and where Albertans need them.

#### Provincial Priorities Act

**Member Kayande:** Mr. Speaker, in justifying the bizarre Provincial Priorities Act, the Premier said, and I quote: we need to change the relationship with the federal government because they are doing an end run around us. End quote. Look, Albertans prioritize living an affordable life, a government that's there when you need it and out of your way when you don't, and, above all, a health care system that works. But the Premier foisted upon Albertans a ridiculously expensive referendum on keeping Canada together. Does she have any regrets about wasting all that money while handing her government a thumping defeat?

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

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very odd for that member to be attacking the Provincial Priorities Act, an act that happily was passed by this government where its only invocation prohibiting federal dollars in Alberta was prohibiting the federal government from advertising the use of meth pipes to high school students in Medicine Hat. These are good policies. These are common-sense policies. These are the kind of things Albertans expect us to do, to listen to them, whether it be through the form of a referendum where we hear clearly

that they support and endorse Canada or they think children should not be encouraged to smoke meth. To the member opposite: do you think they should be smoking meth in high school in Medicine Hat?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister will direct his comments through the chair, as should everybody else in here, and I know that member knows that.

**Member Kayande:** Mr. Speaker, of course children should not be smoking meth.

Given that a referendum that would have split us from Canada included a bunch of other questions intended to push Albertans to support her weird constitutional obsessions and given that Albertans rejected her government in opposing her constitutional hobby horse and not a single riding in Calgary or Edmonton passed her constitutional questions, will the Premier listen to the voice of the people and repeal her pointless ...

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, through you to the member opposite, of course we always listen to the people, which is why we're sitting on this side of the aisle and you're sitting on yours, which is why we have heard clearly that we will continue happily to be Canadians within Confederation. We've heard from all of Alberta, not just Edmonton and Calgary, the position on immigration, where the Premier has said very clearly that we will be respecting the results of the referendum on all 10 questions. Members opposite, get on board. Albertans want to see us working together, defending our interests within Confederation as Canadians, including on the questions of a balanced approach to immigration. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Member Kayande:** Given that the Premier listens only if the people's voice agrees with her own and given that she'll never admit a mistake and given that her priority is constitutional sumo wrestling instead of the actual priorities of Calgary voters, which I will remind the members opposite are jobs, affordability, and health care, and given that in 52 ridings, which is a majority of the province, not a single one of her constitutional questions passed, how can she not repeal the sovereignty act that Albertans soundly and completely rejected?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

2:30

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy the member brought up jobs and the fact that Albertans' highest priority is being able to make sure they're employed and that we can drive the economy forward, but he's a member of a party who told Albertans who could not find jobs to move to B.C., who said that the Alberta advantage was done, who skyrocketed our debt so much that we could not even pay our bills, including our electricity bills. Will that member apologize finally for being a member of a party that completely destroyed the economy here in the province of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Health Services in Rural Alberta

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo residents required over 6,000 ambulatory visits outside the region, according to the most recent Alberta Health Services profiles. Constituents have to travel 450 kilometres each way to Edmonton

for care, often spending a full day on the road and hundreds of dollars on fuel, hotels, and restaurants.

To the Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services: is our government doing anything to reduce the need for Albertans to travel to major centres for health care, and are we succeeding in recruiting health care professionals to rural and remote communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services.

**Mr. Wright:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Where you live in this province should not determine the type of health care that you get. That's why we've made investments in our northern and southern Alberta medical programs to train physicians to service rural Alberta. It's also why we've done an amazing job at attracting new physicians to come to this province, where we are setting a record number of family physicians practising in this province. Also, it's why we're undertaking the largest scope of practice expansion and review in the province's history, with 26 of 28 medical colleges submitting proposals for us to review to expand services, just as we did with optometry on Monday.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the minister for that answer. Given that Alberta's growing population is increasing demand for nurses, paramedics, physicians, and other health care professionals, and given that this government has invested in Keyano College to expand their nursing and paramedic programs already, though other areas like the physician training still remain underutilized, to the same minister: will this government evaluate their health education offerings and maximize training opportunities in rural and isolated communities?

**Mr. Wright:** Mr. Speaker, we know that members of the health care workforce that train rurally will stay rurally. That's why we're taking the opportunity to invest in our northern and southern medical programs. That's also why we've made an investment of \$17.5 million for 132 future rural family physicians. It's also why we're reviewing the Alberta international medical program to ensure that graduates who are coming back to Alberta are prioritizing rural and remote Alberta to deliver the health care Albertans need when and where they need it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that many Albertans relying on government supports also living in rural remote communities must travel to access health care and it is given that some of these constituents are unable to travel by themselves – some don't have the family to get themselves to these health services, and they don't have the funds to pay for the travel – to our government: are there supports for those who do not have the financial means or the support of family or friends to get the health care they need in other centres?

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the member for the question. We recognize that getting to a medical appointment can be a significant challenge for Albertans in rural and remote communities, particularly those with limited incomes or without family support. That's why our government has prioritized investment in transportation services, such as through AISH travel benefits. On income support, Albertans can receive help with travel costs to access that medical care. Assistance with medical trips is also available to eligible low-income seniors through the special needs

assistance seniors program. Anyone facing these barriers can contact their local Alberta Supports. . .

### Support for Persons with Disabilities

**Ms Renaud:** For 50 years AISH has provided severely disabled Albertans income stability because we understood that these folks were permanently disabled and would be unable to support themselves financially. UCP brain trust dismantled AISH, told tens of thousands of people to get a job, while we have the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada and the lowest minimum wage. October is deemed Disability Employment Awareness Month. To the minister: how are you celebrating disability employment awareness month when, really, all you've done is cut their income, told them to get a job? There are no successful pathways.

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As normal, the NDP has got it completely wrong. In fact, our government is part of a government with record investments in disability supports, the highest in all of Canada. I'm proud to be a government where we've put our money to support Albertans. The AISH program continues as it always has. What we did that the NDP never did is that we indexed it to make sure that they keep pace with the cost of population and inflation. We won't take any advice from the NDP, who did nothing to help those who need extra help. I'm proud to be a part of a government who does.

**Ms Renaud:** Given Albertans with severe disabilities – this means all AISH recipients – deal with 40 per cent higher household costs and barriers that we'll never see, which are the reasons unemployment is sky high, given that this government has falsely claimed multiple times that AISH recipients really don't need the extra \$200 from the Canada disability benefit, that this is generous enough, will the minister explain how disabled Albertans are supposed to pay the rent – they're already using food banks – when you've cut \$400?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the NDP couldn't be more inaccurate. Every single member who was on AISH and those who were transferred to ADAP still receive the exact same amount that they have always received. They continue to get that benefit all the way through to the end of next year to allow for our workplace supports, our caseworkers, who work with every single individual, to find them the best support and the best place for work so that they can have a better future. Not only that, we are seeing tons of members with disabilities choose to go on ADAP because the benefit works better for them.

