

Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 2, 2026

Day 63

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 31st Legislature
Second Session

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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Campbell, Kyle, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
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Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m. **Monday, November 2, 2026**

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, it being the first day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Abha Sharma. I invite all to participate in the official language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

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

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, seated in my gallery today is former Member of the Legislative Assembly the hon. Naresh Bhardwaj, who represented the constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. Hon. Mr. Bhardwaj is also the former president of the Bhartiya Cultural Society of Alberta and was here earlier participating in this morning's Diwali rotunda ceremony. Mr. Bhardwaj, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: It is my pleasure to welcome Abha Sharma, who provided us with the beautiful rendition of *O Canada*. Abha recently graduated with a bachelor of arts in music and theatre at Concordia University in Edmonton. After graduating in 2025 Abha has continued to build her career in Alberta and now serves as committee services operations assistant with the Legislative Assembly Office. As a passionate singer Abha continues to pursue her love for music alongside her professional career. Today, two years after her first performance here as a student, we are delighted to welcome her back to sing, this time as a member of the Legislative Assembly Office team. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Hon. members, it is my pleasure to introduce members of the public service joining us in the members' gallery today. I had the pleasure of meeting with them this morning. They are here participating in a full-day public service orientation program, which explores the legislative, budgetary, and committee processes, enabling each participant to apply their knowledge to their role in the public service. I now ask that they all please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Haji: It's my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 133 students from St. Cecilia Catholic junior high school and their teacher, Dylan Brown. This is one of the 10 junior high schools in my riding. I ask the students and their teacher to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you Acharya Vinod Sodiyal from the Hindu Society of North America, Rajinder Verma of the Hindu Society of Calgary, and their fellow guests. Their dedication to serving the community is greatly appreciated. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

Mrs. Sawyer: Mr. Speaker, I rise not to introduce anyone new but to announce that my chief of staff is finally going to marry the love of her life. Now everyone can stop asking her when it's going to happen because she's off the market. I ask that all members of the Assembly join me in congratulating Darby and Tyler.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you the hard-working staff who support my office and the people of Edmonton-Manning every day. In the gallery today are my constituency assistants Paige Kot, David Rolleman, and Madeline Kalisvaart. The work of the MLA's office is only possible because of the dedicated staff who support our constituents, answer calls for help, and work tirelessly behind the scenes on behalf of our community. I ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ms Fir: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a very frequent guest, my mom, Josie Fir. She has been in severe question period withdrawal for the last few months. Mom, we're back. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly representatives of the Alberta Post-secondary Network, the presidents. These leaders work every day to strengthen postsecondary education for students across our province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my friend Kenton Schultz. He's the president and owner of Big Rig Collision. His company is an Alberta success story that has gone North America wide in heavy-duty collision repair, manufacturing, and parts.

As well, it's my pleasure to introduce Ruben and Mayna Marin. Ruben is a dedicated Grande Prairie realtor, and his wife is a teacher here at one of our francophone schools in Grande Prairie as well. I would love for them all to rise and . . .

The Speaker: A polite reminder: 20 seconds is what we get here.

The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you Mr. Stephen Legault. He's been in question period almost as much as I have, and he's up in Edmonton today to talk about the future of energy policy. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there any other introductions? The hon. minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all of the Assembly Eryn Wahl. Eryn is a settlement worker for the Calgary Catholic Social Services, doing excellent work supporting newcomers in rural communities outside of Calgary. I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: That was the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services, followed by Edmonton-South.

1:40

Member Hoyle: You said "followed by"?

An Hon. Member: He just went.

Member Hoyle: Okay. Sure. Great.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to introduce members of the University of Alberta's Black Future Lawyers, an inspiring group of emerging leaders who are breaking barriers, championing representation, and preparing to shape the future of law and justice and policy here in Alberta. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly my friend and my constituent Kim King, who is not a stranger to most of us in this House. Thank you for being here to visit. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce my friend Mandeep Pujara. With over two decades of experience in journalism, Mandeep currently hosts Prime Canada show on Prime Asia TV. He also served with the Canadian Association of Journalists and EPS Chief's Community Council. I ask Mandeep to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Education Property Taxes

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's United Conservative government understands that families are working hard to make ends meet, and with the rising cost of living every dollar counts. That's why our government is taking action to make life more affordable by reducing, standardizing, and freezing provincial education property taxes. Through Budget 2027 our government will introduce a fair and consistent provincial education property tax rate locked in for three years, giving Albertans and municipalities the stability and predictability they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, these changes are expected to save Alberta property owners nearly $100 million in 2027 and 2028 alone. That's real money staying in the pockets of hard-working Albertans rather than being collected in additional taxes. Unlike the opposition, who believe the answer to every problem is higher taxes and more government spending, our UCP government believes Albertans know best how to spend their hard-earned money.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative isn't just about lowering taxes. It's about creating a fairer, simpler, and more transparent system for everyone regardless of where they live. By locking in rates for three years, we're also giving municipalities the certainty they need to plan their budgets, invest in their communities, and deliver essential services. We're doing all this while maintaining stable, sustainable funding for Alberta's classrooms, teachers, and students.

Alberta continues to lead the country because our government believes in fiscal responsibility, lower taxes, and standing up for hard-working families. While the opposition continues to push policies that would make life more expensive, our government remains focused on delivering meaningful affordability measures that make a difference, Mr. Speaker. Lower taxes, stronger communities, and more money in Albertans' pockets: that's the Alberta advantage, and that's what our UCP government will continue to deliver.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Electoral Boundaries Committee Report

Member Miyashiro: Mr. Speaker, well, well, well. Today the UCP-dominated Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries will table a report that does exactly what many Albertans feared it would do. It puts the political interests of the UCP ahead of fair representation.

Last Wednesday my brilliant colleagues the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View read portions of the report into the public record, and Albertans learned that the UCP intends to split Lethbridge into four. The map shows all the hallmarks of a practice known as packing, concentrating opposition voters into one riding so the governing party can attempt to game the system in the others. In plain English, the UCP is willing to sacrifice one seat in order to win three. Mr. Speaker, that's not democratic reform; it's gerrymandering.

When the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission conducted its work last year, Lethbridge residents overwhelmingly told them to keep the city's boundaries intact. Rural municipal leaders also raised concerns about combining urban and rural communities that face different priorities and different challenges, yet the UCP is prepared to ignore all of that. Last week the Member for Lethbridge-East suggested that splitting our city into four ridings was a good idea. If your goal is fair representation, it's a terrible idea. This sham report was written behind closed doors with no public hearings, no record of who was consulted, and without any transparency.

I want to close with a line from the report itself: before we tell an Albertan that their vote should be worth less than others, we must have a very good reason, ideally a nonpartisan one that almost all people of goodwill will accept as reasonable.

When a government redraws the map to help itself instead of representing its citizens, it is not strengthening democracy; it is rigging the game.

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

Diwali

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Bhagavad Gita, chapter 10, verse 11, Lord Krishna speaks of dispelling the darkness born of ignorance with the luminous lamp of knowledge. That message captures something at the heart of Diwali, the festival of lights: the enduring belief that light can represent knowledge, clarity, and strength to move forward with purpose.

For many families Diwali is more than a single day of celebration. The preceding days are filled with preparing sweets, decorating homes, lighting diyas, creating rangoli, offering prayers, visiting loved ones, and sharing meals. Through these traditions values and stories are passed from one generation to the next.

Diwali is also a time to welcome prosperity, and its meaning extends beyond personal success. Prosperity is most meaningful when it is shared, when hard work creates opportunity, businesses grow, families move forward, and one generation leaves something better for the next.

Diwali is celebrated across Bharat, India, Nepal, Fiji, and many parts of the world by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, and other communities. Together these diverse expressions enrich the celebration and reflect the many cultures that helped shape our province. In Calgary-East and across Alberta I have seen how festivals bring families and neighbours together.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the message of Diwali is one that all of us can carry. A single light may seem small, but it never asks how much darkness surrounds it before it begins to shine. May we carry that light with us in our families, in our communities, and across Alberta.

To everyone celebrating across Alberta: happy Deepawali.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hindu Heritage Month and Diwali

Member Kayande: November is Hindu Heritage Month. As a Hindu I'm guided by my religion and my culture in my day-to-day life. We celebrate Diwali in November this year, the victory of light over darkness, when Rama returned home with his wife, Sita, rescued from the demon Ravana.

Ravana, like all good villains, has a backstory. The 10-headed demon performed yearslong sacrifices to the god Brahma. Brahma, pleased at his devotion, offered Ravana a boon. Ravana's first ask was for immortality. That being forbidden, Ravana negotiated immunity from divine beings, wild animals, demons, and others, though excluding humans and monkeys. Instead of asking the all important question, "What are you going to do with all this power?" Brahma granted this boon and empowered a rampaging 10-headed demon.

The key is that Ravana here tried to win immortality, and Hindu philosophy is clear. It's the fear of death that is a source of sinful behaviour. Graft, corruption, unethical business, breaking promises, grasping for power, miserliness, all of it depends on the false notion that we can take our worldly goods with us into the hereafter. But when we come to terms with our fear, that's when we realize that the only way to everlasting life is through the community by living a life of service and duty. Empty devotion like Ravana's is a false path that's conjoined with the fear that drives us to protect ourselves from our neighbours instead of working together as a community.

As a Hindu I know that acting for the community means giving up a piece of my fear of the future. It's uncomfortable, but it means a better future for me and for those we love. Happy Diwali, everyone, and happy Hindu Heritage Month.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Referendum Results

Mr. Nenshi: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad everyone made it here on time because I know calendars are messed up across Alberta. But Edmonton at least is now the same time as Panama City, Florida, which I've just learned is not the same as Panama City, Panama. Albertans had a referendum on daylight savings time. They said no. Yet here we are after the Premier mandated a change despite how people voted. When Albertans vote no, the UCP does what it wants anyway. So why does this government say that direct democracy is important to them if they just ignore the results anyway?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier of Alberta.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, let me fast-forward from the consultation that the government did to what happened in British Columbia, where they made the decision to stay on daylight savings time year-round. Saskatchewan already is on our time eight months out of the year. Northwest Territories changed. Yukon changed. Manitoba changed. Half of Ontario changed. It would have been a little bit strange if Alberta had been the outlier going back and forth. We were just looking at what was happening around us and in western Canada, and we decided to stay in sync with our closest neighbours.

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, that timeline is completely messed up because Alberta went before most of those because the Premier loves to do what NDP governments want to do.

But here's the thing. The Premier lost big also on her referendum questions. The biggest loser was the one that says that Albertans don't want to opt out of federal programs, yet this government is trying to opt out of pharmacare and dental care national programs. Albertans deserve the same opportunity as other Canadians to access dental and pharmacare, so at least the Premier is consistent. She just rejects all referendum results she doesn't like. Why does she hate direct democracy so much?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is true that we had asked the federal government, rather than create a parallel program in both of those issues with separate administration and all the costs associated with that, if they would just piggyback on the programs we already had. We already have a pharmacare program that is way more comprehensive than birth control and diabetes, and we also already have a dental program that covers more individuals than the federal program. What we decided to do is be second payer. Seniors are going to be able to access the federal program, and then they can come to us for things that are not covered.

Mr. Nenshi: Sounds reasonable except the impact of that is that seniors are paying far more for their drugs now under this Premier's plan and under the UCP government.

This government doesn't listen to science. They don't listen to experts. They certainly don't listen to Albertans. The Premier seems to think she has unlimited power; she can do whatever she wants. But as we saw in the referendum, Albertans beg to differ because that's not how democracy works. So will the Premier now back down on withdrawing Alberta from the national pharmacare and dental care programs that every other Canadian enjoys?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I already said yes. We said that we will be second payer, which means by definition that those programs will apply first. Seniors will be able to access the dental care program, and if there are items that are uncovered, they'll be able to come to us.

As for the pharmacare program, Mr. Speaker, there are not a lot of seniors who are on birth control last time I checked, and we already do have a broad range of coverage on diabetes. In fact, our pharmacare program covers a vast number of drugs, and the federal program doesn't. In fact, it's the federal government that ran out of money before they were able to extend it to everybody else.

The Speaker: The second . . . [interjections] Order. That was me talking.

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

Affordability Measures

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, it's not just seniors who are paying way more under this UCP government. A report today from Willful says that nearly half of all Albertans say that they're worse off financially now than they were a year ago. More than half say that they've had to dip into their savings just to cover monthly expenses. This government has voted against every single affordability measure that we have proposed until suddenly last week the weak, watered-down Bill 34 was proposed, which at least caps ticket resale prices. When can we expect the UCP to steal the rest of our affordability agenda and take action on grocery prices?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the first things we did was correct the way in which Calgary was gouging people on their utility bills through their local access fee that was increasing with the increase in electricity. That was done under him when he was mayor, and now we've managed to bring prices down on electricity, from a high of 32 cents a kilowatt hour down to as low as 3 cents a kilowatt hour. We have partnered with the federal government on child care. That's saving families $1,000 per child per month. We have brought through 25 per cent discounts for seniors and a $1,500 tax cut. There's so much more I can be happy to answer.

Mr. Nenshi: Well, it's interesting that the Premier would mention utility rates, which, of course, went up by 400 per cent under her government, but this Premier has also raised property taxes on Albertans by more than any Premier or mayor in history. In Calgary this has meant an increase of about $560 for the average home over only two years. Last week she and her minister announced a freeze that isn't a freeze at all. It just fixes the rates, so if your property goes up in value, you still pay way more. Can the Premier tell us exactly how much this saves the average Calgary household?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's just put on the record that it's the member opposite who increased property taxes 81 per cent in his time in office, and I'm really astonished that he doesn't understand what the current mayor seems to understand, that this was about fairness. For a long time a home that was valued at $500,000 in Calgary paid a different mill rate than a home that was valued at $500,000 in Edmonton. That's what we corrected. We brought the rate down, we've frozen it, and we were also treating fairly both Calgary and Edmonton ratepayers as well as every ratepayer across the province.

Mr. Nenshi: She didn't know the answer, so I'll provide it. The answer is about $6 a month. That means that the average Calgary household, whose value of their home doesn't go up at all, will be paying $480 more per year than before the Premier started hiking taxes only two years ago.

Meanwhile the government refused to reduce the gas tax in February when the war started. They refused to reduce it in June when the law told them they had to. They finally reduced it in October after their $100 vote-buying scheme flamed out spectacularly. Why has this government consistently ignored the very real cost-of-living crisis?

Ms Smith: Well, I think that was a backhanded compliment, Mr. Speaker, thanking us for the 13-cent-a-litre cut in the fuel tax. We have the lowest gas prices in the entire country. In fact, if you were filling up in what used to be NDP British Columbia, you'd be paying about $2.05 a litre. You're only paying about a buck 44 here, so an F-150 driver – and there are plenty of them here in this province – is saving about $75 a fill-up compared to what they'd be spending in British Columbia. These are the kinds of things that we know we've heard from Calgarians. We've heard from Albertans that these are the things that they would like us to act on, and we acted.

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

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, they could have acted eight months ago and saved that F-150 driver for the whole year. They waited until they lost a by-election to make it happen.

Electoral Boundaries Committee Review

Mr. Nenshi: Now, Elections Alberta has been warning for more than a year that they don't have enough time to institute the new gerrymandered maps. The UCP has changed the law so many times that nobody can keep up. They refuse to give Elections Alberta the resources they need to do their job. The Premier could have implemented the independent commission's mandate six months ago, but she didn't like those maps. When will the UCP stop trying to cheat in the next election and abandon the rigged maps?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have great confidence in Elections Alberta's ability to execute on its statutory requirement to hold the election on October 18, 2027, as it is prescribed by law. I would just remind the member opposite that in Quebec they managed to get their boundaries in place just 110 days before election day, and they managed to pull it off. In British Columbia they called the election two years early, and with 32 days they managed to execute on that as well. Elections Alberta just had one of the biggest vote counts in their history, and they pulled it off as well. I'm confident . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: The Premier is being remarkably disingenuous. In British Columbia there were no new maps. In Quebec they only had 111 days because the Supreme Court threw out that government's attempt to gerrymander the map.

Now, what is clear here is that this new sham process that the Premier has put into place has made the population disparity between urban and rural Alberta much, much worse, stealing the votes of urban Albertans for rural Albertans. This problem is one that was created by the UCP. How is Elections Alberta

supposed to do something they say is impossible just because the Premier says so?

The Speaker: The use of the word "stealing" is awfully close to the line.

2:00

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the person who probably had the most influence on the previous electoral panel, and it was the member that they appointed. His name is Greg Clark, and let me tell you what he said: if we had two or four extra seats, these sorts of discussions would be a lot easier. And then he said: there are many things that we wish we had control over, one of them being perhaps having more than 89 seats. And then he said: we need the Legislature to give us more seats. And then he said just as recently as October 23: there's clearly an easy, equitable, and legally defensible answer; let's just add two more seats and move on. It's their member that the electoral commission is responding to.

Mr. Nenshi: Again the Premier is being so disingenuous, and Albertans won't fall for it because she left out one important word, "urban." Those additional seats were supposed to go to the cities, and in fact it was this government that passed legislation to steal those seats from Calgary and Edmonton by capping it at 89. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. You're done. You used that word I asked you not to use.

Go ahead, Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member opposite to read Judge Miller's report. It is very clear that in his addendum he talked about preserving two rural seats without seeing any reduction in the representation for effectiveness in both Calgary and Edmonton. He's simply telling this Chamber incorrect information. I encourage him to go and do some reading so that we can have a better debate tomorrow.

Investigation of Health Services Procurement

Ms Pancholi: Last week Albertans learned that the RCMP have expanded their investigation into $600 million worth of inflated health care contracts awarded to friends and family members of the UCP. That RCMP investigation now includes money laundering. The Minister of Justice has refused to say whether any UCP MLAs have been interviewed by the RCMP, but last week he told the media that his government would fully co-operate with the RCMP's investigation. So to the minister: will that co-operation include waiving privilege over any documents the RCMP wants to review as part of its investigation?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We continue to maintain, as we've said time and again in this Assembly and outside of this Assembly, that we welcome the RCMP investigation and we will co-operate with the investigation fully. We've done so in the beginning. We'll continue to co-operate with the RCMP, and we will move forward with their full support and co-operation. We are encouraged by the work that the RCMP is doing to get to the bottom of the procurement issues, and we will continue to co-operate with them.

Ms Pancholi: The UCP government's assertion of privilege over documents has led to lengthy and expensive taxpayer-funded legal actions in the unfair dismissal lawsuit brought by former AHS CEO Athana Mentzelopoulos. But in a letter sent to government lawyers two weeks ago, we now know that the special prosecutor in the RCMP investigation requires access to the same documents for the criminal investigation. So, again, if the Minister of Justice means what he says and actually intends to co-operate fully with the RCMP investigation, will he waive privilege over those documents?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, the letter made no such assertions. The letter from the independent prosecutor that has been appointed in Ontario was seeking clarification on the decisions of our court here involving the lawsuit with Athana Mentzelopoulos. We are and will continue to co-operate with the RCMP as we have in the beginning, as we have currently, and well into the future. I'm not going to speculate on what they may or may not ask for, but I've made it very clear that this government will co-operate with the RCMP investigation.