**Ms Renaud:** Albertans with severe disabilities deal with extraordinary household expenses such as medical equipment, assistive devices, personal care, adaptive transportation, medication, therapies. Given that we know Albertans with severe disabilities will require accommodation, assistive technology, or equipment in order to actually secure and keep employment, why does the minister believe awarding huge contracts to private companies with zero experience in the Alberta disability sector will produce anything more than an expensive referral system to marginally successful programs?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that is putting Albertans first. We care, and why we care is because we want to see them have the best life possible. That's why we have made record investments in the disability community, \$3.7 billion, all the way from their supports to workplace training and support

programs. We are helping them have the best future possible. We work with each and every one of them. We care for them. We will continue to care for them and provide for them. What we're doing beyond what the NDP did, which was nothing, is that we support our economy and make sure they have a job to go to.

### Health Care Services in Lethbridge

**Member Miyashiro:** Mr. Speaker, while the UCP government has wasted millions of dollars on a referendum that Albertans never asked for and was never part of their election platform, it has been playing *Let's Make a Deal* badly with health care services in Lethbridge. Instead of funding a long overdue cardiac catheterization lab, the government told our community that it had to show support by raising more than \$30 million locally for a project the government should have funded years ago. How will the UCP spend the \$30 million? What's the UCP's contribution? And when will the people of Lethbridge expect this lab to finally open?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a government we're very proud to have made the investment into Lethbridge, to say that there will be an expansion of the hospital to ensure that there is capacity for the cardiac cath labs when they come. We've made that commitment. We're going to continue to do the work to plan and actually execute on it, just as we have done in Red Deer, which the members opposite actually had cancelled the hospital expansion in Red Deer. Thank goodness they're not actually planning the one in Lethbridge. [interjections]

2:40

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West is the only one we should hear from now.

**Member Miyashiro:** Given that this government's health care staffing crisis has left Chinook regional hospital short of nurses, technologists, and specialists, causing service disruptions and cancelled surgeries, and given that the specialized workforce required for a cardiac catheterization lab cannot be created overnight, what specific plan does this government have to ensure this new unit is fully staffed with trained and experienced professionals from day one without worsening shortages elsewhere in the health care system?

**Member LaGrange:** Well, the member opposite just accused us of not building it. Now we are building it, which we are in fact definitely building it. Money is allocated in budget for it, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do exactly what we're doing in Red Deer. As we continue to build, we are building the capacity. We're building the workforce. We're attracting more physicians, more specialists, more health care aides, more nurses with expertise in those areas. I can see that in Red Deer we are ready and ramping up for our cardiac cath labs. I look forward to the same in Lethbridge.

**Member Miyashiro:** Well, given that I should just try this again and hope they answer a question, given that the UCP has also been playing *Let's Make a Deal* with the seven municipalities that provide integrated fire-EMS services, including Lethbridge, by forcing them to choose between higher property taxes and the threat of having ambulance services tendered out and given that the government has now extended the existing contracts through 2029, when can the people of Lethbridge expect this government to support local health care without forcing municipalities to bargain for services they already rely on?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, every day we support Lethbridge and every other community in this province getting excellent health care, including excellent EHS services. We're seeing improvements. We have got a record number of workforce. Whether it's doctors, whether it's nurses, whether it's ambulance paramedics, we're going to continue to increase on that. I'm very proud. And there's some embargoed CIHI data that I'm really excited to share in the days ahead.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will continue with Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

### Members' Statements (continued)

#### 2026 Provincial Referendum

**Dr. Elmeligi:** The results are in, and the people of Banff-Kananaskis have overwhelmingly voted to remain in Canada. The majority also voted no to eight of the nine other referendum questions. The people have been clear. The Premier and the UCP do not have a mandate to divide us or our country.

Even with diverse views across the communities of the constituency, I'm proud to be everyone's MLA regardless of how they voted. True leadership comes in celebrating those differences, being willing to have difficult conversations, and finding the common ground that binds us. Everyone who lives in my riding loves Alberta and where they live. There is an affinity to the land that is the essence of who we are.

We are also united in our frustration with this referendum in general. People are upset that we spent untold millions of dollars on a process that didn't address their priorities and that the UCP intentionally sowed division among us. Nineteen per cent of Albertans said that they stopped talking to a friend or family member because of the separatism question. Imagine that: families and friends torn apart by this government's insistence in stoking the flames of separation, facilitating this referendum, and driving a wedge between us all. Globally this is a common tactic for power-hungry, far-right political parties. When you divide the people, they can't rise up.

But the people of Banff-Kananaskis see through this. Do you hear the people sing, Premier? This referendum was never about separation or immigration or the Constitution. It was about the UCP retaining power and the Premier keeping her job. It cost us money, time, energy, and even relationships. But I hear the music of the people and the beating of the drums. We know we are stronger together. The people of Banff-Kananaskis stand with me. We will not be divided. We are united in our fight for a better Alberta and a better government when tomorrow comes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

#### Incident at CFB Wainwright

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Alberta's military liaison I have witnessed the dedication of those who serve across Alberta and the sacrifices their families make. In August I visited CFB Wainwright and met Canadian Armed Forces members training to serve our country.

Today we mourn four who will never come home: Sergeant Morgan Wong of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, Private Shaun Farrell, Private Aidan Goulding, Private Hayden Lykkemark of the 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. These four soldiers put themselves in harm's way, Mr. Speaker, joining a

family that will honour and remember them forever. Four Canadians who answered the call; four families' lives who will be changed forever. We will remember them.

Mr. Speaker, I would also recognize the 39 wounded service members, all of whom stood to defend our country. Every member of this House and I pray for a speedy recovery for each one of those members. Behind every uniform is someone loved, someone with plans for tomorrow, someone whose absence leaves a place that no one else can fill.

I want to recognize the firefighters, the paramedics, the health care professionals, the military personnel who responded under devastating circumstances. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces are the very best our country has to offer, and you saved their lives. The nation recognizes and thanks you for what you have done.

To the families grieving and to the injured facing a long road to recovery: Alberta stands with you. Our obligation will not end when headlines fade or when the flags return to full mast; neither should our support. May we honour the fallen soldiers for the rest of these days.

#### Grocery Prices

**Mr. Schmidt:** Anyone who's been to a grocery store lately knows that the price of groceries is out of control. A dozen eggs: \$5. A jug of milk: \$7. A pound of ground beef: \$10. Food is so expensive that instead of accepting gifts like skybox tickets to Oilers games, golden cats, or private Saudi flights, the UCP will instead be accepting bags of potatoes, cans of tuna, and tins of coffee.

Why are prices out of control? The answer is simple. Giant grocery retailers and food producers control the market and use their power to jack up prices. Superstore, Sobeys, Save-On-Foods all abuse real estate law to prevent independent grocers from setting up shop on their turf and competing with them. Meat packers collude to jack up prices so that every time you buy a package of frozen burgers, the price you pay is far higher than it should be. The grocery giants rig the market against us, and the result is higher prices at the checkout.