Ms Pancholi: It's remarkable how often what the minister says publicly is different from what his lawyers are arguing in court. Last year the minister said in this House: "The former AHS CEO was fired for complete incompetence and being misaligned with what Albertans needed . . . That former CEO could not deliver, and that's why she was fired." But a court decision last week shows government lawyers argued they couldn't produce records to prove what the minister said because – oops – she wasn't actually fired for incompetence or any cause at all. So will the minister just admit the only reason the former AHS CEO was fired was because she was investigating the corruption of the UCP?

Mr. Amery: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we know from the court decision is that the former AHS CEO provided documents, took documents that she wasn't entitled to take, and that's exactly what that court decision said. That court decision made it clear that she was not entitled to take documents and distribute them or keep them for herself, and that in itself is cause for concern. We'll continue to allow that court process to proceed. That is happening right now. We're waiting to see the outcome of that case, but we're confident in our position.

Electoral Boundaries Committee Review
(continued)

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, throughout 2025 thousands of Albertans in communities across this province met with the boundaries commission and helped develop a nonpartisan map of 89 constituencies based on logical communities and fairness to all voters. Why, after seeing a new 89-seat map that reflected modern Alberta and which would have led to fair elections, did this government decide they would rather scrap all of the work, time, money that went into that and instead opt for a secretive panel that met with absolutely no Albertans?

Mr. Amery: Well, Mr. Speaker, that member knows full well that two of the members of that commission were appointed by the NDP, two were appointed by the UCP, and they were chaired by a well-respected judge here in our province, Justice O'Ferrall of the Court of Appeal. If they're calling into question the integrity of Justice O'Ferrall, I would suggest that they probably move along. If they're calling into question the contributions of their own members, well, that's their problem. [interjection] They had an absolute equal opportunity . . .

Mr. Williams: Point of order.

Mr. Amery: . . . to do what they needed to do.

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

Ms Gray: Given that instead of accepting the results of the proper public process, they set up a secretive panel that did zero engagement with Albertans, given this secretive panel has now produced a ridiculous report wildly out of line with what they were even asked to do, with boundaries designed only for the UCP's electoral advantage, will the Premier and her government do the right thing, defend free and fair elections in Alberta by rejecting the out-of-scope and questionable map drawn by a secret panel that met with no Albertans?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, the irony of this is that the opposition is criticizing the process, but they were participating in it from the very beginning. The panel had access to everything, including the *Hansard* conversations, the maps, the materials, and the submissions of Albertans all across this province. The final boundaries will be debated in this Assembly. Every member of this Assembly will have the opportunity to review the report, which I expect to be tabled today, and then weigh in on it. It is up to the Assembly to make a final decision on whether the maps are accepted or not.

Ms Gray: Given our objections to the process were noted at each and every committee meeting, given Alberta can only remain strong and free if our province has a working democracy, given enacting the secret panel's map would effectively end free and fair elections in Alberta, given ignoring Albertans is exactly why the UCP lost Calgary-Shaw and why the Premier's popularity is at an all-time low, given it's time for this government to finally start working on the things that Albertans want, will the government do the right thing, discard the secret panel's attempts to hijack the next election?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. The irony continues in that they asked for 91 seats. Their representatives asked for 91 seats because that made sense. Once the panel had the opportunity to meet with Albertans, look at the population growth and the other factors, it was clear that 91 seats in this province was the most appropriate distribution, and that's exactly why this Legislature moved forward to introduce a bill creating 91 seats, providing the panel with the opportunity to review with the 91-seat distribution, and that's what we did.

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

Education Property Taxes

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years the education portion of a property tax bill started as a provincial requisition, was calculated on the previous year's property values, and then turned into a different local rate in every municipality. Most Alberta homeowners had no way of knowing how their numbers were calculated. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs please tell us exactly what will change and how the line on the bill is calculated going forward?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, previously – let's be honest – the system was complicated, and we have simplified it. We simplified it for municipalities and for ratepayers. They know now that, going forward, across the province it's 2.56 mill rate for residential assessment for education property tax and 3.975 when it comes to all nonresidential. This is predictable, this is transparent, and this is fair. It does not matter what part of the province you're in. We have listened, and we are having a common-sense approach for an across-the-province standard approach to education property tax.

2:10

The Speaker: Airdrie-East.

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for this very common-sense approach. Given that councils across Alberta are setting their budgets right now and many will begin passing their tax bylaws in the spring and further given that municipal administrators and councillors will want to know what this change means for their work and for their families, can the minister please tell this House what exactly municipalities will need to do differently and what support the province will provide to help them make the switch in time for the 2027 tax year?

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you again for the question. To be clear, Mr. Speaker, this is about listening to municipalities, who have been incredibly charitable but clear in their advocacy to the province. They want a better approach when it comes to education property tax, and we're delivering that with this simplified process. Credit particularly to Calgary's mayor, His Worship Jeromy Farkas, for his advocacy and support for the new process. Going forward, the system will be clear. We will pass laws and have regulations out before tax season for municipalities come April through June so that the new assessment can continue after as before but in that fair and transparent process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's government is taking action to make education property taxes fairer, simpler, and more predictable for homeowners across the province and further given that as we transition to a single provincial rate, it's important that Albertans have the certainty and support that they need to plan their household budgets, can the minister tell this House what measures our government is putting in place to support homeowners through this transition in 2027, and can he confirm that these changes will not come at the expense of funding for Alberta's classrooms and students?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, there are transitional allowances to make sure nobody ends up in a spot where they're paying more taxes than they would have before the announcement. Education investments remain very, very steady and will not be altered because of this. It's all part of the $37 billion less in taxes that Albertans pay as a result of the work this government has done, the $7,300 less than any other province Albertans pay per capita in taxes. We know if the NDP were ever to get back in power, what that means. Albertans would be out thousands of dollars as they continue to raise taxes . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Health Care Outcome Measures

Member Batten: Mr. Speaker, what are Albertans getting for their health care dollars? While this government spends billions of dollars on health care, Albertans still do not know whether they're getting healthier after receiving care. Government collects information on pain, quality of care, and patient experiences, but much of that information is never publicly reported. Why is this minister comfortable telling Albertans how many procedures have been performed but not whether or not those procedures actually improve the lives of Albertans?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for giving me the opportunity to share the latest CIHI data. That is the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Albertans can be proud that Alberta does more surgeries per capita than the national average, and we're increasing them at the fastest rate in Canada. Volumes are up 15 per cent since 2019-2020. That is leading the country. In fact, wait times for hip surgeries: in Alberta 87 per cent of patients with hip fractures receive . . .

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

Member Batten: Given that the minister just proved my point and given that during the referendum campaign the UCP government wasted money on constitutional and immigration questions while Albertans struggled to see a family doctor, get a specialist appointment, and suffered through long waits for surgery or emergency care and given that the Alberta Medical Association's 2026 State of Health Care Report concluded that long wait times hurt Alberta's patients, will the minister stop telling patients to trust the government and commit to publicly reporting patient outcomes so Albertans can see if health care is actually working?

Member LaGrange: I'm so happy to share even more information, Mr. Speaker. Eighty-seven per cent of Alberta patients with hip fractures receive surgery within 24 hours, 3 percentage points higher than the national average of 84 per cent. Radiation therapy: Albertans have one of the shortest wait times in Canada for radiation therapy. In Alberta 97 per cent of patients receive radiation therapy within four weeks. This is better than the national average and second best in Canada. We're going to be the best very, very soon. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member Batten: Given that the minister continues to prove the point that they are not reporting on patient outcomes and given that patients know that cancer treatment will improve their quality of life, that hip and knee replacements will reduce their pain, and that mental health services help people recover and given the UCP government already collects some of this information but does not routinely publish it so that Albertans can review it, why won't the UCP government publish complete patient outcomes and experience data for all Albertans to see?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of hospitals.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite should go on the website and look at our dashboards, and we will continue to increase that data information. To give you more information, Albertans have one of the shortest wait times in all of Canada for bypass surgery. You know what? That improves patient outcomes, the fact that they're getting in quicker. The median wait time in Alberta is eight days, a full day better than the national average. We are ranked among the top in all of Canada. I'm so proud. I'm going to continue to share info with you.

Release of Detainees in Downtown Edmonton

Mr. Shepherd: For years the community in Chinatown has been raising concerns about the release of detainees in their community, but it was only recently that they obtained concrete proof: video of Alberta sheriffs releasing detainees in Chinatown at times when social services and supports were closed. And the response from the minister of public safety? He dismissed them, called it human error, said it's not their common practice. My question to the minister: why was his first instinct to deny the realities that the community in Chinatown has been seeing and living with for years?

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, they're corrections officers, not sheriffs. There is a difference. But in both of these cases the department investigated, and, of course unfortunately, it was a human error. It has always been the government's practice to do warm hand-offs. That's why we created the recovery-oriented system of care, and I can tell you that's why we also have system navigators in place to do those warm hand-offs. You know what we're not going to do? The NDP policy for releasing inmates, which is there's the door, there's the shelter, and there's the one, two, three supervised consumption sites that they imposed on the Chinese community without any of their consultation. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Now it's time to hear only from Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Now, given it's been over eight years since those sites were opened and immediately after they moved under the direct control of this government for seven years and given that during that time we did what the UCP refused to do – we showed up, we listened, and we worked to restore trust – and given that's why dozens of the Chinese community stood with us at the presser calling out this UCP government for them to act, will the minister of public safety stop taking this community for granted, step up, listen to what they said, and actually do the work and make the investments needed to make Chinatown safe?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I'd love to talk more about NDP policy. Let's talk about the decriminalization of drugs. Let's talk about the taxpayer-funded drugs that they're doling out on the streets of British Columbia. Let's talk about how the NDP broke the bail system. I can tell you something. The only ones that seem to benefit from NDP policy in this country are organized crime and drug dealers. You know, now that I think about it, that's probably why they cut ALERT's budget by 12 and a half million dollars.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, given that this minister will talk about anything except his own record and the actual calls from the Chinese community, given that the best way to ensure no detainee is dropped anywhere without supports is to ensure they have the connections they need before release but given that the level of support available in the remand in Fort Saskatchewan falls far short of the level of need, given the minister's commitment of a single new navigator for the remand centre is welcome but not likely to make a significant difference, after spending hundreds of millions of dollars on their wasteful separatist referendum, will he commit to investing in what's needed to support the community in Chinatown?

2:20

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I'd love to talk about our record. Let's talk about Edmonton's crime severity index, down 6 and a half per cent. Overall crime down by 13.6 per cent in Edmonton. EPS-reported violent crime down 17 per cent. All calls for the downtown down 7.6 per cent. Disorder calls in general down.

Over 12,000 people have been helped into the system in the recovery-oriented system of care through the navigation centres, Mr. Speaker. We are not going to sit here on this side of the House and allow those members to gaslight the people of Edmonton into thinking that this is a problem caused by the UCP. It wasn't. [interjections]

The Speaker: A point of . . . [interjections] Order. A point of order is noted at 2:20 p.m.

Health Services Procurement Process

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, seven weeks after taking office this government directed AHS to award a $70 million contract for Tylenol to MHCare with payments made up front, ignoring protocols. We now know that the Premier met with MHCare's Sam Mraiche before becoming leader, later hiring his relatives to work inside government ministries. To the minister of health services: was MHCare identified as the preferred supplier before the contract process began, and who directed officials to make that deal happen?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. What we did when we learned about the procurement issues is that we asked Justice Wyant to conduct an inquiry into the allegations that were being made by perhaps that member himself, and what we learned was that there were certainly some procurement problems that happened. That's why Justice Wyant's report provided for 18 recommendations. That's why this government took those recommendations and began to implement them immediately.

The Speaker: The hon. member managed to avoid what was before the courts the first question. Let's carry on in that positive vein.

Mr. Guthrie: Given government justification for the Tylenol purchase has always been urgency and given the Wyant report identifies a second proposal involving a New Jersey-based manufacturer and given Johnson & Johnson is New Jersey-based and given indications are that this competing bid came with faster delivery, lower cost, and without MHCare's $10 million administration fee, to the minister: was Johnson & Johnson behind that competing bid, and if so, who made the decision to tank it?

Mr. Amery: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that AHS made procurement decisions, and we know from the recommendations made in Justice Wyant's report that 18 fixes were proposed. Those fixes have been implemented or are currently being implemented, but we made a number of significant changes. We've established an oversight process to make sure that procurement decisions are made objectively, we have removed procurement oversight from AHS, and we've introduced mandatory conflict-of-interest training for AHS staff to make sure that they can identify any concerns and avoid them.

Mr. Guthrie: Given court documents confirm a potential RCMP investigation into fraud, breach of trust, and money laundering in Alberta health procurement and given the RCMP executed search warrants involving MHCare and given MHCare continues to bid on government contracts, to the minister: regardless of an investigation, has MHCare or its affiliates received government contracts in the past 18 months? If so, will the government make today disclosure day and release those documents?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we are co-operating with the RCMP investigation. We're co-operating with the Auditor General's investigation. We were co-operating fully with Justice Wyant's investigation into this procurement issue. We've implemented a number of different changes. We're taking steps to strengthen conflict-of-interest rules all across government arising out of these allegations, we're improving the oversight of vendors, and we want to ensure greater accountability in government purchasing all across the board.

Affordability Measures
(continued)

Member Tejada: Mr. Speaker, this government has all the wrong priorities. The people of Calgary-Klein tell me time and time again that they want their government focused on making life more affordable, not divisive attacks, culture wars, or millions wasted on a referendum to tear the country apart. Eighty-two per cent of Calgary-Klein constituents voted to remain in Canada, and they rejected every single one of the Premier's other nine questions. So now that the UCP thinks that the divisive referendum is behind us, where's the action on affordability? My constituents want to know.

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

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This gives us a great opportunity to highlight all the things that this government is doing on affordability. We've gotten rid of the fuel tax, 13 cents off as of October 1; $100 payments that went out to a lot of Albertans over the last three months as well so that they could choose bills that they had to pay. We talk about affordable daycare that we've expanded around the province of Alberta. We've cut taxes, our new 8 per cent personal income tax, saving individuals $750 or $1,500. We are doing a lot for affordability for families in Alberta, and we're very proud of our record.

Member Tejada: Given that that's a hundred days short and several dollars short, given that this UCP government has increased property taxes for the average Calgary home by over $350 and have only offered to lower by a maximum of $75 and given that Calgarians have demanded relief on electricity bills, lower grocery prices, and the end of nuisance fees and given that the NDP has introduced the Alberta affordability agenda to make these the priorities for government, not divisive, wasteful referendums, will the UCP government adopt all of our plans to deliver real affordability for Albertans?

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the one thing we know on this side is that the one thing Albertans can't afford is another NDP government. They talk about their affordability measures, they talk about cutting electricity 10 per cent, yet they're the ones that absolutely destroyed electricity here in the province of Alberta, costing Albertans $2 billion. They saw up to 32 cents a kilowatt hour under that government. I'm not going to take any advice from them on affordability when it comes to electricity. [interjections]

The Speaker: I think it's just Calgary-Klein that we need to hear from right now. Let's just do that, shall we.

Member Tejada: Given it's time to start listening to better advice and that this government refuses to help people earn higher wages so that they can afford daily life, given that working families earning minimum wage are stressed about their car insurance, higher rents, bigger bills, and just putting food on the table, given that lineups at the food bank mean the lowest paid Calgarians are desperate to put more money in their pockets just to get food, why won't the UCP government raise the minimum wage instead of leaving it at the lowest in the country?

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, Mr. Speaker, listen, we are always taking a look at minimum wage, and we always understand that we want to make sure that we have people earning the highest wages as they can here in the province. That's why we've got the strongest economy. We have

Albertans earning the highest average wages across all of Canada. Obviously, when we talk about minimum wage, we're going to continue to make sure that we assess it, but 95 per cent of people in this province do not make minimum wage, and they spend very little time on there. Also, minimum wage: upward pressure to inflation. You can't have your cake and eat it, too.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Oil and Gas Industries

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's Montney oil and gas field is one of the world's economic drivers and one of the richest natural gas and light oil basins in North America, right in the backyard of Grande Prairie. Right now we have an abundance of light oil, natural gas liquids, and natural gas, which the world needs. We also have the opportunity to ship to new markets around the world while also supplying projects right here in Alberta. To the Minister of Energy and Minerals: what does the Montney mean for jobs and the economic future of hard-working Albertans?

Mr. Jean: It's true, Mr. Speaker. I always talk about how great Alberta is to invest, the greatest place in the world to live, work, and play, but don't take my word for it. Let's talk about the Montney. Let's talk about Shell. Shell is a global supermajor. They just bought ARC Resources, and they have a play in the Montney. Let's talk about Ovintiv. They've declared that they're only going to do business in two places in the world: the Permian in Texas and, yes, the Montney in Alberta, one of the best places to invest in energy in the world, right here in Alberta. Alberta's got the answer. We're creating jobs. We're creating the future. It's going to be the best future ever.

The Speaker: Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that companies are choosing Alberta to build new power generation petrochemical facilities and manufacturing that run on Alberta's abundant energy resources and given that every new project that uses our resources here at home means more work for Albertans, unlike the NDP, who told Albertans to leave the province to get to work, a disastrous government with disastrous policies, can the Minister of Energy and Minerals explain why natural gas and natural gas liquids are key components for Alberta's future and how they will create steady long-term jobs?

2:30

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, it's so exciting. We're not just working with Canada; we're working with all of Alberta. We have a successful oil sands industry. We're going to have a successful gas industry, a successful liquids industry, a successful employment industry, not just in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie but all across this great province. That's because energy is the future for Alberta, and we're all about the future. We're about the future for kids; we're about the future for adults; we're about the future for the economy. Alberta is where the future is.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that LNG Canada has made its final investment decision to double its capacity to Asian markets, looking to use Alberta's oil and gas, and further given that the NDP actively worked to destroy the energy market, the cornerstone of the Canadian economy, to the Minister of Energy and Minerals. Families in the energy sector want to know. How is this Conservative government continuing to build and expand a strong, stable economy so oil and gas workers can count on good careers for years to come?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the one thing we're doing is caring about the future by taking care of today. We're making sure that kids are able to get training in our educational institutions, that there are job opportunities right across this great province, that people can afford to live in this province, because we know what the NDP did when they had that short period of time in power. They drove up energy prices. They drove up the cost of living. They closed down coal. They did things that the world was not ready for yet. We are managing the economy in the best interest of Albertans and our future.