Governments should act to fix broken markets and protect us from higher prices, but this UCP government is giving the food giants multimillion-dollar subsidies. Saputo, the dairy giant, got nearly \$5 million. JBS: \$11 million. McCain will get more than \$60 million. This means that Albertans pay the food giants twice, once when they buy their groceries and again when they pay their taxes.

The answer to grocery price inflation is simple: prohibit grocery retailers from using real estate law to insulate themselves from competition. Crack down on price-fixing by the food producers. A fair food market produces fair food prices. The Alberta NDP will bring down the price of food by working for families, not the food giants.

#### Latin American Heritage Month

**Member Tejada:** October is Latin American Heritage Month, and as a Salvadoran Canadian I'm especially honoured to celebrate the rich diversity of the Latino community in Alberta representing over 22 countries, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and hundreds of Indigenous languages. I was honoured to attend many events in Calgary this month, including the Calgary atlas project *El Mapa Latinoamericano* created by the Calgary Institute for the Humanities at the University of Calgary, Central Latino, and SpanicArts. The history and beautifully illustrated map told the story of Latin American contributions and community building in Calgary and by extension Alberta, from Mexican charros dating back to Stampede in 1912 and subsequent waves of immigration

that brought my Caribbean, South American, and Central American brothers and sisters to their new Canadian home.

2:50

The Latin American community has adjusted to these colder climes and contributed workers, artists, educators, entrepreneurs, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and, most of all, a community that is constantly evolving and creating spaces and belonging from southern to northern Alberta. It reminds me that we are treaty people and that unless we are Indigenous to these lands, we have a shared history of immigration that has helped shape Alberta's story, that we are all threads woven into the rich tapestry of this place, and that we all contribute to its beauty and vitality. We belong here. [Remarks in Spanish] Happy Latin American Heritage Month. [Remarks in Spanish]

Thank you.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 35, Education and Childcare (Securing Parental Involvement) Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, sponsored by the hon. Minister of Education and Childcare; Bill 36, Children and Family Services (Supporting Alberta Families) Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, sponsored by the hon. Minister of Children and Family Services; and Bill 37, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, sponsored by the hon. Government House Leader and Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

#### Bill 34

#### Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce Bill 34, Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. This bill will strengthen consumer protections and put common sense first.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 34, Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mrs. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise with the requisite number of copies of a unanimously passed resolution I presented at the Council of State Governments to recognize the value of Canada-U.S. agricultural free trade.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an article that I referred to yesterday in question period entitled Alberta Premier Says UCP Must be Pro-Canada, Separatists Can 'Join A Different Party'.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Amery, Minister of Justice, pursuant to the Legal Profession Act Law Society of Alberta 2025 annual report.

**The Speaker:** That takes us to points of order, and while one was indicated earlier, that was withdrawn. Thank you, everyone. One accident-free day.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 33

#### Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2)

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

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased, as always, to rise and move second reading for Bill 33, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2).

Now, like all justice statutes amendment acts, there are a number of changes that are being proposed through this legislation. Most notably, this bill puts fairness back at the centre of merit-based hiring while making some practical improvements to Alberta's justice system.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, I'll speak first to the proposed amendments to the Alberta Human Rights Act. These amendments to the Alberta Human Rights Act, if passed in Bill 33, will support a merit-based approach to hiring. Our government firmly believes that public-sector jobs should always be given to the most qualified and best people for the job, and that's why our government is doing away with the preferential hiring and promotion practices within public bodies.

But I also want to make something clear, Madam Speaker. The amendments would ensure that hiring or promotion decisions will continue to be subject to the same existing human rights protections regarding the duty to accommodate and the ability to rely on bona fide or good-faith occupational requirements like they always have been wherever reasonably necessary. Now, this is very important.

Bill 33 would also establish neutrality principles for hiring and workplace training. Mandatory training would need to have a clear connection to someone's job responsibilities. Now, in other words, Madam Speaker, the kind of mandatory DEI training in the workplace will no longer be needed, will no longer be allowed. It's simple. Public bodies need to spend their time focusing on preparing people to do the job effectively and not requiring them to do things they don't necessarily need to do. These changes would support respectful workplace practices and impartial, effective provincial bodies that attract and retain the most qualified candidates to deliver the high-quality services that Albertans deserve.

Whether someone is entering the workforce, pursuing a promotion, or changing careers, our government believes that everyone, regardless of their background, should have a fair opportunity to demonstrate what they can contribute. Madam Speaker, we hear it time and again. Every person applying for a job simply asks for a fair shake when they're assessed on their merits, their competence, their skills, and their experience, and that's what Bill 33 is going to do.

Now, finally, Madam Speaker, Bill 33 will make some amendments to other justice-related legislation, including the King's Counsel Act and the Court of King's Bench Act as well. Under the King's Counsel Act amendments will expand the eligibility for King's Counsel appointments to ensure that lawyers who've made significant contributions to Alberta's legal system are not disadvantaged because of things like parental leave or other types of leave. To put that into a little bit of context, lawyers must demonstrate a certain number of years at a minimum to qualify for application to become a King's Counsel appointee.

Bill 33 would do away with some of that time lost for families who are taking time away from the legal profession in order to raise a family or for other types of appropriate leave, which would help foster an environment where parents who have to take the time off or who want to take the time off to raise a family do not lose valuable years when they come to apply for a King's Counsel designation. Currently the periods away from the practice are not counted towards the years required to be eligible for the King's Counsel designation. We're changing that here with Bill 33, Madam Speaker. I'm proud of this change, and I know that it will benefit so many lawyers in this profession.

Finally, amendments to the Court of King's Bench Act would further support our efforts to strengthen the family justice system through the family-focused protocol in the Alberta Court of King's Bench. This will ensure that family and divorce proceedings continue to be resolved through a family-focused approach.

Madam Speaker, that concludes my brief remarks on the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2). Together Bill 33 reflects our commitment to a justice system that is effective, accountable, and focused on serving all Albertans. It also reflects our commitment to giving everybody a fair opportunity to apply and to compete and to be considered for jobs in our public sector. I hope that members of the Assembly will support the good work of Bill 33.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 33. Thank you.

3:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak to this bill. The bill does a lot of things. I think what's worth beginning with here – because why not start with the positive of what it gets right? This bill makes significant amendments to an act that was actually brought in by – oh, he's not here. Oh, right. Sorry. My apologies. Yes. Good point.

An act that was brought in by a UCP private member while I was the Minister of Justice, which was passed at the time because at that time we used to work together in this place. This bill amends that act, and basically, it includes several forms of altered intimate content. The original bill protected women and children from the distribution of intimate images, which was obviously important enough that I supported it at the time, and I think it is incredibly important. These amendments include several forms of altered AI content, which I think in light of the modern times in which we are living is very important. It includes threats of distributing images to get people to do things. I think that is also incredibly important. It includes provisions that indicate that a person can consent and then revoke their consent. This is in sexual assault law as well. Also very, very important. Quite progressive, actually. So yeah. That's really good.