Provincial Pension Plan Proposal

Ms Wright: Mr. Speaker, as hard as the Premier might try to change the channel after Albertans handed her a resounding defeat in the referendum, no one is buying that sudden change of heart, which is why a renewed push from within her own party to withdraw from the CPP raises alarm bells. A supermajority of Albertans have said they do not want the Premier anywhere near their pensions. Why hasn't the Premier put this tired idea of getting rid of the Canada pension plan to rest once and for all?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we did. I know the hon. member doesn't seem to be paying attention, but we've been crystal clear on that. This is just another attempt by the NDP to avoid the great news for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I noticed nobody's had the bother to even ask a question yet of the Finance minister on where we're at as far as the budget, so let me just retell the House again: five consecutive balanced budgets and well on our way to our sixth because of the hard work of this side of the House. They're stuck in the past. We're focused on the future.

Ms Wright: Given seniors in my riding want to know about the CPP, given that Albertans overwhelmingly want to stay in the CPP and have their pensions left alone but given that the UCP's riding associations, like that of Calgary-Lougheed, are still pushing for the end of the CPP in their new so-called road map for sovereignty plan, given that gambling with people's CPP is one sure way to risk making the affordability crisis affecting Alberta seniors even worse, why can't this government just assure Albertans they won't mess around with people's pensions, and will they drop their attacks on the CPP?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we've already assured Albertans of that. We're focused on the future.

Now, you want to talk about pushing. That hon. member's leader Avi Lewis is continuing to push for things like the carbon tax to come back, Mr. Speaker, something that that party did not campaign on the last time that they won an election, without telling Albertans, in secret, behind closed doors, then formed government and brought in the largest tax increase in the history of the province. Through you to that member: is she going to listen to Avi Lewis, or is she going to listen to Albertans who do not want the carbon tax?

Ms Wright: Given that I'll try for an answer one more time, given in their wasteful and expensive referendum Albertans said no to separation, no to meddling with the Constitution, and no to opting out of federal programs, given that Albertans have repeatedly said they don't want the government to mess with their CPP, so much so that the Premier knew she would have lost a referendum question

on changing it, given their failure to address real affordability for seniors while still letting party activists run amok means the end of the CPP as we know it, will the government declare once and for all that they'll take their hands off our CPP?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government has been clear. We are not going down the road of CPP reform. We've heard from Albertans. That's not a conversation they want to have at this time.

But I also tell you that we are the only side of the Legislature that has taken the referendum seriously and the instructions from Albertans. That member's leader has stood up here and said that he rejects the referendum questions that passed on immigration. Mr. Speaker, this side of the House respects what Albertans have given us as a mandate. We're going to comply with it. Is the NDP going to continue their election denialism inside this Legislature? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Government Priorities

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The UCP must be exhausted working overtime to distract Albertans from its growing list of failures. Families are struggling with the rising cost of groceries, housing, and everyday essentials, while the government managed to burn 200 million bucks on a failed referendum to appease the separatists that make up the UCP base. The UCP won't help families pay bills. They won't hire more teachers for overcrowded classrooms. They won't reduce health care wait times. How can the Premier justify wasting so much money on a failed referendum while Albertans are told to wait for actions on the issues that matter to them?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, this kind of economic growth is exhausting for a government, but we are happy to serve Albertans and perform. The highest job growth we've seen anywhere in the country: right here in Alberta. Five times higher employment rate than anywhere else in the country: right here in Alberta. Eighty per cent – no. More than that. Ninety per cent of the country's jobs were created right here in Alberta last year. This kind of performance for Albertans is exhausting, but we serve at their pleasure.

Mr. Dach: Given that most Albertans spent the summer saving Canada because of the crisis the UCP created to keep the separatists happy by sucking up to them and given that Albertans are asking for more schools, more long-term care beds, better access to family doctors, and shorter surgery wait times, what does it say about this government's priorities, Mr. Speaker, that it always seems to have money for political fights but never enough to pay for the services Albertans depend upon?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, it was missed in their time in government, but the way that you pay for world-class services is by having a growing economy, by having productivity, having affluence because of the ability to develop the resources. When you want to shut the resources in the ground as we see from the federal NDP and the time the opposition members were in power, then you end up with a declining GDP, a declining economy, and less resources to pay for teachers, for schools, for social services. The world-class services we have are a product of Alberta's can-do, resource-oriented attitude. Members opposite want to get in power? Best they listen to Albertans on that.

Mr. Dach: Given that this government wouldn't know how to govern without oil money lubricating things for them, given that the UCP government chose to prioritize the divisive referendum that was designed to blame others for the problems of its own making, given that Albertans are looking for leadership on affordability, health care, housing, and education and given that the government spent hundreds of millions on a political vanity project of a referendum that was soundly rejected by Albertans, doesn't this show that the UCP, Mr. Speaker, is interested more in games, distractions, and manufactured division than in delivering the practical solutions Albertans are asking for?

The Speaker: I'm not sure that touched on government policy.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, government policy during 2015 to 2019 was to eliminate oil money from the province of Alberta. I kid you not. This is what members opposite brought when they were in power.

When we look at the 23,000 jobs Alberta gained, Canada lost 68,000 across at the same time. When we look at the per cent of growth that we see in national and provincial earnings, 3.9 per cent above the national average here in the province of Alberta. Members opposite really do not have stones to throw in their glass house when it comes to their record of economic growth. On our side of the House we're listening to Albertans and we're continuing to grow this economy.

Vaccine Safety Monitoring

Mr. Bouchard: Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve transparency when it comes to vaccine safety. This past September for four days Canadians testified on Parliament Hill at the Allison inquiry on serious and life-altering injuries following mRNA vaccination, including concerns about accessing compensation through the vaccine impact assistance program. To the Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services: what steps is our government taking to review reported vaccine injuries and ensure affected Albertans can access the medical care and support that they need? [interjection]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Let's hear from the hon. minister of hospitals.

2:40

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government takes reports of adverse events following immunization very seriously, and every Albertan deserves to have their health concerns heard. Alberta has an established reporting system requiring health practitioners to report suspected adverse events within three days of determining an injury. These reports are clinically reviewed by Primary Care Alberta with recommendations for appropriate medical follow-up and further consultations when needed. Our priority is ensuring serious concerns are properly investigated.

Mr. Bouchard: Given that Albertans who report vaccine injuries deserve to be treated with compassion and provided the appropriate medical care and support and further given the four days of testimony presented at the Allison inquiry included concerns about accessing compensation and receiving answers about their health, to the same minister: how is our government working to address the concerns raised at this inquiry and identify gaps in reporting, access to support, compensation, and accountability?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, Albertans experiencing serious health concerns following immunizations really do deserve compassion, transparency, and appropriate support. That's why Alberta has an established clinical review process alongside the

federally administered vaccine impact assessment program. As of April 1 this program provides financial support to Canadians assessed as having experienced serious and permanent vaccine-related injuries with independent medical experts who review the qualifications. We're going to continue to work with that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that our government commissioned a special report led by Dr. Gary Davidson that raised concerns about vaccine safety and further given that amongst its recommendations was an immediate halt to COVID vaccinations unless patients received full disclosure of the safety and efficacy of these shots, to the same minister: what steps will our government take in response to the report's recommendations to strengthen vaccine injury surveillance, improve medical follow-up, and ensure appropriate support for all affected Albertans?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to transparency, informed decision-making, and ensuring Albertans have confidence in vaccine safety monitoring. Alberta already has mandatory reporting requirements and enhanced oversight for serious adverse events, including those requiring hospitalization or potentially resulting in permanent disability. We'll continue to monitor reported adverse events following COVID-19 immunization, publicly report this information, and share data nationally to identify emerging safety concerns. We're just going to keep working and making sure it's transparent.

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

Members' Statements
(continued)

Cost of Living

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that Albertans are facing pressures from the rising cost of living, and they're not alone. It's an issue that many Canadians are feeling today. The question is: what can Alberta do about it? Families across our province work hard. They deserve to keep more of their hard-earned dollars in their own pockets. Our UCP government is focused on ensuring that we can do just that through meaningful changes which will make a real difference for Albertans.

Last year we delivered on our promise to cut tax savings for individuals by $750 a year. We suspended the provincial fuel tax, saving Albertans 13 cents per litre every time they fill up on gas for the rest of the year. We've cut child care fees by 80 per cent province-wide, saving families an average of $11,000 per child per year. Albertans pay the lowest overall taxes in Canada with the lowest income tax, no provincial sales tax, payroll tax, or health care premiums.

We know that there are still challenges to address. Grocery prices remain a concern. Young Albertans who aspire to own a home or build a future are facing challenges that previous generations did not experience to the same degree.

Our government is committed to making life more affordable for Albertans by pursuing solutions that support Alberta and create the conditions for our long-term prosperity. We must ensure that Albertans are equipped to succeed both today and in the years ahead. Every Albertan deserves an opportunity to build a good life, provide for their family, and look to the future with confidence, and that commitment to a better future must continue to guide our work every single day.

One of the best ways we can ensure that this work continues is by keeping Alberta's NDP with their costly tax-and-spend policies out of power, and electing another strong UCP government in 2027 will do just that.

National Pharmacare Program

Ms Hoffman: Why does the UCP keep failing Albertans and leaving federal dollars for health care on the table? Last week one of the health ministers admitted that while she was busy campaigning, telling people in Alberta to vote to kick their neighbours off public health care, other provinces lined up deals with the federal government to move forward with actual pharmacare and dental care. Pharmacare for people living with diabetes: things like metformin, insulin, and insulin pumps are covered universally in other provinces now because their governments left their egos at the door and actually made deals. They did the same thing with contraceptives and dental care.

Nearly $2 billion was on the table last year, but the UCP was too busy trying to fight with Carney, suck up to Trump, and sow divisions between Albertans to actually step up and deliver on pharmacare and dental care for Albertans who, for the record, are very proud Canadians. Even worse than that, they wasted an additional $200 million on their toxic referendum, so instead of getting $200 million – our fair share from the feds – they wasted an additional $200 million.

The good news is that Albertans rejected the UCP's proposal to separate, and all of the Premiers proposed changes regarding the Constitution. Instead of them fighting Indigenous rights in the courts and fighting the federal government to keep life-saving medications from being universally covered, it's time for the UCP to step up and honour the medicine chest clauses within treaty, get pharmacare for all, and if the current Premier and none of her health ministers are up for the job, I've got great news. I know a guy who is, and he's got a great team behind him that's ready; ready to stop American-style health care, ready to fix what the UCP has broken, ready to build hospitals, ready to deliver on federal pharmacare and dental care, and ready to govern.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Lunty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. Number one, in accordance with clause C(i)(ii) of Government Motion 37, on behalf of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries I'm pleased to submit to the Legislative Assembly the report of the independent advisory panel to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. Copies of the report will be provided to each member of the Legislative Assembly, and the electronic versions of the report will be available on the website of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries shortly.

Number two, on behalf of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries I'm also pleased to provide the Assembly with the requisite copies of USB keys containing the shape files and PDF maps prepared by Elections Alberta for the independent advisory panel's report. Someone will come and grab these.

And number three, on behalf of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries I am pleased to present to the Legislative Assembly the appropriate number of copies of the final report of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries on the report of the independent advisory panel.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sure hon. members have noticed by now that those reports are being distributed to you where you sit, so that'll continue to happen right away here.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Ms Renaud: Mr. Speaker, I have five copies of an article written by Andrew Green called The Price of Love: When Policy Decides if Disabled People are 'Really' a Couple.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table the five requisite copies of the Canadian Press article dated October 31 titled Elections Alberta Recommends 2027 Vote be Delayed as Gerrymandering Accusations Fly.

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

2:50

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on the questions from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, I'd like to table five copies of an article by CityNews entitled Alberta NDP Calls for Immediate End to Unsupported Detainee Drop-offs in Edmonton's Chinatown.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Any other tablings? Seeing Edmonton-Riverview; that's what I see.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling a report about our continuing care system in Alberta by Chris Ryan, and the title is Lower Standards Than Prison: The Consequences of Underfunding.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of my letter back to the Elections Alberta CEO stating that we will not extend the election deadline.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mrs. Sawyer, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, pursuant to the Agriculture Financial Services Act Agriculture Financial Services Corporation 2025-26 annual report; pursuant to the Livestock Identification and Commerce Act Livestock Identification Services Ltd. report to the minister and summary of activities April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026; pursuant to the Farm Implement and Dealership Act Farmers' Advocate office annual report 2025-26; pursuant to the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council annual report 2025-26.

The Speaker: Points of order. It must be my birthday. A year and a half: first time we got to three. Thank you, all, on all sides of the House. The points of order called today both were withdrawn, so three days and my severe gratitude to all members of this Assembly.

Orders of the Day

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

Bill 211
Patient Outcomes Reporting Act

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

Member Batten: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise and move the second reading of Bill 211, Patient Outcomes Reporting Act.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans want to have confidence in their health care system, and Albertans deserve to know whether their health care dollars, their tax dollars, are being invested smartly and are being spent to their benefit. Albertans deserve the respect and to be included, especially when we're talking about their health and well-being. Bill 211 is all about bringing Albertans back to the centre of health care by measuring not only their clinical outcomes but also patient experience to and through those outcomes. This bill empowers better decision-making, leading to better patient outcomes. It optimizes taxpayer dollar spending, and it allows for healthier Albertans. It also brings transparency and accountability, that is desperately needed, so that we can restore Alberta's confidence.

Now, the universal health care system that we all benefit from, living here in Alberta and in Canada, actually sprouted from a young boy falling and hurting his knee. A serious infection developed. The boy required multiple surgeries or he would lose his leg to amputation. The boy's family could not afford to pay for a surgeon; however, this boy was incredibly lucky, and a deal was struck where he would receive the necessary surgeries in exchange for allowing medical students to observe, or so the story goes. The boy's name was Tommy Douglas. He was Premier of Saskatchewan from 1944 to 1961, and he is known as the father of medicare. [some applause] Thank you. Yes. Hear, hear.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Medicare, of course, was a program that came from his personal experience and that offered taxpayer-funded hospital care to all the residents of Saskatchewan. This was the first in North America. Now, today, we have the Canada Health Act, which is the foundation of our publicly funded health care system, and it reflects Tommy Douglas's belief that access to medically necessary care should be based on need, not on your ability to pay. The Canada Health Act was made law in 1984, and, certainly, Madam Speaker, our health care system has evolved over the last 42 years and since Tommy Douglas was, well, writing policy. But it remains set in the belief that need should drive care.

From the patient's perspective, universal health care provides peace of mind that when you need medically necessary care, not only will you receive high-quality care, but you won't have to use your credit card or remortgage your home to access it. It means that when Albertans travel across our beautiful country, should they need medically necessary care, they will receive it through the portability agreements between our provinces and our territories.

From an economic perspective, Albertans having access to preventative, urgent, and emergency care keeps our population healthy. A healthy population requires fewer medical appointments and interventions, but it's more than that. Albertans are more productive when they are healthy. Healthy children learn better. Businesses benefit from a healthy workforce, and families are more financially secure when they're healthy.

From a societal perspective, it promotes fairness and equity. It supports our social cohesion, reflecting our shared commitment that should anyone need care when they are sick or injured, they should get it. Albertans have always known that we are stronger and much more effective when we work in collaboration for a shared goal. Better use of taxpayer dollars with better outcomes for Albertans certainly fits that narrative.

Now it is 2026, and we are weeks away from 2027. There are more than 5 million Albertans accessing our publicly funded health care system. Our population is growing and aging at the same time. More

Albertans are living longer and requiring a broader range of services and supports than ever before. Albertans are increasingly reliant on services that support healthy aging, chronic disease management, and ongoing care. Albertans need access to evidence-based, expert-interpreted resources that they can trust because, Madam Speaker, we live in a time of distraction and misinformation, and having access to information that you can trust is huge. Now, something that has not changed over the last 42 years is the intent of our public health care system, the belief that need, not greed or the balance in your bank account, determines or directs the care you receive.

Health care is incredibly important, but it is also costly. It accounts for more than 40 per cent of Alberta's provincial annual budget. It stands to reason that given the investment in both dollars and in people, Alberta's expectation that their government will use the resources they have and will avoid wasteful or redundant practices shouldn't be controversial.

Albertans expect their government to strive for better, smarter solutions that work for Albertans. Bill 211 brings a practical, common-sense legislation that empowers better use of our resources. It saves taxpayer dollars while taking a meaningful step to restore Alberta's confidence in our health care system. Honestly, it's an opportunity for this government to instill hope to Albertans by passing this bill, demonstrating that they can recognize, acknowledge, and accept good legislation even if it's coming from this side of the House. Now, further to that, it would actually demonstrate that they're willing to put Albertans back into the conversation, which they have clearly removed them from.

Now, the legislation on its surface is very simple. It requires all health authorities in Alberta to submit a report every quarter to an established group of health experts. The report would then provide both clinical and patient-reported outcomes. The experts would then publish the combined data to a publicly facing website. On an annual basis these experts would apply their knowledge and experience to develop recommendations based on that data and then put it forward to the minister responsible. The minister must then develop an action plan to address those recommendations and publish online the plan and their progress to keep Albertans informed.

Right now Albertans can access limited outcome data through various health portals, both at the national and the provincial level. However, most of the data disclosed are quantitative measurements, things you can count: the number of surgeries completed, readmission rates, and so on, and what the minister shared earlier when she was so proudly showing this new data, talking about the quantitative pieces, nothing about the patient's experience.

What Bill 211 does is it adds in that qualitative data, much harder to measure because it's subjective to the patient's experience. It's asking the question: did the care actually improve the patient's life? We're asking questions like: how did you feel during intervention? Comparing it to before intervention, do you feel better or worse? Take the example of readmission rates. Right now the external portal can show you how many patients were readmitted, but it does not capture or consider the impact or the experience of the patient. When a patient is discharged from hospital, they've been very sick, and now they're deemed healthy enough to go home. Then something happens and they have to return to hospital. What does that mean for the patient, for their stress, their families, their child care?

3:00

Though it's not always obvious, the mental health or disposition of a patient has direct impact on their health and well-being. For example, studies show that pain can be increased by simply overthinking or ruminating about it, but it also shows that pain can be decreased through audible cursing. Just so we all know: audible cursing.

An Hon. Member: Not in the Chamber, though.

Member Batten: Not in the Chamber, of course. Of course.

Now, we've all heard the story of a mother suddenly having the power to move a car to save her child. And we're probably all familiar with the placebo effect, where just the idea of something can make you feel better. I certainly don't mean to imply that positive thinking or audible cursing are, you know, the cat's meow for pain management. It's clearly not just mind over matter, but we would be doing Albertans a giant disservice if we ignored or discounted their experiences, especially if our goal is to deliver to them the best care while optimizing the use of taxpayer dollars.