It also creates a reverse onus, which I think is important enough to sort of talk about. So if someone has shared an image with another party, it's not assumed that they lose their expectation of privacy and it's also explicitly assumed that they did not consent to

the distribution or alteration of those images. That is very, very important and, again, surprisingly progressive. There are some questions that I will have later in my speech around how they're handling liability here that I'm hoping the Minister of Technology and Innovation, who I think was the person who was speaking to this aspect of the bill in the media, is able to answer, or maybe the Minister of Justice. I don't actually care which minister as long as there are answers.

Then, finally, it creates a provincial offence for distributing such content. So in addition to having, like, a civil liability remedy, there is actually a provincial offence. All of those are actually very important things. They are protecting the people of our province, including children, from some incredibly bad actors who would seek to do them some very intense harm that would follow them the rest of their lives, so that piece of the bill is incredibly important.

There are many other things in the bill, but also included in the bill is the UCP's ugly politics and the degree to which the one thing does not relate to the other is difficult to overstate. At the same time that we are protecting people, we are also attacking people and seeking to turn them against one another. It's a weird thing to cram into a bill. I mean, the UCP lost their referendum. They lost the thing that they were using to drive a wedge between Albertans and to turn Albertans on each other and distract them from the fact that they haven't bothered to turn up for work or do anything that is important to the people of Alberta in five years, and it's, honestly, incredibly troubling. It's incredibly disgusting. It solves a problem that no one asked them to solve and which does not exist.

Like there's data on this. No such problem exists, but here they are solving a problem that doesn't exist. Why would they do that while they refuse to solve the problem of skyrocketing costs, while they refuse to solve problems around unemployment, while they refuse to solve increased income disparity, while they refuse to solve the problems they've created with their – what is it now? – 21 different health agencies that they have managed to create, while they refuse to do anything to address the problems in our classrooms that continue to persist a year after they forced teachers back to work? They do nothing on any of those problems. Instead they create problems that they purport to solve, basically in order to divide Albertans and turn them against each other in the hopes that they won't notice the actual source of their problems, which is the UCP.

With that said, I am going to move an amendment to refer this bill to committee because I think that the Legislature having to vote on this bill as one omnibus piece is absolutely abhorrent.

Oh, here we go. Okay. That's the signed copy. So I'll give one to – here you go. And I will wait for that to reach you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Perfect.

This will be known as amendment REF1. Hon. member, you may proceed.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that Bill 33, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2), be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

This is what is normally referred to as a referral amendment. The intention here is to have further study of this bill completed because this subject matter doesn't belong together, and the Legislature deserves to discuss these issues in different ways and at different times. I think that this is an incredibly important issue, Madam Speaker.

Let me say that the changes the government is making with respect to protection of women and children around – and men, too. Sorry. I guess it can cut both ways. My apologies. That was not very

progressive of me. The protection of people of this province is incredibly important. To pair it with this just ridiculous narrative of the UCP's, that somehow it is the fault of women, of minorities, of immigrants, of trans people, of whoever it is they've chosen to blame today that the UCP can't show up and do their jobs, is really offensive. This sort of divisive rhetoric is incredibly problematic, but it's also problematic in its substance. There are about a million ways in which this is problematic in its substance.

This piece doesn't deal with the UCP. It doesn't deal with them trotting around and saying this ridiculous stuff about how unless the result is all White men, it's not merit-based, about their own selves. They want to expand that to everyone else, so they're binding municipalities, who they apparently did not talk to about whether or not they wanted to be so bound. They claim that this is about agencies, but it expands well beyond the scope of provincial agencies. Municipalities are creatures of provincial statute. It extends to all creatures of provincial statute. It extends to AHS, which I think is likely to be problematic in light of the fact that physicians are actually required to train in a differential presentation of symptoms in people of different genders and races because people were dying. People were dying, so in order to be competent doctors, they need to know that symptoms present differently in different people, and apparently the UCP doesn't think that's important.

3:10

There's also a problem because police services are explicitly bound by this. I would love to hear from the minister of public safety on this because I know that he is acutely aware of this issue. In order to police in different communities that are heavy immigrant communities – in communities in northeast Calgary, north Edmonton, south Edmonton – on Indigenous reserve, it is really important, for communication to flow properly in both directions, that there are officers who are representative of different cultural groups who are joining the police service. This has been a problem that the Association of Chiefs of Police has been working to address since I was the minister. So this is 12 years ago. This would prevent them from that, so it will make our communities less safe. I would love to hear what the minister of public safety has to say about that.

It also revokes, which is peculiar, I would say, a power that the minister gave himself to approve all the grants for the Alberta Law Foundation. It's worth talking about what the Alberta Law Foundation is because it is not the minister and the UCP's money. It is money that is interest on lawyers' trust accounts. It does not belong to them, and their appropriation of it is, in my view, very inappropriate. So the minister gave himself power to deny grants. Certainly, the feeling of the people on the ground is that his denial of grants was targeted at certain things like gender diversity or Indigenous people. He has revoked that power now, presumably because his intervention got so bad that everyone who worked for the organization quit, so he has presumably taken over the organization and therefore no longer needs this power.

But Madam Speaker, this organization did phenomenal work, and that money went to organizations that do things like domestic violence prevention, sexual assault prevention training. These were important goals that the minister decided were not as important as him appropriating this money. I appreciate that this fixes that temporary grabbing of power, but those people who worked at that organization, many of them for multiple decades, like, 30 or 40 years, because that was such a good organization doing such phenomenal work, are still gone. They still had to leave their jobs because the moral injury from this government's actions was so bad. So this absolutely doesn't fix what they did.

The public-sector transparency piece of it, honestly, seems fine to me. They preserve disclosure if someone moves provincial

agencies, which seems like a small problem to be solved, but of course, because the government spends all of its time reorganizing health care agencies into various new configurations and none of its time solving actual problems, this actually hits a lot of people because everyone works for a new agency every three months because if they stop shuffling the deck chairs, someone might notice that they're not actually doing anything to improve health care.

It also changes applications before masters, moves them to the court. I actually think that's probably good.

It reduces the time to get a QC. So there are two things in here. One is that it would allow someone to go on a maternity leave and still preserve their years of tenure. This is actually a real problem because even though law schools graduate 50 per cent women, by the time you get 10 years out in the profession, that isn't reflected anymore. It's like less than 30 per cent of the profession at that point because women atrophy out of the profession much, much faster. That makes it challenging to have sort of gender balance, and this will help. This will help correct that problem. It will help with gender balance on the bench and potentially gender balance in terms of who gets a KC.

The deep irony of putting a provision like this in an act that basically says that us recognizing that women, you know – in the one breath the act denies that there are any historical barriers and asserts that the producing of White men as judges, as legislators, as CEOs of a company, almost to the exclusion of everyone else, is a merit-based system. Like, that's what they're trying to claim, that if we recognize that other people have merit, that's not a merit-based system.

The irony of doing this at the same time is not lost on me, but I will say that the specific provision here, which is the opposite of the provisions they're doing in the main, is actually very good.

They do, however, shorten the time to five years, which feels a little like a government that wants to hand out candy to curry favour amongst lawyers who are very upset by this government's basically disposing of constitutional norms and procedural rules and basically, well, the systems that govern us. This feels like the minister trying to buy back some of that support with KC designations, and I'm not sure I love that.

It also alters how appeals work for decisions of the Law Society. Honestly, I will ask my questions. I will not anticipate an answer, but I will ask them anyway. It moves those appeals from – previously it was the benchers decided and you could appeal to the benchers. Now it moves those decisions from the benchers to you can appeal to the court. Previously you would appeal to the benchers and then it would go to the court by way of judicial review, so it kind of like removes a step, essentially.

I'm a little curious why it also changes certain rules. It's a bit legislatively complicated because this act amends the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 – we amend a lot of justice statutes in this Legislature; it seems to be like our full-time jobs over here – which has not yet been fully implemented. It amends an amending act which is also amending the actual act, so it gets confusing. Normally, it would seem procedural. The reason I'm concerned is that the amending act it amends is the one in which the minister chose to exempt himself from the rules of ethics and competence that apply to the rest of us as normal lawyers, so that is a bit troubling.

The questions I wanted to ask, specific to, again, the part of the bill that I think is good, which is the protection of people from the distribution of intimate images, are around some of the onus pieces. The act doesn't appear to be retroactive or retrospective. I'm curious, like, why that choice was made. I know that there is generally a presumption against that. We don't do it whenever we can avoid it, but this is actually far more important than many of the

other things that the UCP has done where they were cheerfully willing to be retroactive or retrospective to achieve their partisan aims. I'm curious why it wouldn't be done in this instance.

I would also like to ask about some of the pieces around joint and several liability. I know. Fascinating stuff, Madam Chair. This sort of arises – it protects all people, but it arises out of a case in Manitoba that dealt specifically with children. There are provisions in here that specifically deal with not holding parents of the defendant jointly and severally liable. I'm confused as to why because those victims deserve compensation, and the children, who were the perpetrators, don't generally have money. So, yes.

3:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just for the sake of procedural ease next time, move your referral motion at the end of your speech, as the referral motion is, once it's moved, meant to just be speaking to the reasons why you want to move it to committee; but I understand what you're doing. We got the words in in the time, but next time do it the other way around.

The hon. Minister of Justice on the referral motion.

**Mr. Amery:** On the referral motion. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for that statement.

I want to correct the record. I rise to correct a number of incorrect statements that were made and advise the Assembly as to why this amendment needs to be voted down.

Now, the member talked in great detail about the reasons why the amendment should be supported, quoted a number of areas in the bill, much of which was actually incorrect, Madam Speaker. I thought I'd take the opportunity to speak to members of the Assembly about why that is.

Now, we talked a little bit, in my presentation on the bill in second reading, about the focus on Bill 33 moving public-sector bodies towards merit-based hiring. Imagine that concept, Madam Speaker, and imagine the NDP being opposed to hiring the best people for the best positions. Nobody would dispute that in the real world, Madam Speaker. Nobody who is seeking the job wants the job because of a characteristic, a personal characteristic, but rather because he or she is the best for that particular job. At the very minimum, Madam Speaker, we would expect that from the NDP, but we certainly do not see that in the real world where people say: I wanted the job and I got it because of some characteristic that had nothing to do with my skills and competence, but rather because of something else.

I dispute that wholly, Madam Speaker, and I know that there are a number of examples that come out where people are denied the ability to apply for a particular position not because they are not competent or skilled or the best for the job but because they don't have some qualification that they need, and we think that's patently inappropriate here in this province. We think that Albertans are proud of the ability to apply for a particular position because, again, they are the best people for those positions and not because of a characteristic that has nothing to do with that particular application.

Now, let's talk a little bit about what the amendment seeks to do for just a moment. The amendment wants to put the entire bill on hold while the Member for Calgary-Mountain View studies it. That is inappropriate given how important the terms of this bill are. We talk about giving credit for families in the legal profession for taking time off to raise their kids, for example, and how that should not impede upon their ability to apply for a King's Counsel designation. Let's talk about that for just a second.

King's Counsel designation recognizes some of the most extraordinary lawyers in our province, and the fact of the matter is that it doesn't, as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View said,

reduce the number of years that an individual has to practise it before being eligible. In fact, it says "at least 5 years as a member of the Bar of Alberta," plus a minimum of "5 years consisting of one or [more of a] combination of the following," and then it goes on to say what qualifies as being eligible for those additional 5 years. It remains 10 years at a minimum, Madam Speaker, and it, in fact, expands the eligibility to include those that have practised in another province, in another Commonwealth jurisdiction, or in areas like the United Kingdom, for example, Northern Ireland, and a number of different other Commonwealth jurisdictions that would make one eligible.

It is a major expansion of the eligibility criteria that recognizes remarkable lawyers who come from other provinces, for example, or other Commonwealth jurisdictions. I can't imagine for a second why the Member for Calgary-Mountain View would criticize that.

Now, we talk about Bill 33 and its expansion of the role of applications judges in family law matters. Historically application judges do not deal with family law matters. Bill 33 would give those application judges the opportunity to hear family law motions, applications, et cetera, which would move things through the family law system quicker. The amendment before us today by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View seeks to put that on hold. That is ridiculous. We need family law matters to move as quickly as possible. We need families to get the closure that they deserve, and Bill 33 would create more avenues for us to be able to do that.

We talked a little bit about the digital images and what Bill 33 does to protect people who are the victims of intimate digital image distribution. Again, the amendment seeks to put that on hold. Bill 33 would move forward with severe penalties for people who are distributing inappropriate images across digital means. It is completely ridiculous to say that we should put that on hold. Albertans deserve better than that, Madam Speaker. We will not accept any suggestion from the NDP to put things that are this important on hold for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View's ego.

Finally, I want to talk a little bit about the ALF comments, the Alberta Law Foundation. The Alberta Law Foundation receives interest from the pooled trust accounts of various lawyers and law firms across Alberta and distributes it to organizations to provide front-line legal services. Now, for a little while we had serious concerns about where that money was going. As a matter of fact, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View's dear friend used to serve as a board member on that particular foundation. Through a number of different issues that arose, Madam Speaker, we learned that not only was that board dysfunctional, but that board awarded severance contracts worth millions of dollars to Alberta Law Foundation employees in secret. Not even the law society knew about that, and that is, again, wholly inappropriate. So for that member to defend the conduct of the former board member is highly inappropriate.

The moves that we made to protect the Alberta Law Foundation's money and the Alberta Law Foundation's credibility and reputation were absolutely essential. I'm pleased to report to members of the Assembly and to Albertans that we've made significant changes to ensure that the board now is functioning as it should and that it is doing exactly what it was intended to do. It is supporting organizations all across this province with transparency and accountability at the forefront of everything that it does. All of these good things that Bill 33 seeks to do would be put on hold if the Assembly voted in favour of this amendment, and I think that would be completely and patently wrong.

I hope that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View votes to shut down this ridiculous attempt to hold Bill 33 from proceeding and let it go through because it provides so many good things for this province. I seek all members' support in (a) voting down this amendment and (b) supporting Bill 33 when it comes to voting on second reading.