Now, the patient experience provides valuable insight into what's working well for them and where improvements might be needed, from the lens of the patient. The patient's lived experience, combined with clinical data, helps create a more complete picture of the patient, and the combined data provides us a better insight into how the entire health system is performing. It can support better decision-making for better outcomes for Albertans.

Albertans deserve a health care system that is responsive to best practices to deliver those better outcomes. To be responsive, a strong understanding of the overall health care system is required. Clinical . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to take the opportunity to thank the Member for Calgary-Acadia for this well-thought bill, Bill 211, Patient Outcomes Reporting Act, and more importantly for her eloquence in explaining why this bill is necessary and why we need to have this debate, and encouraging the members opposite, the government members, to support this bill.

Too often our health care debates in the House focus on inputs and outputs. We just heard from the minister, when responding during question period, in terms of talking about how many surgeries are performed. The minister talks quite a lot about the number of family physicians practising in the province and how long someone waits for treatment. Those are important discussions. Those are important topics to talk about, very important measures in terms of the outputs we get for the inputs that we've made into our system, but they do not tell the whole story, Madam Speaker. They do not provide that we are getting the best outcomes for the inputs that we make, and that is what we need to measure.

That's what Bill 211 is attempting to do. Albertans want to know whether the care they receive is improving their lives, not whether they just got – of course, they need to get care; they need to access affordable and quality care. But does it improve quality of lives? When someone undergoes a hip replacement, is their pain reduced? Can they work more comfortably than before? Can they return to work? Can they care for their families? Can they participate in their community again? These are some health outcomes that we need to report on, and that's the attempt that Bill 211 is trying to measure.

When someone receives treatment for chronic illnesses, are they able to function better in their daily life? Are they experiencing a better quality of life? These are important questions, Madam Speaker, because if your input doesn't measure the outcomes, you don't know whether you're getting the best out of the investment that you are making. And this is, more importantly, an investment in the lives of Albertans. Bill 211 focuses on patient outcome reporting. The bill recognizes that we cannot fix what we do not measure, and we cannot improve what we do not openly report and discuss. Those are very important for our systems.

If government is serious about accountability, then we need to move beyond simply counting procedures and wait times. These are important, but we need to go beyond that. If they are serious about accountability – and I've heard today a lot of times repeated the word "accountability" in this House – they should support Bill 211. This is because Alberta already collects such information.

For example, Alberta collected patient-reported outcome measures for hip and knee replacement surgeries for more than two decades, Madam Speaker. Patients are asked directly about their pain, level of mobility, and their quality of life before and after treatment. Albertans are providing this information. The system gets this information. What Bill 211 is asking is to make this information available publicly.

Despite collecting this information, it's difficult for Albertans to find public reporting that shows these outcomes at the facility level, at an aggregated level, at a provincial level as well. Bill 211 will require the aggregate analysis. The bill will require public reporting on patient outcomes, and if passed – and I hope the members opposite will support this – it will establish greater transparency and ensure that outcome data becomes more accessible to Albertans. Bill 211 will make the information available to Albertans, Madam Speaker, in a consistent and understandable manner so that we can understand what changes and improvements we are making and, where we are not improving, we come up with solutions that will address the shortfalls that we experience.

But this government has not been focused on that, Madam Speaker. Instead, this government has been introducing an American-style, two-tier health care system. The ministers of health claim that they are introducing a European-style health care system. Let's talk about that. The minister recently visited Sweden and Denmark with an attempt to learn a European-style health care system. I wonder if the minister can report to this House about what she had learned on patient-reporting outcome measures in the European-style health care system. Like, how much investment do they make, and what do they get out of those investments?

The minister visited Sweden and Denmark. Those are countries that have become internationally recognized, Madam Speaker, for measuring and reporting patient outcomes. Sweden has maintained a national registry for decades and publishes regular reports that allow outcomes to be examined openly, publicly. It was a very good opportunity for the minister to explore this. Another country that the minister visited was Denmark. Similarly, it's a country that uses national registries and public reporting to monitor outcomes and drive improvements across its health care system.

If it is a European style that the government is making an attempt to make it, they will support this bill because this is what European countries do, and this is exactly what those two countries that the minister recently visited provide publicly. These jurisdictions recognize that transparency is not a threat to the health care system. Those countries recognize transparency is a tool for improving health outcomes. When information is available, providers can learn from one another, policy-makers make clear decisions, and patients can have greater confidence in the care that they receive and the care that is delivered in their facilities. That's exactly the principle behind Bill 211.

The objective is to learn what works, Madam Speaker. The objective is to identify where improvement is needed, and the objective is to ensure that public investments are delivering the best possible results for Albertans.

3:10

Albertans have the right to know whether their health care system is achieving meaningful outcomes, and that is patient-reported measures, that are necessary for measuring the outcomes that we get on the investments that we make. More importantly, Albertans have the right to know whether investments are translating into better health, better recovery, and better quality of life. And when outcomes are not where they should be, they have the right to know that government plans to do something about it, that government plans to address those areas where improvement is necessary and required.

At a time when health care spending continues to grow and demand for services continues to increase, measuring outcomes has never been more important, and this bill is being tabled in a timely manner when this is so important and it's necessary. Improvement ultimately delivers better care for patients, and that's why I encourage members of this House to support Bill 211, the Patient Outcomes Reporting Act. It is necessary. It is important. It helps the system. It provides transparency and information to policy-makers, like members of the Assembly, and, more importantly, it ensures that Albertans are getting the best out of the investment that we make in our health care system.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Acadia for proposing such a thoughtful, patient-centred piece of legislation, and congratulations on getting a bill in the draw this early in a private member's service. It's taken me seven years to get drawn for a private member's bill, so I'm a bit envious. I am very much not just envious but also joyous to see legislation brought forward from somebody who has such extensive health care service, somebody who's worked at Alberta Children's, at the call centres when you call asking for medical advice, somebody who's been a front-line nurse bringing forward something that, I think, nurses often keep front of mind, which is the patient experience.

I can also speak currently as the shadow minister of Hospitals and Surgical Health Services but also the former minister and generally as an MLA and specifically, I imagine, as an NDP MLA. People often come to me to share their health care experiences, and when I'm at an outdoor festival or in my office, it doesn't matter. They want me to know about the positive and negative individual outcomes that they or their family members have experienced, because they compel all of us as their representatives to do something about it, to do something to build on the strengths of the system and to do something to correct the weaknesses, to make sure that every patient gets the right care in the right place by the right provider.

Through you, Madam Speaker, of course, I know how moved the member for Airdrie was earlier this week in talking about finally being able to see children born in their home community rather than having to travel down the highway. Those are specific anecdotes; not hearing the number of how many babies were born but hearing what a difference it makes to those specific families to be able to have care closer to home. And that's exactly what this legislation is trying to get to.

We do have some qualitative research that is gathered right now by the Health Quality Council of Alberta, and of course this legislation calls on expanding those opportunities to ensure that we all can gather the qualitative experiences to be able to make best-informed decisions when it comes to legislation governing the health care system, funding, governing where we allocate those resources, and so forth. I am grateful that this bill really does focus on the patient-reported outcomes, not – I know that recent CIHI data came out that talks about the quantitative, and that is useful. That does tell, I would say, half or maybe even slightly more than half of the story, depending on your perspective as a researcher, but

that qualitative piece is what this bill is specifically referring to, so those specific patient stories. I will touch base on one of the reports that I think Health Quality Council – it's a very short report. I hope all members have had a chance to review it, but I will give some of the key factors that it has identified. It's one of the reports that I got to see in more depth when I was the health minister than what the public does receive.

For example, the report that I'm referring to today was released in April of 2024, and it was around improving health care together through the Health Quality Council, and specifically it was about long-term care and continuing care experiences. It was titled 2022-23 Facility-based Continuing Care Resident and Family Experience Surveys. This is a piece of what I think can govern good decision-making. It refers to what the frequency was with regard to response, and in long-term care the response rate was lower, the number of people who actually filled out the survey, than in other forms of care that were surveyed.

One of the takeaways that I have still today in this survey, but I definitely had a more thorough background in previously, is that in terms of satisfaction levels, the highest levels of satisfaction for residents and for family members were in rural settings and in public facilities. That, to me, enabled me to draw a couple of conclusions.

One of the reasons why some of them referred to rural settings having higher satisfaction levels was because of the continuity of care. There are far fewer competing places to work. There are higher likelihoods of getting full-time hours in a rural community whereas we know that in many urban centres people pull together full-time or even sometimes 1.5, 1.8 contracts, FTE-equivalent, by working in multiple centres, and that does lead to less continuity of that patient experience in working with that provider. One of the other things that was referred to was the amount of time that people were able to provide individually. Sometimes in lower density areas in the province there is a higher staffing ratio, fewer patients to the individual workers.

We're able to try to draw some of these conclusions by looking at this report, but what the member is proposing in this bill is to have much more thorough evidence to be able to use. Of course, some might say: well, how do we protect the individuals? Obviously, through rigorous standards around making sure that we protect confidentiality of individuals who are giving their feedback. But that rolled-up piece of being able to access the information in a thoughtful way I think is really important. A parallel that I will draw is that the Child and Youth Advocate's office does very thoughtful analysis, typically, about interviewing individuals and getting their feedback about their experiences within the system, and that's, I think, an opportunity that we have to gain in this legislation.

This bill delivers greater transparency and accountability while requiring that data be collected, analyzed, and published regarding those individual patient outcomes and that recommendations be brought forward or drawn with them and then specifically ministers' action plans or ministerial action plans, which, of course, would be brought through the minister to all members. I think this would enable us all to do our jobs better as individual representatives of our constituents throughout a variety of ridings. I love getting the one-on-one feedback from people about their experiences within the health care system, but being able to see it processed and aggregated in a way that all of us could use it I think would be beneficial to us when it comes to making decisions regarding the health care system at large.

The bill would require that health authorities report quarterly on their outcomes in relation to those patient-related outcomes, patient experiences, and safety, of course, and specific instances and access issues. I know that I'm hearing a lot of people outside of my riding reach out about access issues that they're having, particularly in rural communities where emergency departments are regularly closed and staffing is one of the number one reasons cited for that. That wasn't the case eight years ago. It is certainly a new challenge that the current government is facing. Of course, there could be lots of justifications as to why that is the current circumstance, but when I talk to people in my hometown or in other remote communities, they don't want excuses; they want solutions.

To be able to actually understand what the consequences are when somebody shows up in Fairview and their hospital isn't open or in Lac La Biche and their emergency department isn't open and what that actually means to them when they navigate where to go to receive that emergency care I think is a piece that would benefit us in holding the minister and the current government to account and also any future minister or government of the day to account to make sure that we're actually meeting the demands that we see throughout the province, learning on those individual patient experiences. Being able to say that the number of babies went up that were delivered last year is lovely, but knowing how many of those babies were actually born on the side of the highway, how many were born in the back of an ambulance, how many had negative outcomes because they weren't able to be born closer to home: those are the pieces that I think would tell a more honest and thorough telling of what is actually happening in the current health care system.

3:20

I will say that I do talk to Albertans all the time about their individual experiences, and when we hear responses from the current government about "Well, the number of doctors has gone up" but individuals know that their doctor has retired or left the province and that they can't get a new family doctor – hearing that the number of doctors has gone up doesn't speak to their individual experience. Their individual experience is that they can't get a family doctor, and they're struggling to be able to have early diagnosis for things that they are concerned might be an issue in the long term.

We all, I think, know somebody who has lived with cancer. Knowing if their cancer journey was one that put them at the centre, if it was one where they felt like they got access to the treatment that they needed as quickly as possible and that they understood why it might take a few weeks to get radiation – there was some boasting today about the number, within four weeks. I will tell you that years ago when both of my parents needed radiation, we did not have to wait four weeks, but the time that we waited between knowing that they needed treatment and the time that they actually got treatment felt like a lifetime. For some it could actually cost you your life. So being able to get that anecdotal information from individuals, being able to consolidate it into reports, protecting it for anonymity, and using it to drive effective decision-making moving forward I think is a very reasonable request of any government.

I commend the Member for Calgary-Acadia for the work that went into preparing this and using her own personal experience as well as that of others to help drive legislation that I think is focused on solutions. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of hospital and surgical services.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in opposition to Bill 211, the Patient Outcomes Reporting Act. At the outset I want to acknowledge something that's really important. The underlying principle being advanced by members on the other side of the Assembly is one that I believe all members can support in principle. Accountability matters, transparency matters, and measuring patient outcomes does matter. Every Albertan wants a health care system that delivers results. They want

timely access to care, high-quality treatment, and confidence that their health care system is continuously improving. They also want assurance that government and health care organizations are being held accountable for the services that they do provide.

The challenge before us today is not whether patient outcomes should be measured. They absolutely should be measured. The question is whether this legislation is necessary to accomplish that goal. I don't believe it's necessary because, Madam Speaker, we are actually doing it. Given the bill proposed and considering systems already in place across Alberta's health care system, I believe it is clear that this legislation addresses a problem that largely has already been addressed.

Alberta already has extensive mechanisms for collecting, measuring, analyzing, and publicly reporting health care performance. Patients, families, researchers, and policy-makers already have access to a significant amount of information regarding the performance of our health care system through publicly available dashboards, annual reports, quality indicators, system performance measures, and patient experience reporting.

Yes, Madam Speaker, patient experience reporting already exists, and Health Quality Alberta already measures that outcome. Albertans can already see how their health care system is performing and where improvements are being made. This is an important point because the legislation before us seems to assume that Alberta lacks meaningful patient outcome reporting. That assumption simply does not reflect reality.

Madam Speaker, our government has spent considerable time and effort improving transparency within the health care system. In fact, you can go to MyHealth records. When I first started as the minister of health in June of 2023, only about 250,000 people were accessing their MyHealth records in Alberta. We now have closer to 2 million people accessing their records. We're going to continue to improve that.

Another example is the establishment of public reporting tools that allow Albertans to review health care system performance in a more accessible way. These tools provide information on wait times, surgical performance, patient safety indicators, access to care, and a variety of other measures that help paint a clear picture of how our health care system is functioning.

In addition, organizations such as Health Quality Alberta already play a significant role in monitoring and reporting on health system quality and patient outcomes, Madam Speaker. It is actually in their mandate. Their work helps identify areas for improvement, track performance, and support evidence-based decision-making. This work is ongoing and continues to evolve as the health care system changes and grows. For that reason, I struggle to see what meaningful gap this legislation would actually fill.

Madam Speaker, one primary concern with Bill 211 is that it risks creating unnecessary duplication, and I'm sure the members opposite would not want that. The legislation proposes additional reporting structures and additional administrative requirements even though similar work is already occurring throughout our health care system. We should be careful whenever we consider creating new layers of bureaucracy. Transparency is important, but transparency is not strengthened simply by creating another report, another administrative process, or another reporting body. In many cases duplication can make accountability less clear rather than more clear. Albertans deserve to know who is responsible for delivering results and who is accountable when improvements are needed. Our government has worked very hard to bring greater clarity to those responsibilities through health system refocusing and, of course, enhanced accountability structures. Creating overlapping reporting requirements risks adding complexity to a system that already provides substantial amounts of information to the public.

Madam Speaker, we should also consider the practical impacts of implementing legislation like this. Every reporting requirement requires resources. Data must be collected, analyzed, validated, published, reviewed, and maintained. And while that's already going on, staff must be assigned to develop and oversee these processes, which the members opposite – again, I refer back to further duplication. Systems must be updated, policies must be drafted, administrative structures must be co-ordinated. Those resources are not unlimited. Every dollar spent creating duplicate reporting systems is a dollar that cannot be spent elsewhere in health care. Every hour devoted to building a new bureaucratic process is time that could otherwise be spent supporting front-line health care delivery, improving services, or addressing challenges facing patients. That does not mean reporting is unimportant. Quite the opposite. Reporting is essential. That's why we do copious amounts of it. However, we must ensure that reporting requirements provide meaningful value and address genuine gaps rather than simply replicate work that is already being done.

What Albertans ultimately care about is not the number of reports government produces; they care about results. They want to know if they can access a family doctor, that they will be able to do so. We've seen attachment in this province go up. We've seen the number of family practitioners go up. I'm really happy to be able to report that. They want confidence that surgical wait times are improving. And, Madam Speaker, I told you earlier that we, in fact, are leading the country in the ability to perform surgeries in a timely fashion. They want emergency departments that are available when they need them. We're continuing to add spaces in our acute-care system.

They want skilled physicians, nurses, and health care professionals in their communities. Madam Speaker, I can't wait to share CIHI data. Yes, it comes from the federal government, but we can compare ourselves to all the other provinces, and we are seeing tremendous results; in fact, 2 to 1 in workforce recruitment and retainment of physicians and the same for nurses in this province.

They want a health care system that continues to become stronger and more responsive over time. Those are the outcomes that matter most to the people we represent. When we look at recent progress across Alberta's health care system, there are many encouraging signs that improvement is in fact occurring. We have seen growth in the physician workforce, as I've said, continued recruitment efforts, expanded surgical capacity, and significant investments aimed at improving access to care. These are measurable outcomes that directly affect the lives of Albertans. Our responsibility as legislators is to focus on policies that improve those outcomes while ensuring appropriate transparency and accountability. I do not believe Bill 211 advances that objective in a meaningful way because the reporting system it seeks to create already exists in various forms throughout our province.

3:30

Madam Speaker, I think there is a broader principle at play here as well. Good legislation should solve a clearly identifiable problem. It should fill a gap, address a weakness, or improve an existing process. In this case, this does none of those. Members opposite have not convincingly demonstrated that Alberta lacks patient outcome reporting. Instead, they have proposed a new framework that is largely duplicative of requiring information measurements and accountability mechanisms that, as I've said many times, are already available. That is why I have difficulty supporting this proposal. In fact, I don't support this proposal. The goal of transparency is already being pursued. Patient outcomes are already being measured. Performance data is already being reported. Accountability structures

are already in place and continue to be strengthened. Rather than creating new layers of administration, I believe our efforts should remain focused on improving care, supporting health care workers, expanding access, and building on the reporting systems that Albertans already have access to today.

In closing, Madam Speaker, this debate is not about whether patient outcomes matter, because they do. It is not about whether accountability matters, because it does. And it's not about whether transparency is important, because it certainly is. The question is whether Bill 211 is necessary to achieve those results, and the answer would be no; it isn't necessary.

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

Member Campbell: At 4 a.m. I was awoken with severe stomach pains so significant and unexpected and never detected before that I went to the emergency department. At 4:30 in the morning you might not expect significantly long waits at the ER, but I was found there, too, and unpleasantly discovered such long waits that by the time that noon had rolled around, I had yet to speak with a physician.