Thank you very much.

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

**Ms Chapman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I actually do agree with the Justice minister. There are many things in this bill that are important, of course, not the least the changes that they are looking to make around the Intimate Content Protection Act. One does wonder, though, if these changes are so critical and so timely that this minister and his government have waited until the final year of their term to bring them to the Legislature. If, in fact, these are so necessary, one would think this would have been bill 1 for this government. They could have brought this legislation three and a half years ago.

Now, I have actually risen today to speak in support of the motion that my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View put forward to send this bill to committee. There is actually an important reason for us to consider further study on this bill. Timeliness is not the only thing that we look to when we consider legislation.

3:30

In this case, I would suggest it's not so much about delaying because, as I have said, there are very important pieces in this bill, and there are pieces of it that we are absolutely in support of and want to see move forward. What has happened here is, you know, an increasing trend certainly in this Legislature, but it's happening in others, too, of the use of omnibus bills.

Fundamentally, I think that there is a real problem with omnibus legislation. The *Canadian Parliamentary Review* defines an omnibus bill as one that is "characterized by the fact that it has a number of related but separate 'initiatives.'" Madam Speaker, it's not simply a matter of a piece of legislation attempting to do multiple things or make multiple amendments to an act. There are plenty of occasions where it would be appropriate to bring forward a piece of legislation that might have to, you know, amend a couple of different acts at least to get to its purpose.

Omnibus as a legislative mechanism, whether it's a good or bad thing, is certainly something that is still up for debate. Certainly, omnibus can do what the minister referenced, which is to speed up the work of a Legislature. I would suggest that's not really an issue for this government. When they want to speed up the work of this Legislature, they simply pull the lever of time allocation to make sure that we are pushing through bills as quickly as possible.

I think that the best criticism of omnibus legislation is when it does not work inside a unifying theme or purpose. I have watched several poorly constructed omnibus bills march by in my few years in here, and so one of the first things that I look at now when a bill is introduced is just how many acts it's looking to amend. If it's more than three – ruh-roh – we're going to have a problem there.

Bill 33, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2) amends eight pieces of legislation. This bill amends the Alberta Human Rights Act, the Court of King's Bench Act, the Education Act, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, the King's Counsel Act, the Legal Profession Act, and the Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act. Oh, and one more: the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. If you are asking yourself: what possible unifying theme could those eight pieces of legislation possibly have? They don't. There isn't one because that's not what this bill is trying to do.

This bill is trying to do about six different things. Are some of those things necessary? Yes. Absolutely. Do we agree with all of those things? No. Probably not. Should we be able to discuss and debate each of the very important issues inside this bill? Yes. Absolutely, and that's why what we are suggesting is that we refer this bill to committee so we can have exactly these type of

conversations. What is the most fair way for us to discuss the content matter of this bill?

I know that's maybe not the most popular thing to do, right? The popular thing to do is this silly political wedging and drama, and we're going to shove a whole bunch of things in here and then you're going to have to support it and look like dummies either way. Okay. We get it. We've seen it before. I don't think that we're fooling anyone when we do something like that. I think that Albertans are too smart for that. That political move aspect, really, I do find is the most insulting part of this bill because the enshrining of essential protections for victims of sexual abuse, and particularly for children, really isn't something we should be playing politics with, Madam Speaker. That should be something that is in its own separate, stand-alone bill.

I don't think that there are clear lines to be drawn between all the different pieces in this legislation. For that reason, I encourage members of this House to please vote in favour of this amendment. Let this bill go to a committee where we can not hold it up but where we can do the work that's required to really turn out a well-crafted and thoughtful piece of legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mr. Dyck:** Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Speaker. Really appreciate the time here today. I rise to speak in support . . . [interjections] Mrs. Speaker? Madam Speaker?

**An Hon. Member:** Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Dyck:** Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to rise in support of Bill 33. I also oppose the amendment. I do believe that Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2) is an important bill. I'm going to get into that a little bit, a couple of areas that this really covers, and they share some important goals. Albertans need to trust these institutions that serve them, and this is a way to also support that.

I just want to quickly talk about a couple of things here. One is just merit-based hiring. I think this is really important as we talk about this. I'm going to just talk about an example. I love music. One of the things that I was going to actually pursue before jumping into business was a professional career in music. I played classical guitar for many years, and I was heading towards university for it. Back in the day one of the things that orchestras did was that they realized that they had a talent challenge. So instead of just hiring predominantly men, they said: "We're going to put up a screen, and we're going to listen to who plays best. Instead of just making a distinction on who we expect to be the best, we want to actually retain and grow our orchestra and be able to acquire the best musicians." So what they did was that they put up a screen, and they listened to the music. Through that they were actually able to hire the very best people, some of which surprised people back in the '50s and '60s.

In the same way, we are utilizing this piece of legislation to say that, hey, we want to make sure that the very best people are hired based upon their skill sets and based upon the merit of what they're bringing to the table. This is important because this has been something that has continued to be able to see expanded across music, and the very best people get to play. As I said, in the same way this is an opportunity. We've seen that grow across music with the best people getting to play. In the same way, we're borrowing that in government to say that the very best people are going to be in our government and across all of our opportunities here within.

I also just want to talk about the Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act. We've seen with AI that there's lots of conversation around this right now and many images being created, but we also want to protect those people. We want to be able to protect Albertans, to have strong protections for them so that intimate images cannot be created and distributed without their consent. This is a big deal. We're creating an opportunity for them to be able to have a fine of up to \$10,000 and also potential imprisonment for up to two years or both. We really are creating an opportunity for Albertans to be protected, for them to be able to have strong opportunities within the law as we continue to see the growth of AI, and also for these images of people to be not distributed without their permission.

This is a great bill for our province and for Albertans. To just kind of wrap up on a couple of items here, the message truly, I think, is that as there are opportunities for images to be changed, as well, without people's permission, we need a structure and strength of government and legislation for people to be able to strongly rely upon, and this is what this bill does: to be able, for people as they're utilizing this, to have protections based around this piece of legislation. I think this is a good choice, and I think Albertans are going to be here with us, too, on this. Those are just a couple of things that I think are really important for the public to be able to understand and know.

I'm all for this, and I look forward to the Assembly voting against this amendment but also voting for the Justice Statutes Amendment Act. Thank you.

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

3:40

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to speak to the referral amendment that was made by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View requesting – I'll quote it here – that “Bill 33, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2), be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.”

Now, that's a lot for somebody who maybe doesn't work under the dome every day. I'm going to interpret that a little bit. Essentially, what we're asking to do here is to take a very substantive omnibus bill and rather than continue to keep it here on the floor and debate, as my colleague mentioned, eight different acts that are contained within Bill 33, instead take it to committee, unpack each of those in their kind of individual due, give it the attention required so that we can make sure that the very best bill is brought back into the Chamber so that the entire Legislature can vote on it.

Already the member opposite has unpacked the individual pieces of the bill. What we're talking about here with the amendment is not necessarily individual pieces of Bill 33 that one may like or disapprove of. Instead, it is the use of an omnibus bill to present such critical pieces of decision-making that impact Albertans.