Over the course of that eight hours, or seven and a half, my pain had started to subside, and by the end it was noon, a workday, and as a working father with a young family I thought the right solution was to go back to work, and that's what I did. I became one of those skyrocketing numbers of Albertans who go to our emergency departments, do not seek care, and then depart. That stomach pain that I'd felt was actually the precursor for my cancer diagnosis and was the accumulation of those cells impacting my gallbladder. If I had had the chance to speak with a physician in a timely fashion, they would have done more exploratory work and accelerated my personal timeline by multiple months.

When I was eventually diagnosed and we knew what the diagnosis was, there was a wait of four weeks until treatment start date. That was an extremely unusual part of time because health complications were mounting on the side. That was how all of this was discovered with my own personal health journey, through the complications. Fortunately, those were caught and had stopgap measures, but they weren't producing positive outcomes and are likely creating long-term effects that the lack of timely care would have resolved and eliminated entirely. My health care practitioners were aware of what was going on, but the broader structure likely was unaware and does not know of the personal impacts that happened from the lack of timely care and the patient experience.

I recently had a friend that went to the emergency department with her baby. It was 6:30 in the morning. An infection had worsened overnight, and by the morning it warranted an ER visit. Through long waits with a one-year-old and other children at home, after eight hours she was speaking with a nurse. The nurse had asked, you know, "What time were you here?" and she said, "Six-thirty," and the nurse's response was, "a.m. or p.m.?" The length of wait in our system is so remarkably long that eight hours is not the assumed answer, but it really truly could have been 20 hours with a one-year-old in an emergency department waiting for a serious infection behind the eye, swelling, close to the brain.

These are real issues impacting real Albertans, and their opinions matter, and that's why I really like this proposed legislation. It takes into account the human element. People want to live in a place that works. They need data-driven insights because data drives so much of our lives. That's why so many companies are clamouring to accumulate personal information about every single one of us, yet when we have important data living within our health care system, our current arrangement is to ignore vast swaths of it. It should be publicly available so that our health care system people can look at it and say: "Is this working? Is this improving?"

It's important to understand the trajectory of what is changing, not just a point-in-time snapshot but a trajectory that measures not just raw numbers but also per capita figures. Per 1,000 residents are things getting better or worse? This government seems really keen to report on raw figures, but of course otherwise acknowledging that the province has grown significantly in numbers, and never report on per capita numbers. Per 1,000 Albertans are we getting better or worse?

The accountability of this bill is so important. Everything that we do is accountable to the public: how we spend our money, how we organize our systems, how we spend our time. We expect accountability at every turn, and if we can improve it in simple solutions in a system that already accumulates so much information, that is an effective use of resources.

I really appreciate that this initiative is driven by a health care practitioner. I've spoken with many health care practitioners at the doors, and none of them have been pleased with the changes made to the organization of the ministries and duplication of structure that exists under this UCP government. None of them have found that juggling multiple e-mail inboxes, because now their singular AHS status is juggling family medicine, acute care, hospital lists – the list is endless. Duplication is a true fear and concern in the health care system, and this bill does not duplicate a single piece of it. It is so important to find humancentric, patient-reported statistics.

The last thing that I really appreciate about this is that transparency is so important. It lets us know what is happening. We don't have to take someone's word for it; we can examine it ourselves. We can have experts who know the system and report on it independent of the government. Isn't that what we expect of all of our public services, to have reporting that validates what the government tells us? I actually think it's a little bit of a common refrain that you should take what the government tells you with a grain of salt, and I've certainly been experiencing that in this Chamber over the last week and a half. It seems like no problem is too small for this current government to stick their noses in and no issue too large to shirk their responsibility on it, and the response to this bill feels exactly just that. They're shirking responsibility to be held to account.

One of the best parts of this bill is that it requires the minister to act on the results, and that actually might be one of the deterrents for unfortunate reasons. Could we expect folks to just take action when the good data is put in front of them, when people give them the feedback that really matters and really counts? It's so much easier to deflect than to do. It's so much easier to duplicate departments than to add a new, novel, important way to address health care in our province.

When people show up at our hospitals, they're administered a highly sophisticated but very simple confidence test. They stand in front of a small machine that says: how long would you like to pay for parking? This is a confidence measure in the way that this government delivers health care. Are you confident that you'll be seen by a health care practitioner within one hour, four hours, 12 hours, 24 hours? My personal advice is to always select the 24-hour option. You have no idea what's going to happen. You might as well pay an extra 50 cents and get 12 more hours of wiggle room.

If we were paying attention to patient feedback, this wouldn't be the most sophisticated feedback mechanism that we have. Unfortunately, what people select on these things is not publicly available. I would love to see over time: are people paying for longer parking or shorter? But we have a way better way to measure patient outcomes, and that is the bill that has been introduced.

3:40

Data removes ideology and dogma, things that I think we can all agree should be removed from our health care system. This government doesn't have all the answers. No political party has the market cornered on great ideas, and I'm so grateful to be standing for a great idea right now. We don't have a culture of trust that exists between our doctors, our nurses, our other health care workers, and the whole allied health care universe. There's a culture of fear and reprisals and punitive outcomes handed down to those who are bold enough to say that not everything is peachy keen in health care. This legislation would remove that important barrier for people to have their stories heard, to have the stories of individuals heard. This builds a just system where the truth cuts through cover-ups.

This government is building a track record that will make Albertans sicker with slower health care outcomes and lifelong impacts from delayed care. I am, unfortunately, a frequent flyer of emergency departments. I've had the pleasure of being at the Rockyview general hospital, the South Health Campus, and the Calgary Foothills hospital in the last couple of years, and I've seen the long waits that occur at all of those. You can see it for yourself if you just google "Calgary hospital wait times." You can see it around the clock. There's no time of day that's magic, but you need to show up when you have to show up. You can't just game the system and find that, hey, health care has got much shorter wait times at noon or at 1 in the afternoon or at 4 in the morning. Our system is really in a mess around the clock. That's why this is so important.

Albertans really want to know: is their health care system improving, does their health care system help them get better, can they see a doctor or a specialist when they need to, and is their health care safe? These are fundamental questions that this bill effectively addresses. It is so important. These are things that people deserve to have answers on, and they need answers from this government.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, for the new guy that was perfectly timed to the second.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in support of private member's Bill 211, Patient Outcomes Reporting Act. I think it's a very interesting time to be having this conversation and to be listening to what the government has to say around accountability and reporting and how we're measuring outcomes within our health care system. In fact, I would say that how we're measuring the social determinants of health from how we're wrapping around services, even when patients leave those acute-care facilities and move into more rehabilitative settings, we're seeing across the country that there is data being collected in every single province around outcomes for patients. What we're also seeing is that Alberta is behind many of those provinces.

We're seeing in other jurisdictions an openness and a transparency where data is being collected and being reported in real time. We're seeing that pain tolerance is being reported, and outcomes are being reported that aren't being reported in Alberta publicly. It does raise a question around why there would be a resistance by this government to not want to be able to report on that information.

One example of that would be hip and knee replacement, which we hear the government talking about all the time. They're increasing hip and knee replacements in this province like they're going out of style. Everybody is getting a hip; everybody is getting a knee. They've got all these ORs opening up. It's such an exciting time in Alberta. Come here and get your hips and knees done. Yet we're not reporting on the quality of service past that operation.

We don't know if the patients that are receiving that care have a decrease in pain tolerance, have an increase in mobility, have a continuing of care past that operation into their communities where they reside, or whether or not they're having to come back to an urban centre to receive that. We don't know the comparison between an urban and rural provider because that information isn't being publicly reported and delivered to Albertans so that we understand what's going on. I wonder why that is. I mean, if we really want to focus on hips and knees, because that's a good example we also know that that's where the move to privatization is happening most frequently, where we're seeing more people paying to go and get those surgeries done in Alberta so that they can advance through those wait periods and be able to access those services. So as part of the question around, well, why we don't want this data to be reported, it's because it's actually being done through private health care and not through the public system.

Is it about a private versus public issue? The government will shake their head and say: "No, no, no; that's not at all what we're doing. That's not happening. That can't be the case." But then the government's argument would be – and we heard it from the minister – that it's about duplication. We don't need to be reporting on this information because it's duplicating information that is already being collected. Okay. Well, if it's already being collected, then why isn't it publicly being reported? I guess that would be the first question.

The second piece of that is around: well, we need resources to be able to analyze that data and to be able to look at it and then implement it into policy. Well, I guess if we're collecting data that needs to be implemented into policy, it's probably because there's a policy problem and we have a gap in services. I'm okay and I believe Albertans would be okay with having individuals analyzing that data that's being collected and recommending policy changes to provide better health care. That just makes sense.

But what we see the government doing instead of resourcing good policy, being able to analyze good data and implement quality service, is exactly what the minister just stood in the House and spoke about, which is the concern around duplication. The minister spent the whole time responding to this private member's bill about the concern around spending money, duplicating services. I believe the quote was that less clear is more clear, which I wasn't sure I totally understood. But I'll be clear. When you create four different health care policies and four different health care delivery systems, you've now duplicated the system. That is literally what the government has spent their whole time in government in the last three years doing: duplication over duplication over duplication.

We went from one health ministry to four, and we wonder where the duplication is. Well, I don't know. We've got Acute Care. We've got mental health services. We've got Health Shared Services. We've got 14 regional advisory boards right now. [interjection] I know the minister really doesn't like it when I'm speaking facts because he starts talking to me when I'm doing it. Facts matter. Fourteen regional advisory councils have been established, and the work has continued to establish an Indigenous advisory council. So we don't even have that yet, which I find super fascinating. [interjection] Well, then update your website. As of winter 2025 that didn't exist.

But I'm glad to hear the government is continuing to be innovative on developing more policies to provide services while the minister has literally said that we can't have this bill because it's going to create data and it's going to create policy changes and we don't have enough and it's too much duplication. It's really interesting to me.

I also find it interesting that the last hospital that was built in Alberta is probably older than me, yet we hear continuously across this province the need for more health care and more hospitals. The government can't seem to decide where they want those hospitals to be: north Edmonton, south Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, maybe

Sherwood Park, maybe Red Deer, maybe over here, maybe Lethbridge. Do you know why the government struggles so much with trying to figure out where they need to put a hospital? It's because they're not analyzing the data to tell them where it would make sense. Their quality of information – everything that this piece of legislation would do would support the decision-making processes to decide where the quality of care in public health care needs to be.

In my riding, for example, we had Henwood. Henwood was a voluntary treatment centre where people could voluntarily go and receive addictions treatment. Unfortunately, it flooded, but instead of fixing it or coming up with a system to deal with it, the government just closed it in June. So Henwood doesn't exist now. You know what also doesn't exist in our province at the moment? Those specialized mental health and addiction treatment beds that Henwood was offering, because the government has done nothing to replace them. Yet just down the road, two kilometres, they're going to build two involuntary treatment towers for mental health and addictions. So let's close the voluntary places, the places where people actually have already identified that they need support and where they have specialized mental health and addiction treatment staff. Close that one, and then in two to three years from now we're going to involuntarily confine people into those treatment towers two kilometres down the road because we have now a gap in services. The data would support that that's a bad decision, a hundred per cent bad decision.

3:50

I want to know where those treatment beds are. I want to know where Albertans get to go today to be able to receive voluntary treatment. Henwood is closed. It doesn't exist anymore. They got closed in June. [interjection] Well, it must really bother the government because they keep talking to me about it. They know I'm right. They haven't reopened voluntary beds to replace the ones that are happening in Henwood. It's not existing, and I would love to know where . . . [interjection] If the minister would like to stand up and answer my questions after my turn is over, I would be more than welcome to get that information so that I can get people voluntary treatment. They're not receiving it, and I know they're not receiving it.

What would be even better is if the towers that are being built in my riding that are just for involuntary could be a hospital in north Edmonton. If the government has acknowledged that everything that's needed to build those two towers exists, then you know what could also exist? An acute-care facility attached to it. Why are we spending so much money and not serving Albertans?

The data isn't being analyzed to acknowledge the fact that the Royal Alex hospital in downtown Edmonton serves my community and all of northeast Edmonton and it doesn't have the capacity to do it anymore. The numbers of the amount of people that go down there for services are more than any hospital in Calgary by far. Yet for some reason this government doesn't have the capacity to plan ahead, to look at the information and go: wait a minute; we have a gap here.

We're going to spend millions and millions of dollars building two towers, but we're not going to put an emergency room attached to it. That makes sense. We're going to spend something in Fort Saskatchewan, and we're going to spend a little bit in Sherwood Park, and we're going to spend a little bit over here. We're not going to build one hospital to serve everybody. We're just going to try to Band-Aid everything together, which is what this government does in health care. It is Band-Aid solutions after Band-Aid solutions.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak about Bill 211, the Patient Outcomes Reporting Act. Right off the bat, I just want to make one thing clear, and that's that every member of this Assembly wants to see better health care outcomes for Albertans.

The question today isn't so much the ifs but the hows. The debate is not about if transparency and accountability are important principles for our health care system. We all agree here that those principles matter. Likewise, the debate isn't about if Albertans deserve a better, more efficient health care system. They absolutely do, and I believe that every member of this Assembly wants to see a system that delivers care faster, that uses resources responsibly, and that achieves the best outcomes for patients. Where we differ is not on the goal, Madam Speaker, but on the approach.

The members opposite state that Albertans need to have the resources that grant them access to information about patient outcomes and that government should be required to report on those outcomes, and on that point we also agree. Lots of agreement here. However, Alberta already does exactly that. Our government has put a significant amount of time and effort into increasing the efficiency and transparency of our health care system. Today each health sector is supported by a dedicated ministry and provincial health agency that has clearly defined responsibilities and mandates. These organizations are accountable for measuring performance, reporting results, and demonstrating progress against government priorities.

Our government knows that transparency is most effective when information is accessible, when it's understandable, and when it's useful. In fact, in January of this year Alberta launched the health system dashboard, providing Albertans with easier access to information about the health care system. It's an incredible resource. I've spent time on there myself. So have my constituents. There's really a lot of information there. Rather than relying on broad summaries and waiting for annual reports, Albertans can access that timely information about how their health care system is performing right now. This allows patients, families, communities to better understand key indicators, track progress over time, and see where improvements are being made.

The issue with the bill we are discussing today is that the foundation that the bill seeks to build is already in place. As I mentioned, these dedicated health organizations have clear mandates and greater responsibility for demonstrating results for Albertans, and that structure allows government health care leaders and the public to better understand what is working, what is not, and where improvements are needed.

This legislation risks adding another layer of administration on top of systems that already exist. More bureaucracy doesn't mean better care for patients, and every hour spent duplicating reports is time that could otherwise be spent improving services, supporting health care workers, or implementing solutions that directly benefit patients. We should be cautious whenever legislation creates new administrative obligations without clearly demonstrating that existing systems are underperforming. Before we create a whole new system, we have to clearly demonstrate that the benefit is worth the cost of implementation.

What is often missing from the opposition's argument is an acknowledgement of the substantial reforms already under way. That's why Alberta undertook a significant refocusing of the health care system. Rather than concentrating authority within a single oversized organization, responsibilities have been aligned with organizations that have specific mandates and very measurable goals. That means Alberta knows exactly who is responsible for the results, and the organizations know they are expected to demonstrate performance to the public.

The reality is that our government has already strengthened public reporting significantly. Albertans can access information through various public reporting tools that provide insight into system

performance. Ministries and agencies publish regular reports. We have robust independent reporting through Health Quality Alberta.

Madam Speaker, if Albertans want to access information about their health care system, they do not need to wait for Bill 211 to be passed. Much of that information is already publicly available today. Whether someone wants to understand health system performance, review quality indicators, examine patient experience data, or track progress on key priorities, they can access that information through existing government and agency reporting tools, and I encourage Albertans to do that. The information is there. It is publicly available, and Albertans can review it for themselves.

Albertans already have multiple avenues to see how the system is performing and where improvements are being made. Rather than creating a new reporting regime, our focus should be on continuing to improve the accessibility and usefulness of the information that is already available. The goal should be ensuring that Albertans can easily find and understand the information they're looking for, not creating another layer of reporting that largely duplicates work that's already being done.

Madam Speaker, Albertans expect legislation that is focused on results. They want legislation that reduces emergency service wait times. They want legislation that increases their access to family doctors. They want legislation that gets them off waiting lists and into operating rooms sooner. They want legislation that ensures our hospitals are staffed and functioning efficiently. They're not asking for another reporting structure or another administrative process; they're asking for a health system that delivers when they need it most.

Put that bill through that simple test and ask yourself: how does that make things better? What does it actually do? Will it shorten any surgical wait-lists? Will it help recruit more nurses? Will it attract another physician to a rural community? Will it increase capacity in an emergency department? You will find that the answer is no. What it does do is it creates additional administrative requirements in an area where robust reporting already exists.

Madam Speaker, there is great intent behind this bill, and I want to make sure that I acknowledge the sentiments behind its creation. Transparency is important. Accountability is important. Measuring outcomes is important. Our government already recognizes those principles and has established multiple systems to support them. The bill does not address a gap that currently exists. Instead, it risks creating duplication while adding administrative burden that may ultimately divert attention and resources away from where it really matters, away from patient care.

Albertans deserve a health system focused on delivering results, not simply generating additional paperwork. They deserve a system where accountability is clear, where performance is measured, and where improvements are continually pursued. That work is already under way through existing reporting frameworks and through the ongoing efforts to strengthen Alberta's health system. For those reasons, Madam Speaker, I will not be supporting Bill 211.

Thank you very much.

4:00

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

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in strong support of Bill 211, the Patient Outcomes Reporting Act, brought forward by my wonderful colleague the Member for Calgary-Acadia. Every year we spend billions of dollars on health care. We should not only ask how much is being spent on health care or how many health services are being delivered, but also we should ask whether Albertans are getting healthier. That's why Bill 211 is critical: because it delivers greater transparency and accountability by requiring collection, analysis, and publication of reported patient outcomes, recommendations, and ministerial action plans.

One of the things I find particularly concerning is that Alberta already collects considerable amounts of patient information. We collect data about surgeries and patient experiences and clinical outcomes and services people receive, yet much of that information that tells us whether patients actually improved is not routinely made available to the public. Members of the government opposite today are saying that Bill 211 is unnecessary because transparent and accountable systems already exist, yet the Auditor General in 2025 found inconsistent public reporting and instances where the most favourable numbers were selected.

Where is this existing legal requirement that delivers what Bill 211 proposes? If these obligations already exist, where can Albertans find them? This information is not public, so let me just ask a straightforward question. If we're collecting information about whether patients are getting better, why aren't we sharing those results with every Albertan who funds and depends on this system? Why should Albertans be satisfied with knowing that a surgery was performed without knowing whether it actually reduced pain or improved someone's quality of life? And why should the government be satisfied with reporting how much it spends without showing whether those investments are delivering meaningful improvements? That is not the level of transparency that Albertans deserve, and I believe we can do better.

Bill 211 takes an important step towards changing that. It would require health authorities to regularly report on specified patient outcomes. It would give the Health Quality Council of Alberta responsibility for establishing consistent measures, analyzing results, and making that information publicly available. And, importantly, it would require ministers responsible to publicly respond to recommendations, establish action plans, and report back to this Legislature on their progress. That last part is particularly important to me because transparency without accountability is simply information. Albertans deserve more than another government report. They deserve to know what is working, what is not working, and what their government intends to do about it.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

I also want to speak about something that does not receive nearly enough attention in our conversations about health care. The reality is that our health care system and our economy are deeply connected. When an Albertan cannot get the medical care they need, the consequences do not stop at the hospital doors. A tradesperson who needs knee surgery but continues working in pain because they cannot afford to stop earning a paycheque or a small-business owner who needs medical treatment but cannot find someone to run their business while they recover or a parent waiting for specialist care, struggling to manage a health condition while trying to keep up with their mortgage, groceries, utility bills: for these Albertans getting health care is not just about feeling better; it's about being able to work, to get a job, being able to provide for their families, and being able to live their lives with dignity.

Albertans deserve to know whether the health care they receive improves their pain, allows them to return to work or their daily living. Yet we rarely talk about these outcomes when we evaluate the performance of our health care system. We count the numbers of surgeries completed, but are patients recovering? Are they recovering well enough to return to work? We track appointments and procedures, but are people regaining their mobility, their independence, their quality of life to go to work? From an economic perspective, they matter enormously because when people are unable to work due to untreated

or poorly managed health conditions, there can be consequences for household incomes, business productivity, and our workforce.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when Alberta businesses are already facing challenges finding skilled workers, we should be doing everything possible to help Albertans stay healthy and participate fully in our economy. A stronger health care system supports a stronger workforce, and a stronger workforce supports a stronger Alberta economy. That is why understanding patient outcomes is not just simply a health care priority; it is also an economic priority, something I'm not just seeing from this government. Albertans deserve to know whether the investment in health care is delivering better results, and they have the right to know what the government is doing to fix the problems when it's not.

I want to bring this discussion closer to home because in my constituency of Edmonton-South the consequences of health care decisions are not theoretical; they are very real. In 2024 this UCP government cancelled the south Edmonton hospital project, a hospital that was desperately needed to serve one of the fastest growing areas in our city, a project that had already seen approximately $69 million spent before the government walked away. And what do the people of south Edmonton and areas surrounding have to show for it? No new hospital, no additional hospital beds from that project, and no clear path to delivering the hospital our growing communities were promised. This was a major infrastructure project expected to create thousands of construction jobs, support local businesses and suppliers, and eventually provide long-term employment for health care professionals and support workers. Those were real economic opportunities for Edmonton and surrounding communities, and they were lost when the project was cancelled.

Bill 211 will not build the south Edmonton hospital. It will not by itself solve emergency department overcrowding or increase the number of hospital beds, but what it can do is help ensure that governments are making health care decisions based on clearer evidence of what patients are experiencing and whether the care they receive is meeting their needs. Under this bill patient access issues, including transfers between health care facilities, could be identified and publicly reported as part of the outcome measures established by the Health Quality Council. That information could help us better understand where the system is falling short, and it could help inform future investments in our health care infrastructure and services.

We cannot continue making major decisions about health care infrastructure without ensuring that the experiences and outcomes of patients are central to those decisions. When someone enters our health care system, they're not thinking about government performance indicators; they're thinking about whether they will get better. These are the outcomes we should be measuring.

We should absolutely care about how much we spend on health care. We should absolutely care about how many services are delivered as well, but we must also care about whether those investments are making a meaningful difference in people's lives because the measure of a successful health care system is not simply how many people it treats; it's how well it helps people get better. Bill 211 brings us closer to that standard. Albertans are asking for better health care, better outcomes, and a government that is accountable for delivering both.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there others? The Member for Lethbridge-West.

Member Miyashiro: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak in support of Bill 211 and, more broadly: how do we measure success in our health care system? What we choose to measure shapes what government focuses on, what government funds, and, ultimately, what government delivers. Across the government of Alberta ministries have increasingly embraced performance measurement. Business plans, annual reports, public reporting: they all contain indicators that are designed to show Albertans whether programs are achieving their objectives.

4:10

I've worked in the children and family services, seniors, mental health, and disability sectors, and my work also touched on community and social services, education, justice, and employment, and all use performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness of government programs. But when we look really closely at those measures, we see something else emerging. Government is generally very good at measuring activity, government is reasonably good at measuring service delivery, but government is often less successful at measuring outcomes, and there's a significant difference between those three things. Activity measures tell us what government has done. Service delivery measures tell us whether services were delivered efficiently. Outcomes tell us whether people's lives actually improved, and ultimately outcomes are what matter most.

Mr. Speaker, consider Children and Family Services. The ministry does not simply count the number of children receiving services. It measures permanency outcomes such as reunification, adoption, guardianship. Those indicators attempt to answer the important question: did the intervention help create a stable and permanent environment for a child? Similarly, seniors, community, and social services identifies outcomes such as helping Albertans meet their basic needs, improve employability, achieve greater financial resilience, and those goals focus on whether programs improve lives rather than simply deliver benefits.

But, you know, even there we see some challenges. The office of the Auditor General in Alberta found that income support programs were not adequately measuring and reporting whether recipients were achieving intended long-term outcomes such as increased financial resilience. In other words, government could report what services were delivered but were less able to determine whether those services achieved lasting success. That finding should prompt us to ask an important question. If outcomes matter in child welfare, why would they not matter in health care? If they matter in social services, why would they not matter in health care? If outcomes matter in education, why would they not matter in health care?

Mr. Speaker, nowhere is outcome measurement more important than in our health care system. For years Alberta's health care reporting has focused heavily on operational indicators. We report wait times. We report surgical volumes. We report emergency room department pressures. We report occupancy rates. We report staffing levels. We report number of procedures completed. Those indicators are important. They help us understand how the system is functioning, but they largely measure activity and service delivery. They don't necessarily tell us whether patients are healthier, and patients do not experience health care as a spreadsheet; they experience health care as a person.

When Albertans enter the health care system, they're not thinking about procedure volumes. They're not wondering whether another indicator on a government dashboard improved by 2 per cent. They're asking basic questions. Can I get care when I need it? Will the care I receive be safe? Will it help me get better? Will I be able to see a family doctor? Will I be able to see a specialist? Will my recovery allow me to return to work, return to school, return to my family, and return to my life?

Fortunately, Alberta has experience measuring these things. Through patient-reported outcome measures, often called PROMs, Alberta has been a leader in collecting information directly from patients about their pain, mobility, function, and quality of life

following treatment. Programs involving hip and knee replacement surgeries have used various tools to determine whether treatment actually improved a patient's health and quality of life. Alberta PROMs and EQ-5D research and support unit were established specifically to support this work throughout Alberta.

These initiatives demonstrate something very important. We already know how to do outcome measurement. We already have examples of success. This Bill 211 builds on that foundation. It recognizes that Albertans deserve more than reports about inputs and activities. Albertans deserve information about results because, at the end of the day, health care should not be judged solely by how much money was spent; it should not be judged solely by how many procedures were completed; it should not be judged solely by how many patients moved through the system. Health care should be judged by whether people get better.

That's why Bill 211 represents an important shift. It shifts the conversation away from simply counting health services and towards understanding health outcomes. It asks not merely whether treatment occurred but whether treatment worked, not merely whether care was delivered but whether health improved.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation also has the potential to strengthen our publicly funded health care system. Too often debates about health care become debates about delivery models, privatization, or spending levels. Albertans are less interested in ideology than they are in results. They want evidence. They want transparency. They want accountability. Strong outcome reporting gives Albertans the information they need to evaluate whether investments in public health care are producing positive results. It strengthens confidence in publicly funded health care by demonstrating not only what services were delivered but what outcomes were achieved. It enables governments of any political stripe to make better decisions about where resources should be directed in the future.

Perhaps most importantly, Mr. Speaker, outcome reporting can shine a light on Albertans who have historically been underserved by the health care system. Provincial averages often conceal important realities. Rural Albertans may experience health care differently than urban Albertans. Indigenous Albertans may experience health care differently than non-Indigenous Albertans. Seniors, people with disabilities, newcomers, and those facing mental health and addiction challenges may experience very different outcomes despite accessing the very same services. Without robust outcome reporting those differences can remain hidden. With robust outcome reporting governments can identify gaps, understand disparities, and target investments where they're needed the most. That leads to better policy. That leads to better planning and ultimately leads to better health outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, what Albertans really want to know is not how many reports governments can publish, how many procedures were completed, or how many dollars were spent. They want to know: is my access to health care improving? Can I see a family doctor when I need one? Can I see a specialist within a reasonable time frame? Is my health care safe? Most importantly, when I receive care, does it help me get better? Bill 211 provides a framework for Albertans to begin getting those answers. It builds on approaches already used elsewhere in government. It recognizes that meaningful outcomes are more important than simple activity counts. It strengthens accountability. It supports evidence-based decision-making. It helps identify inequities in underserved populations. It provides policy-makers with better information about where future investments in our publicly funded health care system can have the greatest impact.

The true measure of a health care system is not how many procedures it performs. The true measure of a health care system is whether Albertans are healthier because of it. Bill 211 moves us closer to measuring what truly matters, and that is why I'm so pleased to support it.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Are there others? Okay. The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Member Tejada: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise and speak in support of Bill 211, put forward by my esteemed colleague the Member for Calgary-Acadia. I'm thankful for this bill, especially in light of the deep and lasting damage done by this UCP government to our health care system. We find ourselves in a place where instead of strengthening a unified public health care system, this government has chosen fragmentation. It's broken Alberta Health Services into multiple entities. It has pursued privatization. It's created instability when stability is what is most needed. Transparency is obviously sadly lacking. I find it interesting that we're talking about a bill that improves transparency to Albertans on our health care system in light of a government that has given us the greatest hits of the UCP. I'll just go through a few of those. One was motel medicine, the corrupt care scandal, the DynaLife debacle, deaths in emergency rooms, deaths while awaiting care, and even deaths while, sadly, awaiting diagnosis.

Albertans have lost faith in this government. They want answers. They want to have confidence in a health care system that is patient-centred, that cares for them, that puts them first. This bill delivers exactly what Albertans are asking us for. Just to go through a little bit of what is included in Bill 211: obviously, the title of the bill, Patient Outcomes Reporting Act. It requires public reporting of patient outcomes. It makes the data available to Albertans, and I would say that it makes the data available to Albertans in more than just a dashboard. This isn't a ticker on a website that we're talking about. It creates standardized provincial outcome measures and ensures consideration of population differences. This creates greater government accountability.

4:20

When we're talking about population differences, I also want to just talk a little bit about the population increase. You can tell me that we're doing more surgeries this year than we did 10 years ago, than we did 15 years ago, than we did 50 years ago. There's a very simple explanation for that, and that is population growth as well as the concentration of populations in different places, the different kinds of populations that we're talking about as well.

We're also talking about this bill requiring health authorities to report quarterly on clinical outcomes, patient-reported outcomes, patient experience. I would say patient experience reporting is especially important in light of what we're seeing from this government, in light of the strain that is, despite their best efforts, to blame specific populations or immigration. These are strains that are a direct result of this government's decisions to underfund our public services, namely health care.

It also requires the Health Quality Council to establish at least one reportable patient outcome within two years of the act coming into force, identifying outcomes that have to be reported by health authorities to establish standards that allow aggregate information and patient outcomes that can then be compared provincially. Right now we know that across different jurisdictions there is a lot more data collected and there is a lot more public reporting of that data.

When we're talking about specific populations, my colleague from Lethbridge-West specifically referred to data around First Nations and the care that they're receiving. I think that's incredibly important, especially for a government that – you know, I'll admit this government seems to have a bit of a split personality on whether or not it wants to serve those populations or respect those populations, but it's very, very

important to collect that data. It impacts public health, it impacts quality of life for these folks, and that's something that this bill is asking us to measure and analyze.

It requires that the health council also establish in writing the patient outcome and data collected from health authorities on a website and providing a written copy to each health authority. There are a lot of measurements within this bill that improve transparency, but I would say that in general what this does is it asks us to go beyond just listing figures without context or doing victory laps on how many procedures are done or how quickly they are done. When this government is more focused on creating a two-tiered health care system, this bill is asking our government to have as its goal patient-centered care and its improvement through patient-reported outcomes.

I've heard over and over again the often boastful lists from several of the government members and ministers about how much more money is being spent here than in other provinces. What we're learning from talking to Albertans each and every day is that the simple trotting out of numbers doesn't tell us the whole story. The stories of how Albertans are impacted by the gaps in their health care and how they're impacted in their health care journey not in one specific instance but over their lifetime, how it impacts their family: we know that this government is specifically neglecting to tell us what can be done better.

What comes up over and over again is that access is an issue, that our systems are strained, that wait times put our loved ones in desperate situations. I'm thinking, even just when I was door-knocking in Lethbridge-West during the by-election, of stories of people having to drive two hours for maternal care. Collection of that data, seeing how it impacts specific populations, in that case women in Lethbridge: that is a specific context, and that is specific analysis that needs to be done. Those gaps in the systems need to be improved.

Now, in response to what the sitting minister of health asserted, that patient-reported outcomes already exist: that's only part of the formula and misses the point. Her assertion that this is a duplication of systems and bodies is incorrect. This bill is simply asking that the data already collected by existing organizations like the Health Quality Council be reported publicly and not in a selective way. Further, this bill asks that data be used to improve patient experience.

Albertans do deserve to know whether the health care that they receive will improve their pain, will allow them to just go through life, to be successful, that it will allow them to go back to work. We can't fix health care if we don't consider those patient outcomes in addition to counting the number of surgeries or the wait times for a specialist. Those are stories that my colleagues and I hear in our offices every single day, that those wait times are impacting their families and that they're losing people while they're waiting.

Albertans deserve to know whether the investment that they're putting into their health care is actually delivering better results. I would say that if we're making decisions about our health care system and the major changes that are happening there – I see major changes. I see that we've split it up into several ministries, and the question that I always come back to is: who are those decisions being made for? Is it for improvement of outcomes, or is it for questionable and political reasons, including who gets a contract and who gets bigger contracts? What I'm not seeing is patient-centered care at the centre of those decisions that are being made.

This bill is about delivering greater transparency, about being accountable by requiring not only the collection, which is, you know, in some cases already being done, but also analyzing and making public the reported patient outcomes and, by extension, recommendations and ministerial action plans.

I've received so many e-mails in my office about the gaps in health care. One thing that I will say is that the theme that I hear over and over again is that people are going to their health care providers, they're going to hospital, they're experiencing challenges, they're experiencing those wait times, they're experiencing a lack of follow-through, and the one thing that they understand is that that's due not because of a shortcoming of the service providers but because of the lack of confidence that they now have in this government to properly collect data to be accountable and to serve them.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Happy to rise to debate Bill 211, and congratulations to the Member for Calgary-Acadia for their private member's bill, Patient Outcomes Reporting Act. It's so important given the context that we're in. We have a government that seems quite determined and certain that privatization is the way to improve health care outcomes for Albertans. Having the data to understand whether it is is something that any organization, any CEO, would want. The dashboard that is always wanted in front of an executive when they're looking at their organization is the key performance indicators, the outcomes, the results to know that their business is driving in the right direction, so wanting to have patient outcomes brought forward in an act on reporting seems like good logic.

We've heard so many arguments from the other side about how we don't need more reporting, we don't need more data, but what they are certain of is that we need more health ministries, we need more health CEOs, we need more health boards for all their friends to be appointed to. They're certain that they need more of that, but having more information on whether they're achieving outcomes that are benefiting Albertans is something that they are certain we don't need.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the way they choose to privatize health care and create some two-tier health care system in Alberta, it's not something I understand. I come from private business. I'm used to profit margins. I'm used to operating costs. I'm used to competition. The UCP way of introducing more privatization into the system is to find one of their friends and say: why don't you create a surgical facility? That person says: "Well, I'm going to have to rent land or lease a building or build a building. I'm going to have to get a loan to pay for that. Can you guarantee that if I have a private surgical facility, I'll have the patients come through the door that are going to pay for the loans on my building construction?" The government thinks about that. "Yes, we can guarantee you all the customers you need to pay off your loans, pay for your operating costs, and return a healthy profit to your business." A guaranteed customer for the costs being brought forward by private business means there is no risk for the business. That is not how privatization succeeds in any system.

4:30

I came from a world of competition, where we were competing against other businesses to deliver products and services to our customers. Sometimes we would compete on price. Sometimes we would compete on service. Sometimes we'd have the better product. All of these things would go into the decision-making of the customer. Now, when we talk about health care, we're not asking customers or patients to shop the flyer section of the local newspaper to see: where's the best place they're going to be getting their hip replacement? Where are they going to find the most qualified doctor so that they can then bring a flyer in and say, "Hey, I hear that I get a 10 per cent discount on Tuesdays because that's a slow day in the surgical facility"? That's not

how we're asking people to get their health care. We're dealing in an environment of scarcity. [interjection]

I do appreciate the members that suggested that a seniors discount would probably be very attractive for a lot of people. It probably could be, but that's not how we deliver health care in this province.

Not having data to understand if we are delivering health care well is making it so that the government can come forward, bring up large numbers on how we're spending more in the province, and somehow we're to believe that we are having better health care outcomes. Then when we talk to Albertans day to day, we are hearing about the longer wait times and the poorer outcomes that they're receiving.

To believe that somehow private health care leads to better outcomes isn't supported by data. We're finding that in a study done in Ontario in a long-term care facility where they looked at 384 for-profit facilities versus 256 nonprofit facilities for long-term care, there was a 25 per cent higher hospitalization in the for-profit facilities year over year. There was a 10 per cent higher mortality rate in the for-profit facilities year over year in long-term care facilities that were for profit versus not for profit. There was a single payer for both of these facilities. It was the Ontario taxpayer. Likewise, in Alberta you can expect that when we have a single payer and we have for-profit facilities competing against not-for-profit facilities, you cannot have any idea if you're having better outcomes unless you measure those outcomes and present them to the public.

The thing that I think is most important in understanding not just administrative costs – when we look at the U.S. two-tier system that the UCP are trying to bring in, we have an understanding that the administrative costs for the share of health care expenditures go up 34 per cent. It's a 34 per cent take on the spend by the government versus 17 per cent in the Canadian public health care system. It sounds to me almost like the 50/50 draw at the Oilers games, where 50/50 is supposed to be the split of the pot but there is a massive administrative cost when it is run by the Katz Group.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look at those things that are brought in with for-profit, which are administrative costs, return to shareholders that you need to return in order to deliver health care. When you give your buddies guaranteed contracts with no competition, what we have is a situation like the corrupt care scandal. It's possible that people are coming to the government and saying: well, we can provide your surgical care. They won't take the complicated cases, they won't take the cases that still require everyone to go to the hospital, but they will take the profit and deliver a service that could have been provided in a hospital.

I think the data that's most important, Mr. Speaker, is that when we have for-profit in Alberta, we know that on average we are seeing a 79 per cent increase in cost for procedures, for the same procedure that can be provided in a hospital, a publicly run hospital. We are seeing increasing costs for patients, on average about 52 per cent, and we are seeing that when there are scheduled procedures, it's going up to 55 per cent. What we're not seeing is any decline in the pressures on the public hospitals and the public surgical facilities. So we are seeing an increase in costs going out to for-profit operators, and we're seeing no decrease in the demand on the public facilities. There is an idea that somehow we're increasing capacity in the system and we will provide relief to the public system. We're not seeing that in Alberta. We're just seeing more profit and more cost going to private facilities.

Mr. Speaker, as I sort of wrap up and get close to the end of my points on debate on Bill 211, the for-profit system is creating additional costs in the health care system but no better outcomes. If there was, we would love to see the data that presents it. Provide us the data that shows you're getting better patient outcomes, and let us show that to the public and see that in this House.

Health care should be measured by health for our people, not the wealth for corporations delivering it. When someone needs a hip replacement, they don't care about a company's quarterly earnings; they care about the relief of their pain and a better quality of life. When a parent takes their child to an emergency department, they don't care about the shareholders' dividend. We don't need to see the introduction of privatized health care towers or privatized emergency facilities in this province with two-tier health care that is marching its way in with the UCP.

People want qualified health care professionals, timely treatment, and confidence that the system will be there when they need it, certainty that the public health care system that has been a part of our country for decades will continue and continue to improve, and we know it will be delivered with an Alberta NDP government when we take government in the next election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to add my voice to the debate on private member's Bill 211, Patient Outcomes Reporting Act, and I want to thank my colleague from Calgary-Acadia for bringing this very important bill forward. It's always a real honour to have a private member's bill selected from the draw that the Speaker does for a session, and it's an important act of democracy to be able to put forward something that you think is important and that the Legislature as a whole should be looking at, and it's coming from an individual. Of course, the Member for Calgary-Acadia is a nurse and has had a long career serving people in our public health system, and she has a very deep expertise and understanding in this area, so I am especially pleased to stand in support of private member's Bill 211.

I just want to remind members of the House on both sides that private members' bills, even if they come from the opposition, can be passed. They can be passed, and they have been passed previous times when I've sat in this Chamber, sometimes when I was on the government side. The one I think about is that silver alert bill that came forward. It was a private member's bill with the UCP. It was Drayton Valley-Devon that brought that forward, and it was certainly to address a concern similar to Amber Alerts for children, but it was a silver alert for seniors who may have gone wandering, perhaps a senior with dementia or something like that. That was passed unanimously in this House when we were government. It was something that the UCP brought forward.

4:40

I myself had the honour – it was in the Kenney government – of having a private member's bill passed unanimously, regarding supports for seniors. The government, the UCP, voted in favour of that, and that bill was also passed. I'd love to have exactly that happen with this bill, that the whole Chamber voted in favour of that. You know, just in case some of the newer members aren't aware that this is not necessarily that uncommon, I just did want to start with those opening remarks.

Anyway, Bill 211, of course, brings greater transparency, accountability by requiring collection, analysis, and publication of reported patient outcomes, recommendations, and ministerial plans. So it really creates a very robust framework for government, whatever it is – of course, it's the UCP right now – whatever government is in charge to make sure that we know we're getting the health care we deserve.

We're sometimes measuring the wrong things. Instead of measuring the, you know, improvements in our health, we're measuring just

numbers. And do numbers tell us anything about: we're putting this much money in it, but how much of it is going to the health care corruption scandal? Okay. We've got billions of dollars going to health care, but how much of it is going to nefarious things instead of, really, the direct treatment?

It's important to know how people are improving from that. And, I mean, I can use myself as an example because I've got arthritis in my knees and, you know, I've gone through all of the X-rays and analysis, and they keep telling me, "You're not ready for a knee replacement; you're too young," believe it or not. Sometimes they tell me I'm too young, and I'm a senior. I'm 65. They say, "It's better just to keep exercising, and if the pain is a lot, then how about you go and get an injection?" So I thought: okay; I'll go try and get an injection. They have different kinds of medicine they can inject into your knee so that the pain goes away.

So I actually did this recently, about a month ago, and my doctor couldn't really say whether it was going to work or not. She says, "Who knows whether they'll work," that it's just something that you try, and if it works, great, and if it doesn't, well, that's too bad. So I did go, and I had the injection, and frankly it didn't work. There was no change, but I had to pay out of pocket $275. You know, I could be reimbursed for that, so I was grateful for that.

But it was – I just sort of felt like I needed way more information before I went through that. And, like, I think this bill would have given me that information because we would have looked at the efficacy of this particular drug, and we would know what would work. Of course, there's variance. You know, everyone is kind of unique, and I'm sure that something working for someone might not work for someone else, but I really just felt like there should have been more rigour in whether this was actually going to be effective, and I think this bill would absolutely bring that to the conversation more.

You know, many Albertans, I think, also would really benefit from understanding how well their treatment is impacting them and, I mean – actually, the nurse at the clinic that I went to for this injection wanted me to rate sort of on one of those Likert scales, like: does it feel better or not? It was a very quick thing, and she kind of suggested my answer, and I sort of looked at her, and she goes: okay; a five. So it was not very scientific, I would say.

I just want to also talk about, like, the essence of this bill is something that is also – a very important international advocate for positive health outcomes, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), you know, are seen as an, of course, international leader in patient outcomes. This is exactly the kind of model that they also recommend. PROMs – people have referred to these before – patient-reported outcome measures, are health care measurements and benchmarking or PREMs also, which is patient-reported experience measures. This is something that is sort of a standard reporting mechanism in OECD countries. You know, Canada is one of those countries, but sadly we are not doing that here in Alberta. It would be something that I think would greatly improve our health outcomes.

Unfortunately, you know, what we've seen, and many of my colleagues have talked about this, is how much the UCP is creating so much chaos in our health care system instead of, like, taking the lead from an intelligent, forward-thinking bill like this. We've talked about the extremely long wait times in the emergency departments. We know that a million Albertans don't have a family doc, and that creates a lot of issues in our emergency systems because people aren't supported. Just recently the UCP has fired eight senior leaders in the health system. This is on the heels of firing, certainly, very respected leaders, the two previous CEOs. This is only going to add chaos to our health care system. We have so many issues that, really, the UCP has created. Adopting a bill like this would be a real positive step forward.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

I must interrupt now. The Member for Calgary-Acadia has up to five minutes for this private member's public bill to close debate.

Member Batten: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank all the speakers from both sides of the House for their insightful debate this afternoon. I did want to quickly respond to some of the things we had heard across, from the government and from the minister.

First, the minister had indicated that they could implement this, but they weren't going to, claiming it was duplication. I want to just be very, very clear. I find it unfortunate that the minister and the member across had not actually read the bill. The bill is actually about efficiency, so it's quite the opposite of duplication. Albertans deserve a health care system that is responsive to best practice. To be responsive, you need to have a strong understanding of both clinical and patient outcomes. This data needs to be readily available in its standardized form so you can actually inform the responses. Bill 211 creates this opportunity. It opens the doors for better decision-making when we consider the patient experience, clinical outcomes, and the tax dollars spent.

Bill 211 empowers the use of our resources. The member across had claimed this was creating work. It is not. It actually empowers the groups we already have. Health Quality Alberta, formerly known as the Health Quality Council of Alberta, is legislated. It is an independent organization that already does a lot of this great work. What Bill 211 would do would be to empower them to do the work even better. It allows them to standardize, which means we would collect the same information from across the province, and we could compare them apples to apples instead of oranges to bananas. This would allow for the . . . [interjection] Bananas, yeah. It allows development and implementation of best practice, bringing Alberta back to having a world-class health care system. That is certainly not what we have right now.

There's more, Mr. Speaker. The majority of the data, as it's been mentioned several times on this side of the House, is already being collected from patients. This does not create more work. This is an efficient, smart bill that allows for systemic changes that will permit better outcomes for Albertans.

Now, passing of the bill saves taxpayer dollars simply from better use of the data we've collected and the resources we already have, let alone the expert recommendations that would come out of it and the assumed legislation that would serve Albertans. A simple example. Let's say, hypothetically, that you receive a knee replacement up in northern Alberta, and because of this system we can see that your patient outcomes were better up in northern Alberta. What the council could then go ahead and do is make recommendations to seek that out, figure out why those health outcomes were better there, and then apply it across the province so that it wouldn't matter where you received that care; you would have the same patient outcomes.

4:50

Now, the other part is that this would return Albertans to health more quickly, which is, of course, what we want. We'd be saving the patient and the province the cost of underusing our resources. That is not duplication, Mr. Speaker. That is efficient government work, and as has been mentioned numerous times on this side now, a responsible, respectful government would take good legislation wherever it might come from, instead of, well, applying it probably in their spring bills.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge everyone in this House to vote for Bill 211 and vote for better health outcomes for all Albertans. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:51 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Arcand-Paul	Haji	Miyashiro
Batten	Hayter	Nenshi
Boparai	Hoffman	Pancholi
Campbell	Hoyle	Shepherd
Ceci	Irwin	Sigurdson, L.
Dach	Kasawski	Sweet
Eggen	Kayande	Tejada
Gray		

Against the motion:

Amery	Johnson	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Sawhney
Boitchenko	LaGrange	Sawyer
Bouchard	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Long	Sinclair
de Jonge	Lovely	Singh
Dreeshen	Lunty	Stephan
Dyck	McDougall	Turton
Ellis	Nally	van Dijken
Fir	Neudorf	Wiebe
Glubish	Nicolaides	Williams
Horner	Nixon	Wilson
Hunter	Petrovic	Yao
Jean	Pitt	Yaseen

Totals: For – 22 Against – 42

[Motion for second reading of Bill 211 lost]

Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Alberta Separatism

501. Ms Pancholi moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly
(a) recognize that
(i) Alberta separatism creates investment uncertainty and negatively impacts the economy, and
(ii) actions taken by the government that encourage or amplify separatist sentiment, including the work of the Alberta Next Panel, contribute to that investment uncertainty,
(b) urge the government to
(i) secure a better deal for Alberta within the federation without leveraging the threat of separatism, and
(ii) establish stronger working relationships with other provincial governments to strengthen interprovincial economic ties and reduce interprovincial trade barriers, and
(c) denounce Alberta separatism and express support for national unity.

[Debate adjourned November 3: Mrs. Petrovic speaking]

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much to the House for bringing this motion back. It's been a long time since the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud brought forth this motion at a time when we were really concerned in this House and across the province about the future of this province and the future of Canada.

Well, all these many, many months later we are still concerned about the future of the province and the future for Canada, but things have changed. Many, many things have changed. The most important, of course, is that Albertans voted in overwhelming numbers against this government's mandate. They voted against this government's desire to divide rather than bring together, against this government's instinct to push down rather than lift up. We saw that across the 10 questions but no more so than in the question about Canada.

But something strange happened in the long, long time since the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud put forth this resolution. The first thing is that we had an enormous silence from the government benches on whether they believed in Canada.

See, Mr. Speaker, I committed an act of political malpractice myself. I realized that people were questioning, that Albertans were wondering: where do my MLAs stand, where do my members stand on this? So I stood up in front of a bunch of cameras and I said: I am signing a pledge for Canada, and I'm going to ask all of my members to sign this pledge. A bunch of them were standing behind me. I realized as soon as I said that that I hadn't actually asked my members what their opinion on the matter was. I simply said that they were all going to sign it, and I thought to myself: will any of them not sign it? Within an hour every single one of them had signed saying that they believe in Canada and they oppose separatism.

Then we asked the members opposite: will you also pledge to Canada? Will you also pledge that you are opposed to separatism? Not one of them signed it. Not one. One of them stood up in this House and unequivocally said, "I stand for Canada," without all those other words. It used to be a sovereign Alberta – now it's a strong Alberta because "sovereign" wasn't focus-grouping well – within a united Canada. One of them was able to stand up and do that. You know, the Minister of Municipal Affairs: I give him his props for doing it. He was the only one. He was the only one who was able to do it.

Over the course of this long referendum I would have expected to have heard from them that they believe in Canada. Instead, we heard from Indigenous leaders that the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul had told them that he has separatist leanings. We certainly heard from the Member for Red Deer-South over and over and over again that he, in fact, is a separatist. But the Premier said: the UCP's position is clear; all of my caucus is for Canada. Yet their caucus was remarkably shy about saying so. Only 14 members of that caucus plus the Premier put out any statement during the referendum that they were for Canada.

On this side we were criss-crossing the province – every corner of this province – trying to undo some of the damage the Premier's recklessness with this referendum had caused. I have spoken to people in High Level, in Grande Prairie, in Fort McMurray, throughout the province, in every corner of Edmonton and Calgary and Red Deer and Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.

Didn't make it to Jasper. I need to fix that. I needed to do a little more in eastern Alberta.

But we talked to people across the whole province, and what we really heard from citizens, from Albertans across the way is that they were really angry. And that's what the Premier was betting on. You see, this government runs on anger. It runs on keeping people angry all the time. That's what the first five questions in the referendum were about: get people to blame immigrants. The next four questions were about: get people to blame Ottawa. Get people angry.

Guess what? Albertans were angry. But guess what else? They were angry at the Premier. They were angry at this government. They were angry because they asked themselves the question over and over again: how did we get here? How did we get to a place where health care is a disaster, where public education is a disaster, where despite record oil and gas production we have almost record-high unemployment, where people are having trouble making it to the end of the month, and how did we get to a point where we could lose our country in this referendum?

We talked a lot, Mr. Speaker. I made a lot of arguments that were from the head. I talked a lot about the economic disaster of separatism. We know, for example, that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, around the Confederation of Canada, the city of Montreal was a world capital, a capital of arts, a capital of culture. They had the world's fair there. They were also, importantly, a world financial capital, not just the financial capital of Canada but a financial capital for the world. When separatism reared its head in Quebec – remember, they never won a referendum; it was just the threat of a referendum – 358 companies' head offices left Montreal. Sixty years of economic decline for the province of Quebec.

5:10

So when the Premier says, as she often does, "We need to be more like Quebec," my response is: do we? Is that really what we want, higher taxes and lower prosperity? I suppose at least their unemployment is a little bit lower than in the Premier's Alberta. The Bank of Montreal is now headquartered in Toronto. Canadian pacific, formed in Canada before Confederation, in Montreal just before Confederation, is now, of course, in Calgary.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce. Here is what Shauna Feth, the president and CEO of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, said on June 25, 2026. "Confidence has clearly softened. The uncertainty businesses are navigating right now is influencing investment decisions, hiring, and long-term planning." That uncertainty came from the fact that this government, these members of the government could not clearly stand up and say that they believed in Canada. Had they done so, perhaps we wouldn't have had a referendum at all. Even having the referendum, we would have known that it was much less likely to pass, and people could have confidence in investing in Canada, but they didn't.

So today the government has a real opportunity. They can use procedural tricks to throw this down the Order Paper again. They did it the last time so they wouldn't be forced to take a stand one way or the other. Or they can say: "You know, the Premier has said that our entire caucus is pro-Canada. Here's a chance for us to prove it. Here's a chance for us to vote for it."

Mr. Speaker, I've gone on a lot about the arguments from the head, the economic arguments against separation, but across Alberta – in people's living rooms, on Indigenous nations, in community halls, in big banquet halls, and on the street – we heard from Albertans. We heard so clearly from Albertans that, yeah, they understand the economic arguments, they understand the brain arguments, but perhaps even more important than that were the arguments of the heart.

It's not popular for a politician these days to talk about matters of the heart, but what I heard so clearly from Albertans, whether their families had been here for thousands of years or whether they've just arrived, was a story similar to my own story of being a first-generation Canadian. As I've said in this House before, I was born in Canada but just barely. My mom was pregnant when they immigrated. Over and over this summer I said that growing up my parents and my older sister had these beautiful certificates of Canadian citizenship, and all I had was a lousy birth certificate.

Over many, many years and as an adult I've thought back on that a lot, and I've realized that those three beautiful certificates of Canadian citizenship and that lousy birth certificate: in the multigenerational history of my family across three continents those are the most valuable things we've ever had because they mark us as Canadian. They mark us as belonging to a place that is bigger than any one of us, a place that's willing to invest in a poor kid from northeast Calgary and say, "That kid deserves to succeed," just like we need to say about every other child in this country, that they deserve that right to succeed.

Let's turn to the referendum, shall we? The final results of the referendum: 70.4 per cent turnout. It's actually very good given how turnout has been declining over time here. Seventy-five per cent against the Premier's referendum question.

That, of course, doesn't include her own caucus and former caucus members. The Member for Red Deer-South, of course, said that he did not vote with the majority, that he voted for option 2, against the Premier's wishes. We don't know how Mr. Shane Getson voted. He refused to say, but we do know that he appeared on a separatist radio show the night of the referendum. And, of course, of course, we have the minister of transportation, who when asked over and over again a very simple question – how are you voting on the referendum question? – refused to answer over and over again, which pretty much tells us how he voted.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, all of these folks are sitting in their comfy government chairs over there despite the fact that the Premier said that her party and her caucus are united to be pro-Canada. Today again the government members have a choice. Their choice is that they can actually stand up and say: yeah, we have been pro-Canada; we continue to be pro-Canada. Or if you weren't pro-Canada before, maybe you are now. It's a pretty easy choice to vote for the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's motion.

It's also interesting to note that the referendum question on separation failed in 85 of the 87 ridings. It passed narrowly only in two of them. It's interesting to know which two those were: the Minister of Finance's riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre – he couldn't carry the pro-Canada vote in his own riding; might have wanted to go door-knocking once or twice; he might have been able to do it – and the Minister of Forestry and Parks' riding in Central Peace-Notley. These are folks who did not lift a finger for Canada. They couldn't even carry their own ridings. Today once again is an option, once again is a choice. Curiously, while the Minister of Finance, to his credit, did eventually come out and say that he believes in Canada, the Minister of Forestry and Parks never did. He never did say which way that he feels.

Just to be clear, all of these constituencies had the referendum. I actually have a list of all the cabinet ministers in which it failed. I won't bother reading you that big, long list. But it's very clear that all of those ministers who refused to come out and speak for Canada, all of those UCP caucus members who refused to say how they were going to vote are badly out of step with their own constituents. I'm not in the habit of offering advice to the government benches, but I will. This advice is very simple. You are badly out of step with your constituents. They will assume . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, through the chair

Mr. Nenshi: Sorry. They are badly out of step. I apologize, sir.

The Speaker: It might be "they" but never "you," right?

Mr. Nenshi: Yes, thank you. Not you.

The Speaker: Or anybody "you," okay?

Mr. Nenshi: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

They are badly out of step with their own constituents. Their own constituents assume they're separatists. They have every ability to assume that they're separatists.

So we're offering them today a little escape plan, and the little escape plan is to vote for this resolution and make it clear, and you can go back to your constituents and say: "I know I didn't do anything during the referendum. I know I didn't lift a finger to save Canada, but, hey, at least I voted in the Legislature that I am pro-Canada." Or the government could continue to use its procedural tricks to avoid a vote. Avoiding a vote, silence, means that they're fine with their constituents assuming that they are, in fact, separatists.

Mr. Speaker, Canada is not perfect. This country has made a lot of mistakes over a long period of time. No one has suffered more from the mistakes of Canada than Indigenous peoples, yet we saw Indigenous people stand at the front, defending treaty rights, defending Canada, and I was proud to stand alongside every one of them.

But more than that, Mr. Speaker, this is a big, complicated, bruised country. We made a lot of mistakes. But we get it right more than we get it wrong, and we get it right because we start from a base of values, from a vision of what this place could be, a vision that every kid growing up in every neighbourhood in every province of this country deserves the right to live a great Canadian life. That doesn't just happen. It doesn't happen because we will it to happen. It's not like the Minister of Justice writing to Elections Alberta, waving a magic wand, saying: you can do things that are impossible. It happens because we work hard to make it happen and especially those of us who've been entrusted by our neighbours to sit in these chairs, those of us who've been entrusted by our neighbours to hold even for a minute their voices, to hold even for a minute their hopes and their dreams and their fears and their challenges and what they want for their kids in our own hands. I take that seriously every single day.

Politics sometimes feels like it's about games, that it's about getting re-elected, about fundraising, but ultimately I take very, very seriously that the people of Edmonton-Strathcona, that neighbours across this province put in us that ability, and that ability is simply to create a better vision for this country, a country that is not predicated on division, on anger, and on hatred but a country that reminds us that this place works because we look after one another, a nation that is predicated on compassion, on empathy, on kindness, and, yes, on love.

5:20

What does that mean for a provincial government? It means focusing on creating better relationships with other provinces and with the federal government. It means not getting in the way of Team Canada at times where the country is under enormous threat from the outside. It means not being the greatest threat to Canada. You know, at the beginning of the summer, Mr. Speaker, I did not have saving Canada on my to-do list. There were lots of other things I wanted to talk about, and I realized, much to my shock and horror, that the greatest threat to Canada this summer was not Donald Trump; it was this government.

This government now has a chance to make amends. They've got a chance to make amends with Albertans. They've got a chance to come out once and for all as the Premier has said they always have been. The Premier says that she's always been a fiercely proud Canadian despite the fact that, I would argue, a fiercely proud Canadian would never have let it come to this. This is a chance for the members opposite once and for all to show that even today, maybe not last month but today at least, they can be fiercely proud Canadians.

I thank the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for bringing this forward, and I encourage every member of the House to vote for this motion and to vote for Canada.

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

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so thankful for the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for bringing forward this motion. I stand in support of this motion and urge all members of this Chamber to do so as well because we received an overwhelming response to where Albertans stand on separatism and remaining in this country.

We saw an average of 75 per cent, as the Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition just spoke, particularly about the referendum and how people showed up. I want to acknowledge that in this referendum we saw a 300 per cent increase in voter turnout by Indigenous peoples, as mentioned by Treaty 8 First Nations, Treaty 8 Sovereign Nations, as they just renamed themselves. That was in large part because of efforts by Indigenous organizers to rock the vote in treaties 6, 7, and 8.

That 300 per cent increase is no mistake. We look at our history here in Alberta and in Canada, and we know that there's good and there's a lot of bad, but we know from this turnout that Indigenous people showed up because they understood what was at stake. They understood that our treaty relationship, the solemn relationship with the Crown, was something that could not be negotiated and something that will not be negotiated because our treaty rights will last for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow. Despite this history we show up because we know that we have a deep responsibility not for ourselves but for those that are yet to be born, the next seven generations, and for this land. It means that we as legislators, as people in this House, have a responsibility to show up. We have a responsibility to listen to all people in Alberta, and that includes Indigenous peoples.

You know, for a very long time this idea that Indigenous peoples do not vote has been one that is focused on, but Mr. Speaker, this referendum showed a completely different picture. Indigenous peoples not only showed up, but they gave a resounding no to this government's decision to move separatism. Where polls were requested by First Nations and by Métis settlements – let's remember. The UCP took away the ability for these polling places to be on-reserve or on Métis settlements. You now have to ask every single election or referendum for a polling place. But where they were – there's a couple of them, and I want to list some of those numbers.

In the Kainai Nation the last poll we waited on – at 10:10 p.m. that closed – there was a voter turnout of 132.8 per cent. That means that not only were there electors that were not on the list but that people had to sign up because they had not participated before. They saw the value of showing up for treaty, for showing up for the defence of our treaty rights. Of those 132.8 per cent of people that showed up in Kainai Nation, 98.4 per cent voted to stay in Canada and fought for treaty.

That number is pretty consistent across Alberta. You look at the Siksika Nation, which had an 89 per cent voter turnout. They had 91.9

per cent voting for option 1. We look at nearby Kainai: the nearby Coalhurst had voter turnout at 18.7 per cent compared to that 132.8 per cent. Mr. Speaker, it's giving a pretty, pretty impressive picture that Indigenous peoples are a force to be reckoned with in our territories. In smaller nations like Duncan's First Nations there was 98.4 per cent turnout. Of those 98.4 per cent, 91.9 per cent voted option 1. This also paints a picture that we are not all cohesive. We all have strong opinions on how we move forward, but that large over 90 per cent turnout is something that we all need to be listening to loud and clear.

Our treaty responsibilities to not only these nations that I've named are extended across this territory. Treaties 6, 7, and 8 but also 4 and 10 and the Métis Nation of Alberta, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, and the Métis settlements all deserve to be heard, and we know this government is failing its duty to consult. We see that with this litigation that's still ongoing with several of the First Nations, including Siksika, Piikani, Kainai, those very nations that showed up in droves to the polls, who had run out of ballots throughout this process, who were the last polls to close in this province during this historic referendum.

Mr. Speaker, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in that appeal that is moving forward before the courts – we've called on this government to drop this litigation, but in the meantime we could see this government support this motion and stand up for Albertans and show that they are also in alignment with them, with the very people that showed up in the referendum.

We spent the summer listening to these folks. That number of voter turnout in First Nations and Métis settlements is no mistake, Mr. Speaker. My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and I hit the powwow circuit this summer. We went all the way up to High Level and all the way down south to the Piikani Nation. Every single nation that we could, we went and talked to them of the importance of participating in this referendum. I can guarantee you that these numbers – we have some new electors that are on the rolls now. These numbers should scare this government because this means that we have a promise to move forward in a good way under treaty. The NDP, the caucus, have been standing shoulder to shoulder with treaty nations, standing up for this land, standing up for all Albertans. I'm so grateful that First Nations and the Métis showed up for all Albertans. This is how we do politics, by meeting one to one.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that several nations, several members came up personally and thanked my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford for standing up and just showing up to the community because this is the first time any politician, whether provincially or federally, has ever come to their community to talk to them. That is our job.

The reason why other politicians before me have said that First Nations and Métis people don't show up to the polls is because they haven't been given the opportunity to share their voice or to have their voice heard. We're always having to fight governments through the court system.

We are always having to push back for our voices to be heard. If you look at the way that the court decision was made with regard to the separatist petition that was put forward by the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai nations with the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, we see that the decision there was that the UCP erred in putting forward legislation and did not consult.

5:30

I hear this government. I hear the Premier speak about how there was an error of law. That error of the law is the UCP, plain and simple, because there could have been the ability to do some consultation on this. We're going to continue seeing consultation at the forefront of these conversations, but at the crux of consultation is sitting down with people, talking these issues through. I don't want to see progress in this province stalled or paused because of the way that the litigation is moving forward and because this government does not know how to consult.

Mr. Speaker, it's for these reasons that I urge everyone in this Chamber to support this motion because it will provide the opportunity for the UCP to show Albertans that they are proud Canadians and that they will stand and listen to the results of this referendum, that they so greatly gave a strong answer, particularly here in Edmonton and in Calgary, over 80 per cent. I'm so thankful that the good people of Edmonton-West Henday also stood up and shared their perspective. Hay-hay.

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

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak against this motion, not because I take national unity lightly, but because the motion rests on a premise that the evidence does not support. It says that consulting Albertans and entrusting them with a democratic vote damages our economy. The facts say otherwise, and so did Albertans.

Let me start with the most important fact in this debate. On October 19 Albertans voted. Question 10 asked whether Alberta should remain a province of Canada or begin the legal process towards a binding referendum on separation. According to the official results that Elections Alberta released on October 29, over 1.5 million and 75 per cent of Albertans chose to remain in Canada. Mr. Speaker, that result is clear. It was reached with a voter turnout of 70 per cent, almost 10 points higher than the 60 per cent turnout in the 2023 provincial general election. More Albertans took part in this referendum than choosing this Assembly in the 2023 provincial election.

The members opposite want this House to denounce separatism and express support for national unity. Albertans have already done that in the most powerful way democracy allows. They did not need a motion from this Chamber to tell them what to think. They needed a chance to say it themselves, and our government gave them that chance. Think about what the alternative would have been. A separatist movement that would have been growing for years, fed by grievances about pipelines, equalization, and federal overreach, would have been left to grow in petitions, rallies, and social media spaces. It would have been unanswered, and our government stood our ground. Every investor in the world would have kept asking the same question: how many Albertans really want to leave?

Today we have the answer, which has been certified by Elections Alberta. Three out of four Albertans want to stay. That is not uncertainty, Mr. Speaker. That is certainty, and the vote is what produced it. The Premier also made it clear that she will honour this mandate and that there will be no second referendum on separation during her tenure. When will the message get across to the members opposite? The question on separation is settled. A motion that kept reopening it, keeps telling the world that Alberta is unstable, is what creates doubt.

That brings me to the motion's central claim, that this government's actions, including the work of the Alberta Next Panel, have created investment uncertainty and hurt the economy. Let us test the claim against the numbers. Alberta Treasury Board and Finance now forecasts real GDP growth of 2.3 per cent in 2020. That is a half percentage point higher than the budget in the 2026 forecast. If the past year has driven investors away, that forecast would have fallen, not risen substantially.

ATB Financial's latest outlook is even stronger. It projects 2.6 per cent real GDP growth for Alberta in 2026, compared with the national average of .9 per cent. Alberta has grown at almost three times the national rate. Oil and gas extraction investment is forecast to increase about 4.4 per cent, or $1.4 billion, in 2026 and strengthen to 5 per cent in 2027. Oil sands investment is forecast to rise by 4.2 per cent.

It's charming that the members opposite are talking about investment when they drove business out of Alberta for four dark years. I can keep going, Mr. Speaker. Capital is still making long-term commitments here. Dow's $10.1 billion Path2Zero project is under way. Companies are planning data centres, power generation, and pipeline projects. Investors who believe Alberta was about to leave the country would not be making 20- to 30-year investments.

Mr. Speaker, now let's look at jobs. Alberta added 39,300 jobs in the first seven months of this year. Employment is forecast to grow 3 per cent in 2026. Between the first quarter of 2025 and the first quarter of 2026 Alberta has the highest employment growth of any province at 3.5 per cent and the highest employment rate of 64.4 per cent. The unemployment rate is forecast to fall from 7.2 per cent in 2025 to 6.6 per cent in 2026 and 5.9 per cent in 2027.

Mr. Speaker, those numbers do not describe an economy frozen by uncertainty. They describe an economy that is leading the country. Of course, most investors may be cautious, but ATB's own outlook explains why. Companies are waiting for more details on a west coast pipeline and possible production incentives. The only uncertainty they have depends on federal approvals and federal policy. It is the exact problem this government is trying to fix and the exact reason the Alberta Next Panel exists.

That brings me to section (b) of the motion, which urges the government to secure a better deal without leveraging the threat of separation. I want to be very clear. The Alberta Next Panel was not a separatist exercise; it was a consultation that asked Albertans how to protect our jurisdiction, our resources, and our future inside Canada. Asking Albertans what they want is not separatism. It is the job of this government to consult all Albertans, and by demonstrating this democratic right, Albertans answered more than one question. They gave the government a mandate on questions 1 to 5, to take more control over immigration so it matches our economy and our services. That is what a mature economy looks like. Albertans chose carefully, question by question, thinking for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, section (b)(ii) asks us to build stronger relationships with other provinces and reduce interprovincial trade barriers. This government agrees, and that is why I find this part of the motion confusing. Alberta has been one of the most aggressive provinces in the country in removing trade barriers and pushing for free trade in Canada. We do not need a motion to tell us what to do. We're already doing it. Including it here suggests the government is not doing that work, and that simply is not accurate.

So I want to ask them what this motion is really for. It asks the Assembly to declare that our own province is a risky place to invest. It asks us to blame Albertans' democratic participation for problems originating in Ottawa, and it asks us to denounce the issue that 75 per cent of Alberta voters just settled at the ballot box.

Every time a member in this House stands up and tells the world that Alberta is unstable, that message reaches boardrooms all over the world. Mr. Speaker, before members opposite lecture this government about economic uncertainty, Albertans deserve a reminder of what the NDP actually delivered in their four years of circus charades. When they took office in 2015, Alberta's debt stood at $11.9 billion. By 2019 the province's total outstanding debt sat at $85.9 billion. They ran four straight years of deficits totalling $32 billion, averaging $8 billion per year. Interest payments alone rose from $776 million in 2015 to almost $2 billion in 2019. That is close to $2 billion a year that went to lenders instead of hospitals, schools, and roads.

What did all the borrowing buy? Close to 85,000 jobs were lost in their first fourteen months in office. From 2015 to 2019 employment grew by just 1.1 per cent while the population grew by 4.7 per cent, and Alberta's employment rate fell by 2.4 percentage points. Mr. Speaker, that is the NDP record: record debt, rising interest costs, and an economy that left Albertans behind. They are the last party in the House that should be giving lessons on economic confidence.

5:40

If we want to reduce uncertainty, the best thing we can do is say plainly what the people said on October 19: Alberta is staying in Canada, Alberta is open for business, and Alberta will keep fighting for a stronger Alberta within a united Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have spoken. Our economy is leading the country, and I urge all members to vote against this motion.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's 5:41 p.m. The time for debate on this has concluded.

The mover of Motion 501 has five minutes to close should she choose to use that.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of revisionist history going on right now across the way, which I understand because this is a deeply uncomfortable question for this government caucus, which is why they were so reluctant to vote on this until after the referendum.

Let's remind everybody that this motion was introduced by myself almost exactly a year ago, November 5, 2025, because at that time Albertans deserved to know that each and every single member of this Legislative Assembly was in support of Canada. The members at that time were too frightened to vote on that because they knew it could cost them potential support within their own party and in their own ridings, so they dropped this motion down the Order Paper to put it off until now. My, what great courage the UCP caucus has to now vote on it, as the member pointed out, after Albertans have voted.

Let's remember, Mr. Speaker, that the support for separatism in this province has never risen above 8 or 9 per cent, and in fact, that is still the case right now after this election. Only a third of those people who even voted for option two said they genuinely believe they want to separate. This is the question: why did we go through this exercise in this province when there is more support for chemtrails, perhaps even within the UCP caucus, in this province than there is for separatism? Instead, this government dragged this province through that.

The member was correct on the other side when he said that every time anybody says that Alberta is an uncertain or unstable place it drives away investment. That's exactly what this government did. They sent the message across this world, across Canada, to the United States especially, that we were open for business. Come recruit us to become your fifty-first state. In fact, some of their friends who are members and leaders of the separatist movement went down to the United States to do just that.

This is the key element, Mr. Speaker, of this motion. The key element is the phrase: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce Alberta separatism and express support for national unity." Yes, we know that Albertans expressed their views quite clearly. What's uncomfortable for the members opposite is that they've never had to express their views, and for many of these MLAs, you can tell that the result of the referendum is uncomfortable in many ways.

They thought they would just have an overall vote and that's all that anybody would pay attention to.

In fact, we have riding-by-riding votes. We have city-by-city votes, and those results are much more deeply uncomfortable for these MLAs on the other side because the reality is that in two government ministers' ridings they couldn't even convince their own constituents to support staying in Canada. They lost. The Minister of Finance and the minister of forestry could not convince their own constituents. I'm really thrilled to hear that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is easily door-knocking in Edmonton and Calgary, where the voters resoundingly defeated separatism. He should have spent more time door-knocking in his own constituency of Peace River, where they came this close to almost voting in favour of separatism.

The reality is that every single UCP MLA is afraid. They've been riding two sides of this horse for at least two years now. A horse that, by the way, nobody wanted. Separatism support, again for those on the other side, was never large enough to warrant a province-wide referendum costing hundreds of millions of dollars. It never qualified for that, and Albertans rebuked it with a sound and resounding defeat.

Now these members need to stand up and say to their constituents: do you support separatism? We know, Mr. Speaker, that there's at least one MLA sitting on that side who's made it clear. And you know what? At least he's been public about it. At least he said it. It didn't make him lose his job. He didn't get kicked out of the government caucus. No. You can do anything on the other side and the leader will still keep you in their party. But all those MLAs, particularly in those rural ridings where the votes were closer, were too afraid. They can easily say now what they think, but they won't. They still today cannot say the words. They cannot stand up and vote in favour of a motion that says that they denounce Alberta separatism and express support for national unity.

Mr. Speaker, if the members on the other side in a recorded vote cannot stand up and say that they denounce separatism, they have no right to represent Albertans in their constituency. Albertans have been clear. They know where they stand. They deserve to know where the government members stand.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:45 p.m.]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Ellingson	Kayande
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Metz
Batten	Eremenko	Miyashiro
Boparai	Gray	Nenshi
Brar, Gurinder	Haji	Pancholi
Brar, Gurtej	Hayter	Sabir
Campbell	Hoffman	Shepherd
Ceci	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Dach	Irwin	Tejada
Eggen	Kasawski	

Against the motion:

Amery	Johnson	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Sawhney
Boitchenko	LaGrange	Sawyer
Bouchard	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Long	Sinclair
de Jonge	Lovely	Singh
Dreeshen	Lunty	Stephan
Dyck	McDougall	Turton
Ellis	Nally	van Dijken
Fir	Neudorf	Wiebe
Glubish	Nicolaides	Williams
Horner	Nixon	Wilson
Hunter	Petrovic	Yao
Jean	Pitt	Yaseen

Totals: For – 29 Against – 42

[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader and Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I now move that the Assembly be adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 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

Published under the Authority of the Speaker
of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta

ISSN 0383-3623