What I think is just really important to drive home about these omnibus bills is that we as decision-makers cannot vote on each of its components one by one. As my colleague from Calgary-Beddington very eloquently pointed out, this covers a great diversity of content from the different statutes that it's actually looking to amend. There is no guiding theme. There is no one principle. One might expect when we are trying to talk about a series of changes, a series of amendments to different bills in a single package, that there would be some kind of connective thread between all of those, but this is not what's happening here.

It is not the first time that the UCP have kind of manipulated the use of omnibus bills to cover such vast territory in terms of statutes where perhaps they are going to play some political gamesmanship and kind of force the hand of the debate to talk about things that are not necessarily of critical importance for Albertans.

Some of the content in here is absolutely critical. There have been multiple justice statutes amendment acts since I have been here, since 2023. Multiple times has the UCP government come to amend something like the Citizen Initiative Act to help facilitate and roll out the red carpet for a separatist referendum that we have just gone through. If protecting the intimate images of individuals from sextortion and deepfakes was so important, there were many opportunities to debate that before today.

They are the government, Madam Speaker. They can control what comes onto this floor. If they are truly reflecting the priorities of Albertans, then that would have been a topic of conversation much sooner than October 2026, a year out from the next election.

What I think Albertans want from us as decision-makers and as legislators: yes, do the work quickly, but do the work well. What the amendment to Bill 33 is seeking to do in referring it to committee is to make sure that we are doing the work well, because this conversation will be happening once again in 12 or 18 months because we didn't give it the attention that it is due. That is precisely what committee is for.

I think that the kind of cynical angle on some of this is that the UCP wants to suggest that merit currently doesn't have a place in our current hiring practices and that this is addressing a critical issue that, you know, has really been keeping people up at night. I don't think that's necessarily the case. But embedding it in Bill 33 is forcing a conversation that, as far as I can tell, is a deep affront to our public service workers and, frankly, is also a deep affront to the people who have been exploited, who have been assaulted, who have been harassed as a result of nonconsensual sharing of images that, frankly, should have had a stand-alone bill.

The technology is not new. It has been with us for a long time. The flags have been raised long before today to address what has become a deeply harmful practice and particularly exploitative for young women online. I think that this demeans that cause in a way that victims and survivors deserve better.

With that, I'm pleased to be able to support the referral amendment for Bill 33 introduced by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View and encourage everyone to do the same.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak for the first time in this fall session on the amendment to Bill 33 to not have this Bill 33 – to have it moved to committee and not be read this second time at this moment. This is an instructive moment, I think, for all of us to consider. When constructing bills, we want to ensure that we have clarity of purpose. Bills are very often dealing with very important issues, sometimes urgent issues that need to be addressed. I think there are definitely some things in that category in this bill. But to lump it together with such a diversity of other things – right? – simply defies the logic of how you should construct a bill to have it passed in a timely manner and in a clear sort of way.

My colleagues have described very well just how important the intimate content protection is in our day and age. We've seen now for a number of years where people are using social media to transmit or post inappropriate distribution of intimate images, using those for extortion – videos, images, and so forth – blackmail involved, and then character assassination, too. Now with AI this is even more of an issue than ever.

Now, the gravity of that is apparent and obvious. Many jurisdictions across Canada and around the world have built protections for people and make sure that there are penalties, serious penalties, including jail time and financial penalties. We need to do that here in Alberta, too.

But what we don't need to do is attach something like this to an omnibus bill where that has absolutely no connection to sextortion and

DEI, which is the other part of this one. I find that to be – you know, it defies logic. It's a leap too far in logic, and it seeks to undermine important things that we need to deal with right now in the Legislature.

I think a simple solution to this – I mean, certainly, we have this amendment to have it not read a second time. We need to have some legislation around nonconsensual intimate images being shared and so forth, but we need to have that as a stand-alone entity so that we can give it the attention and the timeliness that it deserves.

To attach it to DEI somehow and talking about merit-based hiring demeans that and confuses the issue. It reminds me of, you know, a certain referendum that we just had recently where – I'm an English teacher. People asked me to try to help them understand the referendum questions, and I couldn't do it because many of them were gibberish. They literally did not have subject-verb agreements, and they amounted to nothing, a whole sound and fury signifying very, very little or nothing.

3:50

That's kind of what this part of this bill is, too. When you talk about merit based and that you have to have a law for merit-based hiring, that's what people do. We have merit-based hiring in the province of Alberta, and for anybody to put something like that into law, there's an implication behind it, Madam Speaker, that it's not happening now. That is absolutely not true and undermines and, I think, compromises the many thousands of people that you would otherwise consider to be in a cultural minority situation or females or persons of a certain age and so forth, that they somehow didn't earn the job that they are working on now.

Madam Speaker, that is, again, divisive. It's dangerous. Again, it's something that this government seems to like to put out these days, somehow implying that immigrants are taking the jobs of Albertans and taking the health care and the education away and so forth. That's not true. What is true is that the government is not supplying those things in the first place adequately or actively cutting health care and education and then somehow trying to blame it on immigrants.

There's a parallel in logic between that and this bill saying that it wants to enforce merit-based hiring for Alberta. We have merit-based hiring in Alberta now, and the people who have achieved those jobs and are actively doing and are very successful at those jobs are doing so because they have the skills and the ability to do so. It's not because they were hired because of their gender or their cultural backgrounds, their age, whatever you want to try to do.

That's the problem with this bill, right? And we can fix it. We can take it back to committee and, you know, give it a little patch job. Yes, we do need to do the Intimate Content Protection Act. There are many other elements to this bill that seem quite intriguing as well in terms of legal reform and talking about KC appointments and all of that kind of stuff. I mean, that sounds interesting and probably good, too, but to kind of lump it all together into a salad like this bill is is not the best way forward.

I appreciate and will thank my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View for putting forth this amendment to Bill 33. Yes, we need to debate many of these things. You know, it's not as though many of these issues weren't around before anyway. As I said, the intimate sharing, sextortion, and all this kind of thing: it's been going on for years. For the Minister of Justice to say, "Oh, well, you're stalling this out; how come you're getting in the way of something important?" this government has had three years and change to deal with this and even more with the last government. I mean, that's hardly an excuse.

I would say that we send it to committee, we look for a way to build a stand-alone bill on inappropriate intimate sharing, make it strong, make it timely, and get the job done for the sake of Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others on amendment REF1?

Seeing none, I will ask the question on amendment REF1 as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there anyone that would like to speak on the main bill in second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak to Bill 33, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2). You know, I'm a bit of a geek. I like comic books, superheroes, science fiction. I'm a bit more of a *Star Trek* than *Star Wars* guy, though, I mean, I did enjoy *The Mandalorian*. *Andor* was a pretty good series. I love all kinds of cartoon franchises, and I have for years. I follow a lot of this stuff online. I watch YouTube videos about people analyzing Marvel movies, the new DCU, different series. I love this stuff.

It's been interesting, you know, as a fan of this to watch a trend that's developed over the last 10 to 15 years. Now, it started out in gaming. I'm not much of a gamer. The last time I was good at video games, you had a single joystick and one button. It started in the gaming industry, and what it was was people creating outrage about any series that dared to deviate from what they considered to be the norm. If you introduce, say, a female protagonist and if that female protagonist, that female main character, wasn't drawn in the generous proportions that they were used to or if you suddenly brought in a person of colour or changed the focus or included a nonheterosexual relationship, they started to use that as a reason to generate outrage.

This spread on social media. There was a whole thing called Gamergate that involved some of this kind of stuff, and that has bled over into larger geek culture. You may have heard the phrase – it's around too much these days – go woke, go broke. Some folks were lobbying that at BioWare when they recently announced that they were going down. What it is, Madam Speaker, is folks that are using the concept of adding diversity to different material – and hey, whether that's, you know, Marvel decided to do a movie about Captain Marvel or another female character or whether that's casting a Black actor in what has in the comic been a White role – going out and crusading about wokeism and DEI destroying all the things we care about and all that we love.

The thing is, Madam Speaker, the reason this has taken off and the reason people do this is not because they genuinely care about the material or the quality of it. It's because it generates content and it helps them make money. There are professional YouTubers, Twitch streamers, TikTokers whose entire income is based on looking for the next opportunity to find anything they can spin for outrage because that gets them clicks, that gets them views, that makes them money. It's pretty cheap and disingenuous. It cheapens the art, cheapens equality, and it's a bit of a plague on fandom. That's what I thought of when I saw this government with Bill 33. Just like those TikTokers, those Twitch streamers, those YouTubers who are fishing around looking for the next opportunity to generate outrage for their own benefit: that's this government.

What's interesting, Madam Speaker, is that the minister stands here today and he says: well, I can't believe that you're objecting to this bill that we're putting forward because we so deeply care about the impact of sextortion, deepfakes creating fake pornography of people. Let's be clear. That is indeed something very serious, something that should be addressed. But you know what? When they stood up and they did their press conference, the first posts on the Premier's social media accounts were not about protecting against sextortion. They were not about preventing deepfakes or pornography. It wasn't about trying to restore balance or undo some of the things that have been done to the Alberta Law Foundation. No. It was fearmongering about DEI, big bright

letters, graphics created that went out minutes after the press conference. The first video clip that they put up was the Premier and the minister standing there talking about the deadly plague of DEI.

So let's be very clear about where this bill is coming from, Madam Speaker, and what the government's intention is. That is why we brought forward this amendment, and that is why we have concerns with this bill.

Now, let's be very clear. It was interesting to hear the Member for Grande Prairie talk about his concern with DEI and talking about that example of musicians playing behind a screen. Madam Speaker, that's exactly what a lot of DEI practices and other things have been about. Did you know that there have been a number of experiments run and practices changed because they discovered that when you took names off of resumé's, suddenly somebody who had a name which was non-Caucasian would rocket up the list in terms of priority for interviews? That's blind screening, and that is part of the practice of trying to eliminate discrimination through diversity, equity, and inclusion.

What the member spoke about is precisely what so much of this is, but the government wants to play into this MAGA bogeyman because if it's trendy in the United States with the MAGA movement, Madam Speaker, you can guarantee this government is going to bring it into our Legislature.

Let's be absolutely clear. When the minister talks about saying, "Well, why would you delay these important pieces to send this to committee?" well, let's be very clear, Madam Speaker. If this was a priority for that minister, he's had over three years to do it. In those three years what did he make a priority? Well, making multiple changes to election laws to lower the bar to help separatists force us into a referendum; shortening the amount of time Elections Alberta had to complete an investigation from three years to one, coincidentally while his friend and relative Mr. Sam Mraiche was under investigation for illegal campaign donations; taking provincial control of our libraries and creating the new occupation of government library inspector; giving himself immunity from proceedings and sanctions by the Law Society of Alberta. This government has had a lot of other interesting priorities before bringing this in, so it's a bit rich for them to complain about us wanting to take a moment for thoughtful consideration before we proceed.

4:00

But let's be absolutely clear on this. I and my colleagues certainly do support those pieces. When we talk about expanding the victims of nonconsensual distribution of intimate images act, we are fully in support. When we talk about undoing some of the constraints that the minister put on the Alberta Law Foundation – now, he stood today and talked about new information, that I don't believe that he's ever shared in this House before, claims that his restricting of their ability to give out grants and their access to their own funding that comes from lawyers themselves was because there was apparently this significant concern that he had over some severance packages that went out. I haven't heard the minister mention that before. I don't recall that coming up once during the debate on that particular bill. So it is difficult to know if this was indeed the fact or if the minister is looking to backfill, to try to justify why he made a move that he's now choosing to undo.

I do know that I did see several organizations, who were doing excellent work in the community, that the minister stopped the foundation from being able to provide a grant to or significantly

reduced the amount of grant they were able to give at the same time that he was taking funding away from them to cover his government's obligations to fund legal aid. So I think it's incredibly important that we continue to consider all of the context here because, again, this is a government that is consistently, thoroughly disingenuous.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, that Albertans have so many other things that they've wanted this government to be focused on right now. Albertans are struggling with the cost of living. Now, this government says suddenly this session that they're going to put forward some pieces, some of which were actually introduced by some of our members previously and voted down by this government and are now suddenly coming back in government legislation. They've had four years to try to bring down the cost of living; they haven't. Albertans are deeply concerned about access to health care. This government has been tearing that system down.

The fact is, in the midst of all of this, that this government's first piece of legislation and the first thing they highlight from this legislation is this phantom bogeyman. Let's be absolutely clear, Madam Speaker. The ones in charge of hiring in the public service for the past four years have been this government, so if they're concerned with their own hiring practices, well, as a former Premier once said, they need to look in the mirror.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, that while we do not support this government trying to use this thing that they've pulled up from the MAGA movement in the States as a distraction, as an attempt to restart another culture war at a time when they are at their lowest ebb and the Premier is the least popular politician in Alberta and Albertans are sitting up and paying attention to the fact that this government just wasted nearly \$200 million on a referendum they did not want, despite all of that, we support the other pieces of this bill that are indeed important, that are indeed valuable. I want to be absolutely clear that when we vote in support of this bill, it is because of those pieces and those pieces alone.

I, like the Member for Grande Prairie, recognize that there are things that we need to have in how we hire and approach to ensure that indeed we get the best candidate, and that means that sometimes you have to take steps to consider what are preventing some of those best candidates from being seen or heard or given the opportunity to get to the table. But we are not going to play this government's game of delving into MAGA influence culture war at a time when Albertans want to see us doing real work in this Assembly.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, in this session that is what we're going to be doing, private members' bills to bring down costs, to improve our health care system, just like we have been doing for the past year and more. If this government wants to continue on with playing games like they have, wasting Albertans' money, they are welcome to do so. We're not going to take part.

With that, Madam Speaker, let's have it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to Bill 33?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 10 tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:06 p.m.]







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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](mailto:AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca)