

Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning and afternoon, November 5, 2026

Day 66

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 31st Legislature
Second Session

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

Al-Guneid, Nagwan, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC), Deputy Government House Leader
Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Campbell, Kyle, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
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Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC), Deputy Government Whip
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m. **Thursday, November 5, 2026**

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and 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, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by members of Pro Coro Canada and Axios Men's Ensemble. I would invite all to participate.

Hon. Members:

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

[Standing ovation]

The Speaker: If any of us are not awake now, consult your doctor. Great job.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, I am pleased to welcome members of Pro Coro Canada and the Axios Men's Ensemble, who just finished singing *God Save the King* for us today. In June of this year they made history by receiving the Juno award for classical album of the year with the *Ukrainian War Requiem* recording. This was not only the first win for a male choir but also the first win for an a cappella album and the first win of a choir west of Ontario. The singers are performing tomorrow evening at St. Basil's Ukrainian Catholic church and then head on to a national tour under the direction of principal conductor Michael Zaugg. They are wearing the traditional Ukrainian vyshyvanka – if I didn't say that right, all my Ukrainian friends, you can tell me later; I apologize – in honour of the heritage at the heart of their music. Please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Okay. School groups. We have Sherwood Park, it says here. Take your seat, hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Okay.

The Speaker: Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I think the school group is working its way in, but maybe we can just give them a round of applause for when they show up. Through you and to all the members of the Assembly Pine Street elementary from Sherwood Park is visiting today. It's been in Sherwood Park since 1963. There are 360 students there; 65 will be visiting the Legislature at about 10:30 today, so be on your best behaviour when answering questions.

The Speaker: This House is always on its best behaviour.

The Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mary Pelech, Ruth Adria, Peter Adria, Sheryl-Anne Adria, and Jean Krieger from the Elder Advocates of Alberta Society. In keeping with their founding mission of advocating for seniors, they have carried forward the words "Rise in the presence of the aged and honour the face of the old." I would ask them all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you today and through you to the Assembly Dr. Marisa Vigna, who is an emergency resident working on the front lines in our emergency departments. Can I ask Marisa to please rise, and we'll give you the warm welcome.

The Speaker: Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Lunty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce a couple of VIPs. That's very important parents, of course. My mom and dad, Terry and Gordon, are here along with my brother Nate. I'd ask all three to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: I should have done this earlier, so please forgive me. I would also like to introduce Nick Kalynchuk. Nick started as an intern and worked his way up to senior digital communications lead, and May 2027 will be his eight-year anniversary in this building. He is joined by his brother Steven Kalynchuk, who is president of an Edmonton-based steel and aluminum manufacturing company. Steven grew up in Edmonton and holds a business degree from the University of Alberta. He currently lives in Edmonton-South West with his fiancée, Shalina, and their very rambunctious but very good dog, Wesley. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of this House.

My apologies for not getting to you sooner. I was so inspired by the singing, as we all were, so it's all on me.

The next introduction belongs to the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you two special guests joining us today, Anselem and Johnpaul Okorie. Anselem is a lawyer in Nigeria and Johnpaul is a nurse in Nunavut, but they are also brothers of my former legislative co-ordinator OG Okorie. I ask that they please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Fir: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you mentioned, what an inspiring way to start off our day. I think Pro Coro Canada and Axios Men's Ensemble deserve one more introduction. This incredible, award-winning professional chamber choir is celebrating 45 years this fall. Maybe we can get them back again next time singing *O Canada*. I'll ask them to rise one more time and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Sinclair: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm good today. Thank you.

The Speaker: The Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mayowa Ajibodu and his team from the Live Initiative. This Edmonton nonprofit mentors young people and newcomers by helping

them discover and express their talents through the arts, mentorship, and education and empowerment. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Morag Mottram, Jan Dougall, Colleen Pollock, Muriel Davidson, and Val Moore. They're a neighbours group called neighbour friends grand tour, and once a month they get together and do little regional field trips around Alberta. This month they're in question period and touring the Canadian Energy Museum. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you André Deslauriers. André serves as vice-president of the Grande Prairie Construction Association. He's a board member of the Alberta Construction Association, and he's treasurer of the Bear Creek Folk Festival. He's a great community leader. I would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly some very good friends of mine all the way from Stony Plain, Calvin and Shey Hennig. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

10:10

Members' Statements

Remembrance Day

Ms Goehring: Every year from the last Friday of October to November 11 tens of millions of Canadians wear a poppy as a visual pledge to honour Canadian veterans. On Remembrance Day we gather to remember the countless sacrifices of the people who serve our country during times of war, conflict, and peace. Time and time again I'm reminded of the strength, commitment, and resilience of our veterans and active service members and those that love them. We remember those lost in combat and those lost in noncombat incidents. From the First World War to the recent tragedy in Wainwright, we acknowledge the sacrifice not only of those who served but their loved ones and their broader communities. We honour the soldiers, the veterans, and so many others who sacrifice so much to protect the freedoms that we enjoy today.

We recognize that our safety and security is made possible by countless Canadians who answered the call to serve and defend our borders at home and abroad. The loss of our Canadian soldiers was ultimately in pursuit of peace, freedom, and democracy, and these values we get to experience every day should not be taken for granted. They are values that were hard fought and that our military community continue to defend. The commitment of our women and men in uniform has earned Canada a world-wide reputation as a country that supports and protects peace.

Let us pay tribute to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for us, those who have served, those who currently serve, both at home and abroad, and to the families and friends that support our military community to do the selfless work that they do every day for us all. We honour them as we continue to strive for respect, tolerance, and dignity for all. Lest we forget.

Bill 33

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about a principle that should be simple and widely shared. When Albertans apply for a job or seek a promotion in a public institution, they should be judged on their skills, experience, qualifications, and ability to do the work, not on DEI principles. That is why Alberta's government is scrapping DEI hiring practices and returning to merit-based hiring. Albertans work hard to build their careers. They pursue education, develop new skills, and gain experience so they can compete for opportunities and contribute to their communities. They deserve to know that this effort matters.

Mr. Speaker, public institutions carry important responsibilities. They deliver services, manage public resources, and make decisions that affect people all across our province. Albertans should be confident that these institutions are hiring qualified, capable people who are ready to serve. Under these proposed changes hiring and promotional decisions would be fair, neutral, and based on merit. Applicants would not be favoured or disadvantaged because of personal characteristics unrelated to the position. Where a specific characteristic is generally required to perform the job, that practical exception would remain.

The bill would also establish neutrality principles for hiring and workplace training. Mandatory training would need a clear connection to an employee's role and responsibility. Public institutions should focus their time and resources on preparing employees to do their jobs safely, effectively, and professionally.

Importantly, Mr. Speaker, these changes would maintain Alberta's existing human rights protections. Protecting people from discrimination and assessing applicants as individuals are not competing ideas. Both are essential to real fairness.

Whether someone is entering the workforce, pursuing a promotion, or changing careers, they should have a fair opportunity to demonstrate what they can contribute. Mr. Speaker, merit-based hiring respects individuals' efforts, strengthens public institutions, and builds public confidence. Bill 33 puts the focus where it belongs, on the . . .

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

National Indigenous Veterans Day

Member Arcand-Paul: On November 8 we remember and honour the service and lives of Indigenous veterans who have served this country locally and abroad, including at times when governments did not extend basic freedoms to their families back home, selfless and honourable people like Private Mary Greyeyes from the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation. During World War II she was the first Indigenous woman to join the Canadian Army in 1942. She served with the Canadian Women's Army Corps and was eventually stationed in England. Private Greyeyes enlisted with the Women's Army Corps because at the time the navy and the air force were open to women's divisions, but they were only open to those of, quote, White race, end quote. Private Greyeyes received international recognition for a photo that Canada used to distinguish itself from the British Armed Forces. She met the Queen and the King while her family at home were not considered citizens of the very country she served.

I also think of my great uncle, Private Henry Huppie, who also heeded the call to fight fascism overseas and to liberate the people of populist fascist leaders in World War I. Private Greyeyes and Private Huppie enlisted at a time when First Nations and Métis people were exempted from conscription and while governments did not recognize Indigenous people's right to vote.

On National Indigenous Veterans Day may we always remember and thank Indigenous veterans like Private Greyeyes and Private Huppie for fighting for freedoms that still had to be fought for here at home. [Remarks in Cree] Lest we forget.

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

Provincial Response to Incident at CFB Wainwright

Mr. Lunty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans continue to mourn the tremendous tragedy at CFB Wainwright. It's hard to put into words the devastation, sadness, and loss from that tragic event. Unfortunately, tragedies are an unavoidable part of life, but thankfully, when the unimaginable happens, Albertans have proved time and time again that they answer the call and look for ways to step up and support each other in their communities.

We saw this incredible service in action during the recent events at CFB Wainwright, Mr. Speaker. First responders, medical professionals, emergency service workers, and military personnel all mobilized towards saving lives. All Albertans owe these workers a debt of gratitude and tremendous thanks for their efforts and service.

But if I may, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to humbly and personally thank one Albertan in particular. My brother Nate, who I introduced to the Assembly earlier, is an EMS operations supervisor for the central/south division. Nate was on the ground at the Wainwright hospital during the tragedy as part of EMS command, where he worked with military and hospital personnel to help oversee triage, treatment, and transportation of patients to appropriate facilities.

Mr. Speaker, when I approached Nate and asked if I could thank him for his efforts during my member's statement, he was quick to ask that I not make it just about him. He wanted to ensure that all the paramedics, doctors, nurses, 911 operators and dispatchers, environmental service workers, flight medics, pilots, off-duty workers who heard about the events and came in to help without being asked, hospital admin, firefighters, including volunteer firefighters, and everyone else who played a role were equally recognized. I couldn't agree more.

Our front-line and emergency service workers deserve our thanks and gratitude each and every day. As Albertans, there's no reason to wait until tragedy strikes to show our support and thanks for those who serve our communities so valiantly. So Nate, no, this isn't all about you, but even still, I'm proud of you, kid. Thanks for stepping up when we needed it the most. [Standing ovation]

Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas

Member Gurinder Brar: A man stands on the steps of a magnificent palace. Inside lives a cruel king. In his hand the man holds a burning candle. He tilts the candle, pours the melting wax, puts the candle on it, and walks away. He returns the next day and the next and the next. Every day another candle; every day another act of courage. One day his friend asks him: do you really think that you will be able to change the mind of that cruel king with your candles? To which he replies: "My friend, I do not light up these candles to change the mind of the king. I light up these candles so the king doesn't get to change mine. He may rule his kingdom, but he will never be able to rule my conscience." Today that cruel king doesn't live in the distant palace; that king lives in the minds of our palace. His name is hatred. And that man also lives in the palace of our minds, and his name is love.

As we celebrate Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas and as we learn from the teachings of Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji and Lord Ram and as we light up the diyas in our homes and communities, let us light up another flame, the flame of our conscience. Just as that man refused to let that cruel king rule his conscience, let us refuse to let hatred change our hearts, division destroy our unity, and anger defeat our compassion. With that, Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas to everyone here in Alberta and across the globe.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's 10:20, which makes it time for Oral Question Period.

10:20 Oral Question Period

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

Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction Minister's Travel to the U.S.

Mr. Nenshi: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister of service Alberta couldn't answer some pretty straightforward questions about his expenses. It's remarkable what kind of a shop the Premier is running over there when ministers aren't accountable for how they spend taxpayers' money. Was the Premier aware that the minister took not one but two distillery tours in Kentucky just a few days after he allowed Kentucky bourbon back on Alberta's shelves, and is it normal government practice to drink alcohol during a workday and charge the taxpayer for it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is making a number of allegations, and I would have to say that we're going to take a look at the name of this particular taxi service. I know it was called a particular name. My understanding is that it was a taxi service, and these are normal expenses that you'd pay when you go into any kind of international trip. There's an airfare cost. There's a hotel cost. There's a transportation cost. There is a per diem rate. There is not $1 that can be spent on alcohol, and we'll be looking into it.

Mr. Nenshi: Maybe I can help the Premier out a little bit. The minister actually admitted that it was for a bourbon tour, so it wasn't for a taxi, but here's the funny thing. He charged it as though it was a taxi, not once but twice, and you would think that the government would have noticed that the first taxi cost $3,200 and the second taxi cost $2,200. That's Saudi private jet rates, Mr. Speaker; $5,400 on booze cruises. Why would the Premier allow her minister to claim booze cruises at Kentucky distilleries as taxi receipts?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister has parameters that we look at for what a reasonable expense is for transportation. We also have a policy that zero dollars can be spent on liquor, so I'm going to have the Finance minister take a look at this, ensure that the taxi rate falls within what is reasonable, and we will be able to report back. These kinds of events are important to building up our whisky industry. We want to also have an Alberta whisky tour here. We need to understand those who are doing it well in Kentucky. It's a $28 billion business. [interjections]

The Speaker: It's Thursday, but anyways the question was asked. I think both sides probably wanted to hear the answer.

Mr. Nenshi: You know, I've actually been on a ton of trade missions. We've attracted billions of dollars of investment to Calgary and Alberta, but I never charged $5,400 and pretended it

was a taxi and certainly not drank alcohol during the day. Thank you to the Premier for saying we're going to have yet another cabinet minister under investigation, but let's be clear. Billing taxpayers for drinking alcohol on the job would get any other public servant fired. We also know it's never ever only one. Given what she learned yesterday, has the Premier reviewed any of her own or other cabinet ministers' expenses for other questionable expenses?

The Speaker: Let's keep all the questions and answers under 35 seconds, please.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, alcohol is not permitted to be charged as a government expense. I'll correct my previous statement. It's a $10 billion industry in Kentucky that also supports farmers. We're also building out our Alberta whisky brand. That also supports Alberta farmers. Yes, we have to do research, but we also have to stay within the rules. There is no money that can be expensed associated with alcohol. We have to make sure we stay within a reasonable amount for transportation costs. The Finance minister will be looking into this, and he'll be looking into every minister's expenses as he always does.

The Speaker: The second . . . [interjections] It's my turn. Okay?

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

Mr. Nenshi: Well, he clearly didn't look into those expenses before or he might have noticed $5,400 on You Sip. We Drive.

Food Prices and Affordability

Mr. Nenshi: Now, last year, Loblaws, Sobeys, Walmart all had record profits. I used to be a retail consultant. These sorts of companies were my clients, and I can tell you that these profits are extraordinary. They're because of skyrocketing grocery prices. Since this spring, sweet potatoes up 20 per cent, coffee up 30 per cent, a whole chicken up 60 per cent, yet the Premier said little convenience stores will save us all. How many of these pocket stores have been built in Alberta, where are they, and what impact have they had?

The Speaker: Second warning going over time. Next one you'll lose your questions.

Premier

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that Sobeys, Loblaws, and Walmart have all also voluntarily agreed not to have restrictive covenants on their stores, and that's going to be very important because that will allow some of these pocket stores to find more locations to locate. I had another opportunity to talk to Per Bank. He has said that they are rolling out 45 of these across the country. I've asked how many he will be rolling out in Alberta and that we'd be happy to work with him on getting more. The first one has been established in Calgary. The member opposite would be happy to go stop in. It's located on 11th Street and 9th Avenue, and I think it's going to be the future.

Mr. Nenshi: I was shocked, as were all Albertans, yesterday when the Premier said that people just need to shop at No Frills and buy the no name products and everything will be fine. I happen to be a big fan of those yellow potato chip bags. They used to be on sale for $1 at Superstore. Today's flyer price: $1.50 at Superstore. No name products are up 50 per cent, but the Premier has a private jet and six-star hotel lifestyle. Does she understand . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Sorry. Stop the clock. You're going to get your whole 35. Don't worry. We want to hear the question. We want to hear the answer. It doesn't really matter whether we like the question or the answer. We need to hear it.

Carry on.

Mr. Nenshi: The Premier has a private jet and six-star hotel lifestyle. Does she even understand how hard it is for the average Alberta family just to put food on the table?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do my own grocery shopping. Yes. I do understand, and I do shop around just as everybody in this room does, and I do also notice the increases in prices, which is why I've observed that those stores are taking the effort to make sure that they offer a variety of different discount labels. The reason they do that is that they're able to leverage their purchasing power with European and American buying groups so that they can get the lowest prices possible. I can tell you who can't do that: government-run grocery stores, which is what they want to do. We have to make sure that we're supporting innovation in the private sector, and that's what we will do.

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

Mr. Nenshi: The last.

The Speaker: Oh, yeah. You know what? You're counting better than I am right now. It is the end of the second set of questions.

Mr. Nenshi: The Premier just read us Galen Weston's talking points. She just admitted that the only people she looks to for advice on this are the grocery stores themselves. They're the ones who are responsible for the high prices. They're making record, unbelievable profit. By lunch on January 1 Galen Weston has made more money than the average Alberta worker makes in an entire year. Why does the Premier think that only the oligarchs have any interest in solving these problems for Albertans, when they created and profited from these problems?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I invite the member opposite to do some research. It's called the German discount model. It is very popular in Germany to have these smaller footprint stores with a lower number of product choices focusing on the essentials, so they have a lower cost of their footprint as well as are able to leverage buying. This is going to be the future. In fact, they're expecting that this model is going to be able to increase the amount of footprint that they have of grocery retail space. Our job as government is to make sure people have more money in their pockets with fuel tax relief, personal income tax relief, and making sure that they have the ability to pay for these things themselves.

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

Mr. Nenshi: Perhaps the Premier should do some research that doesn't come from her lobbyist friends.

Electoral Boundaries

Mr. Nenshi: Now, the Premier said something yesterday that I've really been reflecting on. It was a throwaway comment. She said, "The maps drawn by Notley," but that kind of gives it away, doesn't it? She thinks that the previous Premier drew the maps, which is why she actually believes that she's justified in drawing her own maps. Of course, Rachel Notley accepted the findings of an independent commission that were actually bad for the NDP – ask these two right

here – but the Premier seems to want to draw her own. Does she understand that's wrong?

Ms Smith: Okay. I could have said the maps that were presented from an Electoral Boundaries Commission that occurred at the time that Rachel Notley was Premier. That's what I meant, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite missed the main point, which even the CBC has realized. If this is gerrymandering, it's the worst gerrymandering ever because they get more seats under this map than they would have under the old electoral boundaries. There is no story here. They would get three more seats; we'd get an additional one. He's being ridiculous.

10:30

Mr. Nenshi: Well, it surprises no Albertan that this government is responsible for the worst everything ever. She could have said that, but she didn't say it, and the fact that she didn't say it tells you exactly how she's thinking. This is a pattern with this Premier. She thought she was a U.S. governor. She thought she could pardon her friends. She thought she could tell the police who to arrest, she could tell prosecutors who to prosecute. The Ethics Commissioner already caught her on that. This past weekend she said that she was shocked to discover that the people she appointed to her independent Human Rights Commission believed in human rights and were independent. Does she know she's not the queen of Alberta?

The Speaker: I'll just caution the member a little bit. It can be a point of order when you say what somebody else thinks, which I think you did several times. So this is your gentle warning.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, unlike the member opposite, I waited until the report was presented in the Legislature before I commented on it, before I saw the maps, before I was able to digest the results, before I ran it, before I was able to watch the analysts run it through different computer models to determine that, yes, indeed these new maps benefit the NDP. That is absolutely the truth. That is what the Electoral Boundaries Commission proposed. That is what the former Justice Miller proposed. It was based on recommendations that came from them. They've been implemented. They benefit.

Mr. Nenshi: She can't help herself, Mr. Speaker. She only talks about life and politics, not really about what Albertans feel.

Even on merit. Lately they've been talking a lot about merit in hiring, but that doesn't fit her pattern of behaviour. She's only interested in appointing people who do what she wants. She hasn't conducted any open searches for the head of the public service, for six consecutive CEOs of AHS, for people who serve on her boards and commissions. She just appoints those who she thinks will do her bidding. And when they don't, she acts surprised, she acts affronted, and sometimes she fires them. For this Premier does merit mean "do what I say"?

The Speaker: Order. It's a good thing you don't have more questions, because you would have just lost them.

Ms Smith: I'm not quite sure what the member is talking about, Mr. Speaker. I think he's still talking about the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I would remind him that two NDP members were appointed by them; two members were appointed by the UCP. Then when we had the advisory committee, two NDP members were appointed by them; two were suggested by the UCP. We had an independent justice in both cases who looked at all of the information given by everyone, and then they made recommendations. Justice Miller recommended that the two rural seats be restored.

Ms Gray: Albertans are speaking out against the inappropriate process this government is using to rush through a partisan do-over of the new election maps. First the government used time allocation to stifle debate on the government's motion that created the secretive panel. Now the government is again shutting down debate, this time on the gerrymandered maps produced by that panel. To the Premier: does your government understand that each time it shuts down debate on Alberta's election maps, you further erode Albertans' trust in your government?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'll remind the hon. member that the report was prepared by an independent advisory panel chaired by a former Alberta Court of Appeal judge, Justice Brian O'Ferrall . . .

Mr. Dach: Balderdash.

Mr. Amery: . . . who is, again, a highly respected jurist in our province. Mr. Speaker, the report is tabled. There will be an opportunity. The hon. member knows full well that she will have an opportunity to debate the bill that is coming before this Assembly soon, and we will all have the opportunity to discuss the report.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung will constrain himself. I believe it was your outburst.

Ms Gray: Albertans are right to have no trust in this government or the rushed process to draw Alberta's provincial election maps in secret after the official and proper boundaries commission met with hundreds of Albertans face to face all around the province and accepted thousands of submissions online. They created a fair and balanced map of 89 districts, that had the support of commissioners appointed by the NDP and the UCP. Why won't this government support the contributions from so many Albertans, pass fair maps that respect all of Alberta's communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The boundary commission made it absolutely clear that the only way that they could draw maps that made sure that effective representation was clear and obvious to all Albertans was to move to 91 seats. They had a very difficult and challenging time with drawing an electoral boundary that included 89 seats. That's what they asked us to do. They asked us to move to 91 seats so that they could create a redraw that was effectively representative of all Albertans. That's what we did.

Ms Gray: That's not true. There was a majority map recommended that this government rejected, and now what we have is the worst gerrymandering in Canadian history, and there is no close second.

The use of time allocation repeatedly is a hallmark of this UCP government. We saw it under Premier Kenney, and every time he did it, the poll numbers went down, which led us to the closest election we've seen in this province in its history. To the Premier: do you understand that Albertans will remember this?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, that is not true. The report was clear. When Justice Miller provided the report, there was a recommendation in there that said that 91 seats were necessary to make sure that Albertans had effective representation. That advice was tabled in the way of a piece of legislation, which created 91 seats in this province. We returned it back to the panel, who had the full benefit of all the materials, all the submissions, and all the evidence that were provided to the initial

commission. They provided us with maps. Those maps are here for the . . .

The Speaker: You've got to stop when I stand up, Minister.

Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction Minister's Travel to the U.S. *(continued)*

Member Eremenko: Surely, Mr. Speaker, every UCP minister is familiar with the province's travel, meal, and hospitality policy, which means they would know it does not allow receipts for alcohol purchases without a very good reason, like maybe ordering Alberta whisky here for visiting delegates. The policy requires sign-off by the Premier and also requires food be served with booze. Will the minister of service Alberta somehow claim his sampling of local Kentucky barbecue helped to promote Alberta beef during his bourbon booze cruise?

The Speaker: The hon. minister . . . [interjections] This is my time here. This is when I actually tell somebody who can talk.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. She quoted the expense policy of the government of Alberta correctly. Members of the government cannot expense alcohol for dinners while travelling or those types of expenses, and we make sure that does not take place. There are appropriate times where alcohol could be done for large hospitality events, but they do need prior approval. As the Premier has just indicated in regard to the issue the member is talking about, the Department of Finance will double-check to make sure all expense policies were followed appropriately.

Member Eremenko: Given no public servant would ever get the green light to tour distilleries in Alberta or anywhere else and get sauced while on the clock and given a public servant shouldn't have taxpayers pay for drinking on the job . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Member Eremenko: . . . and given the minister took not one but two booze cruises around Kentucky, who authorized these booze cruises, and why did the minister claim them as taxi receipts?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 10:39 a.m.

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. There was no booze cruise. This was a trade mission. Kentucky has a $10 billion bourbon industry. It's the biggest in . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

All comments should be through the chair, not directly at another member because that actually leads to disorder in the House, as we've just seen.

Start over, Minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate the NDP continue to not be encumbered by the truth. There was no booze cruise. This was a trade mission to Kentucky. They have a $10 billion bourbon industry. It's the biggest in the states. In Alberta it's less than $750 million. We have a lot to learn. It helped inform the creation of the Alberta Whisky Act, which they actually voted in favour of.

10:40

Member Eremenko: Given that no regular Albertan could ever expect to send their boss a bill for $4,000 of multiple days of a booze cruise and claim it as transportation, given this reeks of entitlement and a flagrant abuse of the very policy that ministers are supposed to uphold and given this is yet another example of government waste that Albertans are utterly fed up with, will the minister apologize and pay back every cent for this outrageous expense?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what Albertans are sick of is the fear and smear of NDP politics. We will make sure all expenses on this trip in question meet all government policies, and if for some reason they do not, action will be taken, but there is no evidence that they do not. I have spoken to the minister, who assures me he has not expensed alcohol on his trip. We will confirm that, but for members to continue to stand up in here and make comments like a minister was sauced at work while out defending and promoting a great industry here in the province of Alberta is outrageous.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Domestic Violence Prevention

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every November we recognize Family Violence Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness, support survivors, and recognize the role that each of us plays in preventing violence before it happens. Sadly, many Albertans have experienced some form of family violence, whether emotional, financial, physical, or sexual abuse. To the Minister of Children and Family Services: what is our government doing to ensure the survivors of domestic violence can access the supports they need when they need them the most?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of children services.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to that member for her question and her passionate advocacy for women and children here in this province. You know, as the member mentioned, this month we recognize survivors, raise awareness of the signs of abuse, and reaffirm our commitment to ending gender-based and family violence. No one should ever feel unsafe in their home. That's why this year we're investing more than $188 million to address gender-based violence and supporting women's shelters and sexual assault centres so that anyone experiencing violence has a safe place to turn.

The Speaker: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. Given that the government has previously committed to increase funding to shelters and to ensure that shelter space is available for women and families fleeing violence and further given that the minister's mandate commits to increasing shelter funding by $10 million over four years, to the same minister: what is the government doing to ensure that shelter capacity continues to meet the needs of survivors?

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

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, thank you to the member for that question. Every Albertan fleeing violence deserves somewhere safe to go. That's why we've invested over $62 million each year in emergency family violence shelters like women's shelters here in the province of Alberta. On top of that, we've invested nearly $50 million in targeted grants to maintain critical shelter facilities, strengthen regional collaboration, and increase operational funding. That means shelters can keep their doors open and more

women and children can have a safe place to turn to when they need help the most.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for that great answer. Given that fighting the root causes of domestic and family violence is the best form of prevention and further given that prevention has been an important pillar to stop violence before it starts, again to the Minister of Children and Family Services: what is the government doing to ensure that these life-saving supports are available in every community in Alberta?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Turton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Prevention is key. This year we're funding 60 community grants, including Indigenous-led approaches that promote healthy relationships and help strengthen families in this province that we call home. We can make a difference by learning the signs, checking in with a friend, and listening without judgment. If someone is in immediate danger, please tell your friends and family to call 911. Free, confidential support is available 24/7, and anyone who needs help can call or text 211, or else they can call other numbers.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Forestry and Parks Minister's Activities

Dr. Elmeligi: Mr. Speaker, Albertans know the government has the wrong priorities. The ministers certainly enjoyed a summer of jet-setting, which is why they weren't available to be campaigning for Canada. The Minister of Forestry and Parks has spent over $43,000 of taxpayer money travelling internationally to promote special hunting licences. Can the minister tell Albertans why selling Alberta's wildlife to the largest international bidder was a better use of his time than keeping our country together?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Parks.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. I always enjoy the opportunity to travel and promote Alberta and promote the great things that we're doing in this province. The special minister's licences raised $1.2 million for conservation in this province. It's a proud story. It's a story that's been going on for 20 years. Even when the NDP were in power, they were still selling minister's licences, but they were selling at a discount because nobody was there to promote them. I went there, I promoted the minister's licences, and we've done well for Albertans.

Dr. Elmeligi: Given that if it's been going on for 20 years, Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister's priority should have been on current events, keeping Alberta in Canada. Given the minister's riding is one of two that voted in support of a binding referendum on separation but given that instead of focusing on the future of our country by actually talking with his constituents to address their concerns, the minister had to respond to a request for an ethics investigation from constituents over the potential conflict of interest around hunting allocations, wouldn't the minister's time have been better spent campaigning for Canada?

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, as a minister of this government – and the opposition members know this, too – everything that we do is investigated and checked over by the Ethics Commissioner. I have complied with all the requisitions by the Ethics Commissioner. Everything is reviewed, and to suggest that otherwise is happening is very disrespectful and actually disgusting, to have the opposition continue to bring these allegations forward when they know the facts. The facts are that the Ethics Commissioner looks at all ministers' work and everything in their lives to review it, and it's been approved.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that again the minister is missing the point – it's actually about where he's prioritizing his time – and this minister has made catering to trophy hunters his top priority and given this minister seems more concerned with selling big-game hunting licences than campaigning to stop separatists from taking over the province, given he clearly isn't listening to his own constituents when it comes to hunting management and regulations, what is the minister's justification for jet-setting when he should have been here at home, fighting for Alberta to remain in Canada?

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the travelling hunter that comes to Alberta is the highest spending tourist that comes to this province. Travel Alberta recognizes this. Tourism recognizes this. There's nothing wrong with having people travel to this province and enjoy the beauty of this great province. I'm proud to do that work. I'm proud to represent Albertans. I'm proud to bring money like $1.2 million a year for conservation in this province. I think it's alarming that we have an opposition member that doesn't like to have money spent on conservation. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

Mr. Shepherd: Last Saturday on Rebel News live the Premier told Ezra Levant that she and the Justice minister were making it a priority to repeal protections in the Human Rights Act against statements, signs, or symbols that promote hate because, in her view, public entities like the police or Human Rights Commission should focus on real issues. The thing is that hate incidents, hate crimes, hate-fuelled violence in Alberta are all on the rise. So why is it the Premier's priority to make things worse by stripping away protections for Albertans who are victims of hate?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has always been unequivocally clear that protecting human rights and protecting fundamental freedoms are of utmost priority to our province. I can advise the hon. member and I can advise the members of the Assembly that no changes to the Human Rights Act are being contemplated at this time and that we are not doing anything to take away from the dignity and the importance of protecting human rights in this province.

10:50

Mr. Shepherd: Given that in the comfort of that cozy conversation the Premier said that it was a priority – she went on about woke ideology but said nothing about the effects of growing anti-Semitism on Jewish Albertans – and given she made sure to mention cancel culture and DEI but not the increase in violent attacks on Muslim Albertans and given she said, again, as she did this summer, that she expects all public entities like police to focus on more important issues, is it the Premier's policy to tell Albertans who are targets of hate that they should simply suck it up?

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'll let that hon. member know that no changes are being contemplated to the Human Rights Act, as he is alleging. In fact, that conversation, that line of questioning, and the type of information that is being communicated in this room does nothing to serve the marginalized communities that are being targeted by hate. On this side of the Assembly we will do everything that we can to make sure that people in this province are safe and protected and that people can move around in their neighbourhoods and in their communities with safety and confidence.

Mr. Shepherd: Given that what does nothing to help vulnerable Albertans is when the Premier plays this cynical game, where she says one thing in front of her supporters and then they say another thing when they're called out, and it is cynical to toy with vulnerable Albertans who are targets of hate and given it's good to hear they're backing down but most Albertans wish this Premier would stop posturing for this fragile few on the far right and indeed focus on real issues like addressing her tragic track record on health care, education, and the cost of living, to this government: if that's what they care about, when will they?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can appreciate that the responses are not what the hon. member expected, but I will reiterate once and for all. Protecting Albertans is of utmost priority to my ministry, to the minister of public safety, and to all members on this side of the Assembly. We are not contemplating any changes to the Alberta Human Rights Act to remove the protection of human rights or the dignity for all Albertans. We will continue to stand in the way of hate, in the way of violence, and in the way of persecution of any marginalized group in this province.

Water Management and Livestock Industry

Mrs. Petrovic: Mr. Speaker, southern Alberta's strong and ever-growing livestock sector faces unique water challenges. Under the current framework confined feeding operations can be approved and begin construction before securing the water licence required to operate, which means producers are investing in infrastructure without guaranteed access to water upon completion. To the Minister of Ag and Irrigation: would you consider reviewing the Agricultural Operation Practices Act to explore ways of confirming reliable water supply earlier in the approval process to provide greater certainty to producers and others in rural communities?

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

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Water licensing is handled by Alberta Environment and Protected Areas while confined feeding operation approvals are handled by the NRCB under AOPA. They are separate processes. Producers, however, can choose to link those applications, which allows both the regulators to co-ordinate their reviews. That co-ordination does protect Alberta's water, but it gives our producers a practical, predictable path to invest, expand, and grow. Our government will continue to listen to producers if there's a practical way to make that process work even better.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her response. Given that AOPA has served Alberta's livestock industry well for many years, though we know conditions can look very different across the province, and further given that in southern Alberta, where access to water can be a significant consideration for agricultural development, to the same minister: how does our government commit to supporting responsible livestock growth while recognizing the unique realities of water in limited-water regions?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Responsible livestock growth does require both strong oversight and sustainable water management, especially in southern Alberta. That relationship has been examined in co-llaboration with both the municipalities and industry leaders, and whether water licensing and AOPA approvals should be more closely linked is something they discuss. The current model does maintain separate requirements, but it does allow the process to work together to avoid unnecessary duplication and recognize those regional realities. That balance protects our water, but it also helps our livestock producers.

The Speaker: Livingstone-Macleod.

Mrs. Petrovic: Once again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the minister. Given that Alberta's livestock industry is an important part of the economy and a cornerstone of Alberta's identity and further given that southern communities support responsible water management to sustain the livestock sector's growth, would the same minister consider meeting with some of the municipal divisions of Livingstone-Macleod to discuss agricultural practices in the region and potential for growth and new opportunities?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again to the member. It's no secret that hearing from producers is an incredibly important and passionate thing, so I welcome the opportunity to not only meet with producers but the municipalities or community members on any of their concerns or opportunities that they want to bring forward. We know that water certainty matters in southern Alberta, both for the public's confidence and for our producers who are considering major investments. Those local perspectives are important, and we work to protect our water sources with those for the producers. Our goal is simple. Protect the resources but also keep the door open for opportunities.

COVID-19 Vaccine Availability

Mr. Haji: Last year Albertans lived through the deadliest respiratory virus season in more than a decade, and many could not get a vaccine at their local pharmacies. Despite the UCP government's promise of a better rollout, vaccination rates remain 30 per cent below what they were a decade ago, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister commit today that Alberta's vaccination coverage this year will return to pre-UCP levels so that Albertans do not face another deadly season and the health care system does not suffer as it did last year?

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker, while the NDP is looking to spread the virus of distraction and disruption, we're immunizing Albertans with over 300,000 vaccinations that are ready to go out to meet COVID needs for Albertans clear across the province. We've heard concerns from pharmacists who have overordered an entire season worth of vaccinations, breaking the program of weekly ordering. We have corrected this. We are working directly with the pharmacists. There is nowhere in this province where you cannot get a vaccination. We're delivering what Albertans need.

Mr. Haji: Given that the minister repeatedly assured Albertans that vaccine uptake was on track, yet vaccination rates have fallen by more than 30 per cent . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, try it without the preamble, please.

Mr. Haji: Okay. Given that the Premier recently announced expanded influenza, RSV, and COVID-19 programs through local pharmacies while pharmacists report they cannot even get enough COVID-19 vaccine stock, why do the Premier and the minister claim they expanded access to vaccination at the local pharmacy when the pharmacists cannot even get the supply they currently need to deliver the services that they're required to deliver?

Mr. Wright: Again, Mr. Speaker, showing the division and distraction. If we quote even the president of the association of the pharmacists, they specifically said that 95 per cent of all Albertans have access. We've even gone further to ensure that over 99 per cent of Albertans have access. The only orders that have been cancelled are individual orders that exceeded the weekly recommendations that those pharmacists had. There have been no other cancellations. We have a program to order weekly to deliver the product where it's needed.

Mr. Haji: Given that there has been a tremendous number of cancellations that have written to my office, Mr. Speaker, given that this government charges families for a vaccine that was once free, adding barriers to households already stretched by the rising cost of living, and given that the Premier has stated that she is expanding the very program she is charging Albertans to use, will the minister commit that every Albertan who wants the vaccine to protect themselves and their loved ones can get one without financial barrier?

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: I will recognize you. I promise.

Mr. Wright: I apologize, sir.

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker, again, 157,000 COVID vaccinations have already been delivered. There are 300,000 that are available for Albertans across this province. We have the vaccinations and availability for any Albertan to receive vaccinations when and where they need them. Seventy per cent of those vaccinations have been distributed to pharmacies, with 30 per cent being delivered through our primary care clinics in community. This is one way we are taking a measured approach to deliver the health care and vaccinations Albertans need when and where they need it.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

11:00 Road Construction in Chestermere-Strathmore

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Families in Chestermere-Strathmore have waited a long time for safer intersections on Glenmore Trail at range roads 283 and 284, and our government has stepped up to fully fund these important upgrades. Residents were glad to see the design phase moving forward, but we have now learned that the fall 2026 commencement is facing delays. Can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors share how we are moving forward with this substantial work before the snow falls?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore for her strong advocacy for this project. That's the reason why, actually, this government has invested $16.4 million to improve Glenmore Trail and range roads 283 and 284. We've also partnered with Rocky View county to expedite and deliver this project on behalf of the province, and the county and the province: we're actually finalizing the utility agreements right now and the land purchases so that we can actually start construction as soon as possible on this very important project.

The Speaker: Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given the importance of highway 1 to Alberta's economy and the movement of commercial traffic and given that continued growth in the surrounding area, particularly from Chestermere, is putting increased pressure on this corridor, can the minister share what improvements are being planned to address current and future traffic demands at highway 1 and Garden Road?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of transportation.

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On this project engineering work is well under way. As the design is finalized, we are working through the next steps, which again include utility relocation and land acquisition to advance this project towards construction. Overall our government is investing $110 million in this very important economic corridor in this region of the province to make sure that products can get to market but also that families can get around safely and get home safe at the end of the day.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Alberta is one of the fastest growing provinces in the country, putting increased pressure on our roads and highways, and given that major infrastructure projects are critical to supporting economic growth, improving safety, and keeping people and goods moving, can the minister speak to the importance of getting major infrastructure projects built and ensuring Alberta is prepared for the growth ahead?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Design, engineer, build: if you do those three things right, you can build major projects, and if you don't do those three things well, you end up like the leader of the NDP when he was mayor of Calgary and could not get the green line built. His entire time as mayor of Calgary: he couldn't get the green line built. He wasted billions of dollars of provincial and federal dollars that were committed for that project. Didn't even get built, but thankfully this government showed up. We actually partnered with the city of Calgary, the current mayor and council, to make sure the green line is getting built. If he wants to come for a visit, we're touring it next week.

Government Priorities

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, breaking news. UCP president Rob Smith is deeply concerned. The Alberta NDP is leading in yet another poll. He unravelled his thoughts on social, saying that it's time for the UCP government to recalibrate or they'll lose the next election. Recalibrate away from what? Separation? Will the Premier admit that the party president is correct and she must stop placating and texting with the separatists?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, nowhere in that rambling did I hear anything that resembled a question about government policy, but what I can say is that the Premier and members of the front bench and the government caucus all understand what the job is, and that is to make sure that we remain the lowest taxed jurisdiction, the one that attracts the most investment in the country, and the beacon of economic opportunity for the entire country of Canada while also remaining in Canada, which is the mandate that was given to us by Albertans by over 75 per cent, thanks to the referendum that was issued and initiated by Thomas Lukaszuk.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the UCP's Trump-inspired culture war distraction tactics have just received a glorious shellacking across the United States and given that three years into a four-year term is a little bit too late to right the ship that has focused so much on separatism instead of the priorities of Albertans, will the government admit that recalibration away from separatism should not include ramming through unconstitutional, gerrymandered maps?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite doesn't seem to have any real direction. His questions are not really related.

What I can say is that we understand the assignment, which is attracting investment. As a result of the Premier and her leadership and the members of this government caucus, we've seen billions of dollars, like Linde's $2 billion clean hydrogen facility in Fort Saskatchewan and Dow Chemical's $11 billion net-zero ethylene. I can tell you Alberta is winning. The members opposite would love to see this province fail, and that's what will happen if they end up in government, but on this side of the House the message is clear: affordability, making sure Albertans have jobs, access to low-cost fuel, which we've made happen.

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Well, given that you're only given so many second chances, Mr. Speaker, and given that Albertans have been clear about what they want to see from their government – public health care, smaller class sizes, fair wages, good-paying jobs, and affordable groceries – and given that the UCP recalibration looks more like the same kind of scandal, separatism complete with booze cruises, private flights, if they cannot recalibrate themselves out of this one, why don't the UCP just try to listen to Alberta's concerns?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, since the Premier became the leader of this party, we have seen the province gain 305,000 new jobs. I repeat: 305,000 new jobs. I'm not sure we want to recalibrate anything away from that. It's important that there are job opportunities and employment in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have rejected from the first day the tariffs the United States have placed on Canada. We believe that we should have a tariff-free relationship. It's why the Premier and other members of this caucus continue to meet with federal and provincial legislators across the line, and that's not going to change.

Urgent Care Centres

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, Albertans want emergency care but not political distractions like a divisive referendum. In 2025 the government announced urgent care centres. Nearly two years later none of the nine centres announced have left the planning stages. While government poured millions of dollars for a failed referendum, Albertans wait more than eight hours in emergency rooms. Why do this government's political pet projects move faster than patient care?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of hospitals and surgical care.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say that we are continuing to make sure that we have urgent care centres planned for right across the province. In fact, in Edmonton I can share that we have many projects that are on the go: in-patient towers at the Grey Nuns; the in-patient towers at the Misericordia; the Royal Alex hospital redevelopment; the Stollery children's hospital planning, which the members opposite could have announced but they never did; the University of Alberta hospital Brain Centre; the Neurosciences Intensive Care Unit; and, of course, the U of A hospital expansion.

Mr. Deol: Given that patients wait too long in overcrowded emergency rooms and given that not one urgent care centre in Edmonton, Medicine Hat, or other communities is open today and given that patients have died waiting for urgent care yet the government chose to spend untold millions on a referendum rather than opening these care centres, when will construction actually start on the urgent care centre the government announced but did not build?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the members opposite, we actually do the planning and make sure that these are well-thought-out projects. We have eight urgent care centres, including in Edmonton, that will take place. I'm happy to let the member opposite know that we are leading the country in workforce recruitment and retention. That is going to be extremely important when we do open these urgent care centres as well as any other health care facility. We have more doctors, more nurses, more health care aides than ever before.

11:10

Mr. Deol: Given that more than 2 million Albertans waited in pain last year for urgent medical care and given that Albertans can see online how many hours they will wait to be seen by a doctor in an emergency room but cannot see when these announced urgent care centres will actually get built, how long will Albertans have to wait for the centres to be built so millions of people will stop having to wait to get help in this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to report that our triage liaison physician program is now up and being recruited to. It will have a huge difference in our emergency rooms. The member opposite was asking about waiting in emergency rooms for emergency care. We are actually going to have a clinical triage team. We have got doctors and nurses and other allied professionals really excited about this program. We already have five hospitals, many within Edmonton, that are looking at implementing the clinical triage team and the physician program.

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

Members' Statements
(continued)

Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction Minister's Travel to the U.S.

Member Kayande: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction carried out some truly detailed on-the-

ground research about Kentucky bourbon. He did this first-hand research by hiring Kentucky's premiere private bourbon tour experience to drive him and his chief of staff from distillery to distillery via a luxury You Sip, We Drive chauffeur service.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate a good old-fashioned once in a while, and I'm sure the minister had a good time schmoozing in a country that's currently declared a trade war on our economy, but I'll be honest. This sounds more like a booze-soaked bachelor party than a critical taxpayer-funded research project. The fact that the minister has submitted an expense report for not one but two days of boozing and cruising in Kentucky and described it as taxi fare strongly suggests that something smells, and it isn't the central vanilla notes of French oak barrels.

The public service has very strong, clear prohibitions against billing taxpayers for alcohol, but the minister's expenses stick taxpayers with a more than a $4,000 hangover for what is clearly a tasting tour, not taxi fare. What exactly did those thousands of dollars pay for? If the minister wasn't drinking at each of these distilleries, why book a You Sip, We Drive service? How many shots did that generous taxpayer tab cover? What does he tell his constituents who are struggling with groceries, mortgages, bills on everything about his expensive junket that they paid for with their higher property taxes?

Not only did this minister put American booze back on our shelves mid trade war; it looks like he billed taxpayers for copious amounts of it. Albertans see the truth, and the minister needs to pay his tab.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 214
Alberta Health Care Insurance (Protecting Public Health Care) Amendment Act, 2026

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is actually my first time as a private member to introduce a bill, so I'm very excited. I rise to request leave to introduce a bill. It's Bill 214, which we're titling the Alberta Health Care Insurance (Protecting Public Health Care) Amendment Act, 2026.

If passed, this would restore confidence in our public health care system by reversing key planks of the UCP's American-style privatization agenda. It would ensure that medical advice focuses on patient needs rather than focusing on asking people to pay out of pocket or buy private insurance to be able to afford health care.

I urge all members to support this bill and look forward to debating it after the break.

[Motion carried; Bill 214 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate copies of a submission from the University of Calgary talking about just how bad Bill 38 is.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd love to table five copies of an article alluded to multiple times today in Question Period entitled service minister's Kentucky 'Booze Cruise' Cost Albertans More Than $4,000, Receipts Show.

The Speaker: Any other tablings? I see none.

That takes us to points of order. A point of order was called at 10:39 by the Government House Leader.

Point of Order
Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time noted, without the benefit of the Blues, I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j) to point out that the Member for Calgary-Currie was posing a question to the government and at the time accused a member in good standing in this Assembly of getting sauced on the job. This is totally inappropriate language, and it's a totally wild accusation to suggest that a member of either caucus is getting sauced on the job or whatever term you want to use. There are lots of them. I do not think that this kind of language rises to the level of decorum that is becoming of a member of this Chamber, and I ask the member to apologize and withdraw and refuse from using this kind of accusatory language in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a long-standing practice in this House that when a member makes a statement, we believe them. That being said, neither the minister of Service Alberta nor the Finance minister have ever said that there was no drinking on these distillery tours despite being asked repeatedly, probably because no one would believe them.

Now, the member did not say that the minister got sauced. Without the benefit of the Blues, I believe that the Member for Calgary-Currie said, and I quote: "Given no public servant would . . . get the green light to tour distilleries in Alberta or anywhere else and get sauced while on the clock, and given a public servant shouldn't have taxpayers pay for drinking on the job." Both of these are statements, Mr. Speaker, on the expected conduct of public servants, one I honestly think I heard the Minister of Finance agree with when he read the official government policy.

This is not a point of order because the member made a comment that any reasonable person would agree with. The minister is being asked about expensive and potentially inappropriate behaviour while representing Alberta with stakeholders. Despite how sensitive and vulnerable the government may be feeling on this, it is not a point of order and an accusation was not made against that minister.

The Speaker: Anything else? Okay.

Well, I think that the hon. Opposition House Leader was accurate, but I will read the Blues directly to you.

> Given no public servant would ever get the green light to tour distilleries in Alberta or anywhere else and get sauced while on the clock, and given a public servant shouldn't have taxpayers pay for drinking on the job.

I think the hon. Opposition House Leader is right insofar as the hon. member did not directly say the minister did, but there is precedent here. Certainly, the innuendo is likely to provoke disorder, and there was a ruling on November 25, 2025, where the phrase "specialty drinks" suggested that somebody else, and it seemed like an attempt at reputational damage, and at that point the Speaker asked for an apology and withdrawal for an insinuation that a member had too much to drink. I would call this an insinuation also, and I will ask for an apology and a withdrawal.

Member Eremenko: I apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: That concludes this matter.

For those watching at home, that is the proper way for an hon. member to conduct themselves at this point. Thank you very much.

11:20

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading

Bill 33
Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2)

The Speaker: The hon. Justice minister.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move third reading of Bill 33, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2).

This legislation advances a straightforward and important principle that hiring and training within public institutions should be based on merit. Albertans should be confident that public-sector employment and promotion decisions are made on a candidate's qualifications, their abilities, and their capacity to perform on a job. That's why Bill 33 ends preferential hiring and promotion practices within provincial bodies. It places the focus on where it belongs, on selecting the most qualified candidates capable to do a particular job. Albertans, Mr. Speaker, deserve the best people in their public-sector roles.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

At the same time, these amendments maintain important protections under Alberta's human rights framework. Employers will continue to have a duty to accommodate employees and applicants. They will also continue to be able to rely on good-faith occupational requirements when those requirements are reasonably necessary for a particular position. These protections remain an important part of ensuring that workplaces remain fair, accessible, and respectful. Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed today do not take away from the protections that the Human Rights Act guarantees to all Albertans on the various protected grounds that exist within it.

Bill 33 also introduces neutrality principles and prohibits certain types of training within provincial bodies. In other words, we're scrapping certain types of mandatory training in our public institutions. Mandatory workplace training must have a clear and practical connection to an employee's responsibilities. It must do away with the types of mandatory training that is being imposed upon people working in our public institutions that contain ideological theories or political positions. Public institutions need to be directing their time and their resources towards training that helps employees perform their jobs and their duties more effectively and, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, on delivering high-quality services to Albertans.

Now, we talked a great deal about this. There was some robust debate in this Assembly on this bill. A number of times we've heard in this Assembly the opposition say things like: Well, there's nothing to see here; nobody is complaining about this; there's no DEI hiring happening here in Alberta. So I'd like to clarify for the record what the problem is. The city of Calgary's gender equity, diversion, and inclusion strategy talks about the integration of unconscious bias training into its recruitment and its selection. On a job posting for a city of Edmonton project manager it says, under skills required for successful applicants, that you must have a commitment to embracing a culture of DEI. Mr. Speaker, the University of Lethbridge has a job posting for a tier 2 Canada research chair and the job posting states that in accordance with section 10.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act only applicants who identify as a racialized individual will be considered for this Canada research chair opportunity. These examples speak for themselves.

These practices exist in Alberta. Bill 33 draws a clear line. We want the best people to be employed in our public-sector bodies. We want them to have the requisite skills, the requisite competence, and the requisite experience to excel in their roles, primarily because those are public-sector employees that are serving Albertans.

Now, there are a lot of other things to talk about in Bill 33 that I think are remarkable as well. I'm proud about the practical improvements that Bill 33 makes to Alberta's justice system. Amendments to the King's Counsel Act will ensure that accomplished lawyers are not disadvantaged in the appointment process because they temporarily step away from their practice for parental leave or other types of appropriate leave. This is important, Mr. Speaker, because there are a certain number of years that a lawyer must practise before even becoming eligible to apply for a King's Counsel appointment. Families who make the decision to step away from that practice for a year or two have been historically prejudiced by the ability to come back and claim those years in practice. We're doing away with that so that lawyers that decide to step away from their practice for a little bit to raise their family can come back and not be disadvantaged in their application process.

We're also making amendments to the Court of King's Bench Act to further support the family-focused protocol in Alberta's Court of King's Bench. This is important because this amendment will ensure that family and divorce matters continue to be addressed through an approach that focuses on families, encourages effective resolution, and strengthens Alberta's family justice system.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 33 does a lot of things, and it's ultimately about fairness and it's ultimately about effective public service. It strengthens merit-based hiring. It protects existing human rights obligations. It ensures that mandatory training is connected directly to an employee's work, and it makes thoughtful improvements to Alberta's legal and family justice system. It deals with issues we had with the Alberta Law Foundation, and it creates an opportunity for the Alberta Law Foundation and its board of directors, a new and remarkable board of directors, I might add, to continue the great work that they do to deliver essential services to legal organizations all across our province. It reflects the government's commitment to public institutions that must remain and should be impartial, accountable, and focusing on Albertans. And, finally, it affirms that every Albertan should have a fair opportunity. They must have a fair shake to be able to compete, to be able to contribute, and to be able to succeed based on their qualifications and their merit.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to move third reading of Bill 33, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2). Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any others wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to third reading of Bill 33. When President Trump took over, one of the few things that he started pretty much both terms with was that he would dismantle DEI. Then he also put culture wars on steroids. Then he targeted immigrants and went on to, say, Muslim bans, building a wall, and all those things. These were all distractions. That was all rhetoric, and last Tuesday, when all these distractions were tested on ballot paper, the American people rejected all that rhetoric. They rejected all those policies because there were more important issues, because there were priorities that were ignored by that administration. They voted in favour of a more hopeful future, in favour of candidates that were focused on the priorities of working people such as affordability, access to health care, and a society that respects the dignity of all individuals.

Here at home the UCP has been operating from the same script and from the same playbook. They are now putting forward this bill and claiming that it will dismantle DEI hiring practices.

11:30

Their own public service has confirmed that within the government of Alberta there is no such thing as DEI hiring practices. The three examples the minister came up with: one was from the city of Calgary, one was from the city of Edmonton, and one was from the University of Lethbridge. All these institutions do have their own bodies, elected bodies for Calgary and Edmonton, and I'm sure that University of Lethbridge has procedures and processes in place. They have senators, they have a board of directors who can look after the university. But this government's policy from day one is that they want to have control over everything and everyone. They preach all day long for others to stay in their lane, but whatever they preach, they never apply that to their own actions.

The amendments they're making to the Alberta Human Rights Act: I think nobody was asking for them, and it's again a distraction that now somehow Albertans are to believe that government will move towards merit-based hiring. If they really want to do that, I think they have to look at their own practices, their own hiring choices that they have done in the last little while.

Just to quote a few examples, the candidate in Sherwood Park in 2023, Jordan Walker: when he was defeated, he was hired as manager of corporate development at Alberta Innovates.

Ms Hoffman: I believe so.

Mr. Sabir: Yeah.

And Miranda Rosin, who was defeated by my good friend the MLA for Banff-Kananaskis: she got appointed as the Alberta director of tourism strategy, and I'm pretty sure if she knew anything about Banff's tourism and all that, people might have trusted her on the ballot, but no. They rejected her policies, and now she's the Alberta director of tourism strategy and policy.

They can look at many board appointments, be that Alberta Health Services and all other boards where they have hired and fired almost five, six boards so far. None of those appointments were based on merit. Like, they were hiring their friends, former MLAs, lobbyists, donors. A number of relatives of Sam Mraiche and, by extension, the Justice minister's relatives: they were hired in the public service left, right, and centre. Were they hired all on merit, or was the only merit that applied to them that they're relatives of the Justice minister? I think there are so many other appointments that even the Justice minister recently had made. There is one particular person in Calgary who used to be the Justice minister's staffer as well, I believe. He was appointed to five, six boards just in the last five, six months. One day he was sharing the Justice minister's post about merit-based hiring. I wish he could have let that one slide, but he didn't.

At the end of the day, I think government through these changes is reaching into other independent organizations, businesses, other municipalities, nonprofits, and universities. You name it. I don't think that Albertans like this overreach. I don't think that it's government's role to control every organization, every municipality, every nonprofit, and every university, how they manage their affairs, how they manage their hiring practices. But when I talk about my own constituency, it has a lot of first-generation, second-generation immigrants, and not one of them ever talked to me about DEI hiring practices or how they have benefited from any such practices.

Everyone has a story. They have struggled here. They have to jump a lot of hoops, and I might add unnecessary hoops, to get to where they are. They have to work double, triple times harder than their other counterparts to get to the places, get to the professions that they have been trained for, and still their number one issue remains recognition of foreign credentials that this government has done absolutely nothing other than passing a piece of legislation that was not helpful to anyone, passing a bill to strike a committee to look into that issue. Again, nothing has changed for those people who are still struggling to get their credentials recognized and be able to practice in the profession they are trained for. If government really wants to kind of govern for everyone, if they really want to have an opportunity and a fair shot for everyone, they should be looking at those issues.

The second thing I do want to talk about is that earlier, in the referendum, again, which no one was asking for, not even Thomas Lukaszuk, they had five questions, again, straight out of Trump's playbook, anti-immigrant questions plain and simple. Again, the government, despite taxpayer-sponsored propaganda to the tune of $4 million, didn't get the result, didn't get the mandate they were looking for. Those questions passed very narrowly, but I can say that in my riding, which is almost 80-plus per cent immigrants – first generation, second generation – people resoundingly voted against all those anti-immigrant questions. They voted no to all nine questions. That was the result in the Justice minister's riding. That was the result in pretty much the entire northeast quadrant.

Now, I think, instead of listening to their constituents, they are now adding things anyways. It doesn't matter what those results were. For instance, they're making changes to the Court of King's Bench Act. One of the questions was about whether the Premier and cabinet should appoint justices to the superior court. Albertans rejected that suggestion resoundingly, but instead of listening to Albertans, instead of respecting what they have to say, now they're doing what they are not able to do directly. They're creating positions of application judges. To my knowledge nobody has so far been appointed. Also nobody really clearly knows what they will do, but here they are giving them more powers, powers that usually are vested with the superior court judiciary judges who are appointed in a very fulsome and rigorous process.

These judges who are just appointed by the Justice minister and cabinet: they will have some of the same powers as federal superior court judges. I think that goes against the wishes of Albertans, who clearly told this government that they should not come close to the judiciary. They should not tinker with these constitutional appointments, but they are doing it anyway.

I also want to talk about a few other things that are included in this bill. There are changes with respect to the Alberta Law Foundation. What government is doing here is that they are reversing some of the changes that they made through Bill 14 and Bill 39 in previous sittings. At that time we warned them that these changes are undemocratic, heavy-handed, and government is exceeding its powers and reaching into the funds that don't belong to the government.

11:40

Nonetheless, they used or abused their majority and made those changes, which resulted in the entire board quitting their jobs, 14 employees leaving that organization. After months they are now reversing those changes, which is a good thing, but government should also do a little bit more. Government and the Minister of Justice should also apologize to all those employees whose reputations were tarnished, who were subjected to government abuse of power and certainly who were harmed by this government action. Government should apologize to them. Just reversing those changes alone is not enough.

Then there are certain changes to the KC appointment process. A 10-year requirement is there, but now government is adding that out of those 10, five years could be in any other common law jurisdiction. Sure. People's experiences, credentials should be recognized, as long as they are relevant and they are up to par. But we still do not have an objective criteria that one can tell how to distinguish a member of the bar getting KC appointment as different from a member of the bar with the same amount of service who's not getting KC appointment.

I think one criteria that should not be anywhere close to these appointments is that it shouldn't be based on who knows the minister or who knows the right people. That should not be the criteria. Rather, there needs to be a more objective criteria that is understandable to the members of the profession, and based on that criteria they'll be able to make those applications.

The last thing I want to talk about is Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. I think changes contained in this act will enhance transparency, something that we rarely – rarely – see from this government, and we're all in favour of this change.

One really important change in this legislation is the protection for the victims of sexual abuse, which on this side of the House we fully support. No one should be able to distribute or threaten to distribute intimate images without the other person's consent. Government is creating, I guess, stronger measures and also creating a tort that if such an incident happened, those victims will have some recourse. These are really good changes.

I think in this day and age where social media use, where technology use is so prevalent – there are studies out there that there are greater chances of harm from these developments as well, so we would have supported and government could have considered banning some of these things such as social media for kids under a certain age. Parents would have welcomed it, and that would have strengthened these protections as well.

In short, in this bill there are some really good changes, good provisions such as protection for victims of sexual abuse, but they have mixed them with some of their usual rhetoric. I think they're incapable of doing something good without politicizing that.

In any event, at the committee stage we requested that some of these provisions be separated. We did vote in favour of protections for victims of sexual abuse and public-sector transparency and some other changes. We didn't vote for the UCP rhetoric around DEI and how these changes are making any impact whatsoever. At the end, I think, we will support in favour of these changes, in particular the changes around protection for victims of sexual abuse.

With that, I will take my seat.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any others wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I give the Minister of Justice the opportunity to close. That is waived.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 36
Children and Family Services (Supporting Alberta Families) Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children and Family Services.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise at second reading of Bill 36, the supporting Alberta families act. Every child and young person deserves to be safe, supported, and surrounded by people who care about them, and when a child or youth needs intervention, Alberta's laws should help the people around them make good decisions, provide appropriate supports, and work towards their safety and stability. This proposed legislation includes amendments to four separate acts.

Firstly, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, or CYFEA, is Alberta's primary child intervention legislation. It provides the legal framework for supporting children who are abused, neglected, or otherwise in need of intervention. This legislation deals with some of the most difficult circumstances that a child or family can experience, making it especially important that the legislation is clear, fair, and responsive to the realities facing children, youth, and families of today.

Mr. Speaker, many of the changes proposed in Bill 36 stem from the first legislative review of CYFEA. The act requires a comprehensive review at least once every five years by a review committee. This committee includes representatives from Indigenous communities, guardians and caregivers, service providers, and members from each caucus represented in the Assembly. I would just like to thank the Member for Camrose for chairing the review committee as well as the participation of the MLA for Calgary-Acadia. The committee has also invited written submissions from First Nations and Métis leadership, delegated First Nations agencies, adoption agencies, associations, and advocacy organizations, amongst others. I would just like to thank each and every committee member for participating in this vital work.

Following this year-long review process, the committee produced 37 recommendations. Not every recommendation requires a legislative amendment. For example, some recommendations reinforce existing practices such as promoting collaborative case planning, and other recommendations can be worked out in regulations.

The review gave us an important opportunity to look at where the legislation does need to change. The amendments before the Assembly focus on administrative fairness, increasing participation by families and caregivers, system improvements in adoption processes, and modernizing terminology. The proposed amendments would give greater priority to kinship placements, which is very near and dear to my heart. This follows best practice to ensure that more children will, whenever possible, stay with relatives or people that they know and trust while maintaining important connections to their family, their community, and their culture.

We're also proposing to give both kinship and foster caregivers a stronger voice in decisions that affect the children in their care. Eligible caregivers would receive court notifications and participation rights. Clear rules will make it easier for families to navigate the system, and by eliminating unnecessary court appearances, we hope to reduce uncertainty and stress for many Albertan families.

To ensure that children have greater self-advocacy amendments we would introduce a requirement that the child's voice be heard in decisions that affect them. Proposed changes would allow my ministry to mandate permanency frameworks to support long-term planning for children, enable openness agreements for adoptees to remain connected to biological relatives, and make adoption records easier to access for adults and mature minor adoptees. Taken together, these changes are intended to support timely decisions and help children and youth find safe, stable, and permanent homes, which is something I think every member of this Assembly is interested in.

11:50

Since tabling the legislation on Thursday, my office has been contacted, entirely unsolicited, by adoptees, grandparents, and practitioners who support these changes. Just earlier this week I met with Rylee Mae, a young student advocate and recent graduate from the University of Lethbridge who, growing up, frequently relocated between multiple placements. She stressed the importance of doing everything in her power to make finding long-term placements easier and listening to the child and those who care for them in determining these placements. That's a goal I believe that both sides of this Chamber can and should support.

Turning to the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act, or PSECA, amendments, one of the key changes we're proposing is to update how child sexual exploitation is addressed in our legislation.

You know, for a long time we thought of safety mostly in terms of physical terms. Today exploitation often begins not on a street corner but on a screen. A young person can be at home in their own bedroom, when their family is just down the hall, and still be in danger. Our laws need to reflect that reality.

The proposed amendments to PSECA replace antiquated prostitution-focused language in the act to align with the current understanding of child sexual exploitation, which includes online harms such as grooming, cyber luring, trafficking, digital harassment, and other forms of predators' behaviours, both online and in the community. By clarifying that these harms are exploitation by definition, this allows practitioners to intervene as soon as they know a child is being targeted and to identify pathways for treatment. It also empowers law enforcement to combat online predators' behaviours as child sexual exploitation.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments to the Protection Against Family Violence Act, or PAFVA, repeal outdated sections related to the now-closed Family Violence Death Review Committee. The committee was dissolved in 2025 after an internal review found that its work was increasingly overlapping with other oversight mechanisms and resources could be redirected to proactive, client-focused supports for victims of family violence.

Finally, regarding the Education Act, a minor update is proposed to replace the term "foster parent" with "kinship caregiver," and this aligns with the changes to CYFEA.

At the heart of these proposed amendments is one simple goal: helping children and youth across our province to grow up feeling safe, supported, and connected to the community where they belong and the communities that they call home. These proposed legislative changes will improve clarity and accountability, giving Alberta's children and youth better access to the safety, stability, and connections that they need to thrive.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of the supporting Alberta families act. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his comments. I'm pleased to rise in support of this bill, some amendments that are much needed and reflecting many of what the minister had said, particularly to make sure that every child deserves to feel safe in their community that they live in. I'm so grateful that the good work of the individuals that submitted letters, that participated in the review did so under the recognition that all children in our communities deserve to be respected and heard in all decisions that this government should make. I am very cognizant of that participation and the minister's comments that not all recommendations were needed.

I'm certainly seeing some submissions – and I'm not trying to discount the important work that this bill will do, but I do want to recognize that there's more work that needs to be done with respect to Indigenous kids in care. We look at the numbers, particularly from this report, from this change to CYFEA and the report to the minister with respect to Indigenous children in care.

My colleague, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, has called these changes window-dressing amendments because the crux of this bill should have focused on recognizing that we still have one of the largest numbers of Indigenous kids in care. We continue to have Indigenous children overrepresented in care. The most recent numbers, September through April 2026-27, we have about an average of 78 per cent of kids in care who are Indigenous. In '23-24, this was about 72 per cent, so under this minister we continue to see an increase of Indigenous kids in care, and the changes to legislation do not reflect this need.

I'm heartened to see that more reliance and an increase of kinship caregiving is one of the major tenets that the minister highlighted with respect to these amendments, but the first call to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to reduce the amount of Indigenous children in care. These amendments that have been put forward despite the report to the minister for the review of CYFEA: we're still seeing an absence of this recognition of the jurisdictional matters that still exist after C-92 came out, and it's absent, particularly in any of these amendments.

One of the recommendations from that report to the minister of the review to CYFEA is reporting to First Nation, Métis, or Inuit communities, and that's recommendation 28, Mr. Speaker. There are no legislative changes in this bill through any of these amendments, and that is particularly a concern. I think the one recommendation in here that I do see is with respect to openness agreement, and so that's already when the child has been apprehended and is going through an adoption process. That's recognized because they understand that when you take out an Indigenous child from a community or from their family, oftentimes those openness agreements are necessary to ensure cultural continuity, which is very important.

I recognize the minister's important point of recognizing cultural continuity, but I am also heartened to know that these recommendations were not done in silos because we look at the amount of Indigenous kids in care, and we are seeing the increase of Indigenous kids in care, not just in the care but also through apprehensions, and we had an opportunity to make these amendments. I hope this minister really takes that to heart. We need to be including Indigenous communities in these decisions, especially through that ministry given these unfortunate numbers that we are facing. I understand that the ministry did not want to focus solely on Indigenous children and communities in any of these amendments because it's not supposed to be an Indigenous-specific bill, but not including this does not reflect the data of Indigenous children representing almost 80 per cent of all kids in care.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight how this affects Indigenous peoples because I also have personal experience with the system. I have a nephew who has been under the foster care of a wonderful family, has been removed from our community, from our family, because his mother, who was also a product of the system, passed away. He's been with this wonderful family and has learned different languages, still comes to community events, but does not have that same kind of connection to, say, Nehiyawewin that he might have to another language that he's learned, like Tagalog. I'm heartened to see that openness agreements are a feature of these amendments, but it doesn't really reflect the importance of respecting kinship caregivers with respect to this legislation.

12:00

I'm going to talk about kinship caregiving in a minute here, but to drive home the point of this amendment of openness agreements, really understanding that cultural continuity provides so much more than that connection to community, it provides a level of stability and respect to those kiddos that are removed from their community, that don't have that ongoing connection like some of us had even growing up in community. When we look at that amendment, I'm grateful that we had that, and it was something that was requested for cultural continuity.

When we look at the success of kiddos that have connection to their cultural background, in particular we'll look at Indigenous kids but also non-Indigenous kids that have cultural connections to their community. They have greater likelihood of success. There's a greater incidence of lack of depression. There are greater instances of attaining more in terms of workplaces, of educational attainment.

These are good things, and I appreciate that cultural continuity is something that is replete within making sure that kinship caregivers are given greater opportunity.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the things is: where is the money attached to this? We know that foster caregivers are receiving a lot more than a kinship caregiver is receiving. When we ask our community and our families to support our kiddos, it is a good thing, but when we don't have the same kind of dollars that a foster caregiver might receive for providing support for kiddos that might come from their families, it paints a picture that we don't appreciate the gravity of kinship caregiving. I know this minister is not unfamiliar with my calls to action on this particular point to ensure that kinship caregivers are receiving adequate support for providing caregiving for these kiddos that are apprehended by the province, that do become part of the system.

We look at the numbers. Foster caregivers are receiving over double what kinship caregivers receive. We look at it in the context of Indigenous peoples expecting Indigenous caregivers to take up the charge to raise our babies, which is phenomenal, but really, when non-Indigenous families foster Indigenous children, they're given greater dollars to provide that support. Despite this openness agreement that might be entered into in terms of adoption if it gets to that point, I think we have to look at how this is a kind of a double-edged sword and may prevent further kinship caregivers from participating in the system when the option to foster children is a much greater opportunity for non-Indigenous people to take Indigenous kids in care.

I spoke about that personal anecdote with my nephew, who is being fostered by a wonderful family, and they are such lovely people. But that connection to community that otherwise would have been there if he was, for example, under kinship care – we would have seen greater connection to community, but at the same time the detriment to how much is given financially in regard to a foster caregiver versus a kinship caregiver should be something that we talk about. I will be following up in budget estimates, and I hope that this minister is aware of this need and this gap. It's something that will continue coming up.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I also think of the 20 per cent of children in care that are non-Indigenous that might benefit from kinship caregiving. If we are not considering these families and all families in Alberta, then this program misses the mark. We can talk about cultural continuity all we want, but when we have a program and a policy that doesn't reflect the ethos of what the minister is saying about ensuring that kinship caregiving is the priority, Madam Speaker, I think that we need to revisit these amendments. We need to really look at the work that goes on behind the scenes on how we make sure that there's some clarity for much-needed support for caregivers offering kinship support.

These are things that I think this ministry would be benefited to consider moving forward to ensure that kinship caregiving is the priority so that our families can raise our children and share those histories and make sure that those connections that the minister talked very highly of are continued.

Madam Speaker, I do thank the minister for putting forward these amendments and for considering some of the recommendations that were made, but I do still want to see specific, Indigenous-led amendments that would focus on reducing the amount of kids in care. When we start focusing on the historic harms that have been caused by residential school trauma, the ongoing trauma, intergenerational trauma, we have the opportunity to start healing our families and start healing our communities. And when we start healing our communities, we have the opportunity to unlock unmarked potential, and that potential means that our communities are safer, our communities are vibrant, and that we have much more in terms of growth that our province can go through.

I want to kind of focus now on the PSECA portions of the changes, and I'm grateful for the minister for recognizing that these changes were much needed. We're at a time where the minister highlighted a potential scenario where exploitation of children is happening not in physical forms solely. It is also online, and you need only to look at media to see news of organized crime rings who are exploiting a lack of oversight online to protect children from sexual exploitation. This shift away from language including solely prostitution or sex work is really major, and I am thankful to the minister for making that change based on the recommendations that necessarily required this to reflect the modern times that we live in. Technology has become such a benefit, and I rise in this House to speak to the importance of technology and making sure that we have guardrails in place to match these changes in technology and particularly how bad actors and criminals are exploiting our babies.

This change is welcome, but another aspect of this is the funding and the support for workers doing this very important work to intervene when necessary. This is my notice to the minister. I will be following up when we get to the budget about this increase for dollars for more workers to reflect this needed change. This is going to mean more work. This is going to mean more support that's needed to ensure that our babies are protected and safe. I want to ensure that when we do have these conversations about budget, this is something that is reflected because I know that the mighty team doing this work for PSECA is going to need greater support, especially with this increase in mandate and this increase in the work online that is necessary. I know we're not going to catch all those bad guys even though we try very, very hard, but, Madam Speaker, the reality is that there's so much that is uncharted with respect to online harm, and we need greater clarity on how we do this, and we need greater support in terms of workers to do that very vital job.

Madam Speaker, again, there are still little pieces in here that may need some fine-tuning. I think there are the apprehensions without orders. We do need to consider procedural fairness for the best interests of the child, and overall the best interests of the child do need to be reflected in these amendments and in the legislation. And I note maybe anecdotally – I don't have any other information other than I talked to the legal community, and I know that LRCY is no longer taking on more lawyers, so how are we going to ensure that the children's voices are being reflected? I know the minister talked about amendments in the legislation to ensure that children's voices are heard, but if we're looking at these apprehensions without orders by just director decisions, I think we have to consider how procedural fairness for that child's voice is actually reflected in these changes because if we're not thinking of the best interest of the child, then I really wonder what we are doing here.

12:10

Madam Chair, while I appreciate and I do support these amendments and I thank the minister for putting them forward, I do think there are still recommendations out there that need to be reflected, particularly when it comes to working with Indigenous communities, Indigenous nations when an Indigenous child is apprehended and is in the care of government. If I'm reading these amendments and the only mention of an Indigenous community is around openness agreements, I wonder how we are going to continue making these changes to ensure that Indigenous children are not overrepresented in this system. Under this government's

tenure we are seeing an increase of Indigenous children in care. When we have other pieces of legislation that don't require cultural training to work with Indigenous peoples, we're going to see this ongoing misunderstanding of how we work with Indigenous communities.

I know that the important work that our social workers do must be complemented by understanding the community that they serve. If we are removing Indigenous workers, Indigenous social workers, under these attacks to diversity, equity, inclusion, I really do wonder: what does that mean, how these amendments have not made their way into this legislation?

I do take note that the ministry has indicated that they didn't want to make it an Indigenous-focused bill, but again, Madam Speaker, we have to look at the data. When we have Indigenous children that do represent over 80 per cent of children in care, then we need programs, we need policies, we need laws that reflect how we reduce that. I can tell you that it's not a parenting issue. It's not that Indigenous families are incapable of raising their babies. It's that we have to . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Carry on.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is that we have to consider how the best interests of the children are considered. We have to include Indigenous parents in that conversation. I know this government likes to say that they are always looking out for the best interests of the child, but when you're not including those voices and understanding that they are a gift to us – in Cree ways our babies aren't given to us. They pick us as parents. They come to us in the spirit world, and they get to make that decision on who their parent is. In our way our babies can always be taken away from us by the Creator if we are not doing our job, if we are not raising them the way that we're supposed to raise them.

Madam Speaker, when we consider how our babies are part of our lives and how they belong to our families, they are the ones that pick us, so if we're not listening to their perspectives and including their voices at all decision-making steps, I do worry that we're going to continue seeing major changes and major disruptions to our communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to participate in this debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Member Batten: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to rise and join debate on Bill 36, Children and Family Services (Supporting Alberta Families) Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. I first want to start by thanking the minister for bringing forward this legislation. As I move along, we'll see that I'm not super happy, but I do think it's a really good step in some regards.

Now, the minister had mentioned that there was a review committee, and I was honoured to be a part of that. I want to of course acknowledge the work of the chair, who is the Member for Camrose, on this committee. The calibre of folks we had around the table I cannot overstate. It was amazing to work with these folks. They are the experts. They came from across the province, and it was my absolute pleasure to work with them over that year to come up with the recommendations.

Now, as the minister had said, the CYFEA review committee proposed 37 recommendations. That is where I'm kind of focused today, specifically just taking a look at, again: what is the purpose of the revision? I mean, bluntly, it is so that we can provide better care to Albertan kids. Thinking of it that way and approaching these different recommendations, the four themes of the recommendations we put forward were administrative fairness, permanency for children, Indigenous continuity, and cultural considerations. What we're seeing in this bill is that there are some partial recommendations that have been applied.

When we think about considering children's rights, especially in the context of online harms, it's really great to see some legislation that starts to speak to protecting kids in the reality of the world we're living in because, of course, we know that kids have access to a very different world than most of us did growing up. We really do need to make sure that we've got the proper legislation and protections around for them, so I was happy to see some of that.

A big piece was – I guess I was going to say fair – more fair respect for kinship care. We are seeing some changes there where they are acknowledged for the amazing work they do and acknowledged for what they bring forward to, I mean, the Indigenous and Métis children who end up in care of the government or in situations where the government needs to step in. That I'm very happy to hear because, of course, as the government of Alberta every child inside the borders are subject to this legislation regardless of if they are treaty members or not. I love that we've got the inclusivity, including all Indigenous nations and Métis territories. That is great.

Unfortunately, there were a few things that kind of just missed the mark on it. For instance, when we're talking about licensing reforms: yeah; that's really important. And we want to make sure that how licences are distributed, accepted, and honoured is important, but a big part of that recommendation – this is recommendation 9 for anyone who's looking at the recommendations – was cultural training. This was super important because, as the Member for Edmonton-West Henday had just been mentioning, that connection to culture is incredibly important. The disproportionate number of Indigenous and Métis children that we are seeing in the system tells us there's a problem. It tells us that there are gaps we need to fill, and this was a huge gap noted by the committee, brought forward as a recommendation, and it's not noted in here at all.

The minister did mention that of the 37 recommendations, there were a few that didn't require legislation. I absolutely can understand that, and I look forward to them coming forward in the regulations, but then my question to the minister would be: when are we going to see those regulations? The CYFEA review committee's recommendations were tabled in this House a year ago, so I would just like to see a little bit more urgency there from the ministry, especially when we're talking about the lives and safety and futures of Alberta kids.

Now, there were some changes to permanency for children, and I think that's, again, incredibly important. Thinking about the best interests of the child, again, was a huge – I don't want to say theme. That sounds wrong. I mean, that was a huge focus of what we were focused on because the children's voices are sometimes ignored or discounted. It doesn't matter which child in care I've spoken with or children who have transitioned out. Their voice being heard has – we have failed them on that account. They do not feel like their voices are being heard to an extent that they should. Of course, we have the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, who does phenomenal work, but we have seen steps from the same ministry – well, pardon me; it was actually through a private member's bill – that increased the workload for the advocate by 98 per cent without a dollar.

12:20

Again, Madam Speaker, I question why. Like, we're seeing, you know, amendments to a bill that's super important, and CYFEA is a vital piece of the system we have going on now, but we're not seeing changes that are actually going to make big differences to children in care. That best interest piece: the spirit is reflected, but

there's no legislation on it. There's nothing that actually would create better outcomes for these kids.

I want to speak to recommendation 8. It is about public reporting. Earlier this week we debated my private member's bill, which was on patient outcome reporting. [some applause] All right. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Unfortunately, this government deemed it redundant and that Albertans didn't need insight into their health care system. Fun fact. Inside that bill one of the things that was super important for myself and for everyone on this side of the House was that we would be able to follow and identify vulnerable or underserved populations. Just think about what Bill 211 would have done for children in care. Think about the ability for us to use the data we have, identify concerns, and actually address them.

Now, I recognize that the bill was predominantly speaking about health care, but it is an indication of where this government wants to spend their time and resources, and apparently they don't want to spend it on public disclosure or actually informing Albertans even though the committee put this forward as: this is really important; we need to make sure that there's transparency in here because there are concerns. I find that particularly frustrating, Madam Speaker.

Further, recommendation 20 talks about youth transition supports. We'll remember that not too long ago the minister put forward legislation, and it was pushed through this House, that decreased the age at which a child in care can receive different services. It meant that when a child in care turns 18, that morning they turn 18, they are barred from where they were staying. Like, they are barred. If they were staying at a centre, they are no longer able to be served there. That youth transition, that, "How do we ensure continuity of a child's formative years?" is badly lacking and, again, was a recommendation that the committee put forward very strongly because we recognize that the day you turn 18, you're not, poof, suddenly having all the skills you need. Certainly that's not what happened to most of us, I would say. We had to grow and experience life, and many of us had the support of our parents, our families. These children weren't that fortunate.

The government as their guardian at 18: poof. We're not going to help you transition. Further, I mean, to be fair, there is a program that is to assist youth in care transitioning into adulthood. However, it is a system that is restricted, again, in terms of age. It does not address the actual needs of these children and youth who are transitioning out of care, and the minister is well aware of this. It is unfortunate, Madam Speaker, that we are seeing time and effort and taxpayer dollars put into something and then it's not actually brought forward when there is an opportunity. So incredibly frustrating.

I want to just kind of end on a big part that was missed, and the Member for Edmonton-West Henday certainly touched on it. Of the four themes, the last two are, like, directed to Indigenous continuity and cultural considerations. Can you guess how many of those were implemented in here? Yeah; not many. To be fair, there was a terminology update, so that's cool, and, as the Member for Edmonton-West Henday had mentioned, the openness agreements. But that's it. Like, that was the bulk of the recommendations, and we're seeing nothing. It pains me, Madam Speaker, that year after year we stand in here and we ask the government to do better for these kids, and then we get definition changes. That's not actually useful.

When we're talking about the priorities of Albertans and this government is ignoring it, basically, from time allocation, where they shut down opposition, they shut down all the voices that we represent, that we are bringing forward, they decide to use opportunities like amending a bill as important as CYFEA to change definitions, move some pieces around, and call it a day, it's not good enough, and I suspect the minister knows that.

With that, I will adjourn. Thank you.

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 36, Children and Family Services (Supporting Alberta Families) Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. A little bit of background. Prior to being an elected official, I was a court co-ordinator with children's services. I represented the director of children's services regarding family court related to CYFEA, PSECA, PCHAD, PChIP, and secure services. What that means is that I was the worker representing the director of children's services in court to assist workers with their applications regarding all of those pieces of legislation. We became somewhat experts when it came to the legislation. So it's with that perspective and front-line experience working with the children involved with children's services that I bring my remarks.

Part of working in court services was supporting workers in applications to secure children, whether it was under PSECA, the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act, under secure services, under CYFEA. Those decisions are not taken lightly because essentially what you are doing is stripping rights away from children. In some cases, specifically under the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act, these are the victims that we are taking rights away from. When I look at this proposed legislation that speaks specifically to PSECA, I'm really happy to see the expanded definition to include online activities. That's been something that's been happening for a long time. Kids are pretty good at accessing technology, so to see that included is wonderful.

I do have some concerns around the proposed legislation. It's specifically around the ability to apprehend and secure a child under the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act, specifically section 2(9), that allows a police officer or director to secure a child under this piece of legislation into a safe house. My concern is that there isn't information about when that order or that decision has to then come before the courts. It's granting authority to the director of children's services as well as police officers to apprehend and detain and transport and secure a child to a safe house when there's imminent risk; however, it does not specify the time period that would force the director, the police to be in front of a court to talk about extending that time. Under secure services, it's 72 hours. From when a child is apprehended and placed into a secure services facility, the director has 72 hours to then bring it forward to a court to explain why this child is in imminent risk and requires further confinement.

12:30

Now, when we say confinement, to be clear, this child is in a locked, secure facility. Their rights are very limited when it comes to their ability to come and go; they cannot. I'm concerned that there is no information in this proposed legislation that dictates when the courts are to hear the rights of the child and whether or not the decision to have that child placed into a secure facility is supported. Evidence is required. A hearing typically occurs. It gives the child a right to have representation through the LRCY, which, we heard in earlier comments, is not being supported to have new lawyers. It's concerning that there is the piece about who can apprehend, detain, and secure without the checks and balances of a court. That is something that is essential when it comes to taking away human rights.

I believe that when it came to court services, looking at secure facilities and secure services orders, there were strict timelines in place that a child shall not remain in custody for more than 30 days. That includes the first 72-hour hold period, that includes the initial assessments, and then that includes the decision of how long the order should go. It's intended to prevent prolonged confinement,

because in the past what had happened was that children were secured, they were put in a secure facility, and essentially there were no timelines that were indicated that would allow the child to have an opportunity to appeal or review. It could just be consecutive orders over and over that continued to have that child put in secure services. I'm concerned about that, and I would like some clarity and hopefully some clear legislation that talks about timelines because that is something that the child has a right to.

When it comes to what this government is proposing, we are in one hundred per cent support of expanding the definitions and ensuring that children that are being exploited – it looks at all of the different ways that bad guys are exploiting our children. I think one of the things that I would have hoped to see is also expanding the criminal charges to those that are exploiting children. In my career I worked closely with the Internet crimes unit out of K Division with the RCMP. We refer to them as ICE, and their job was to find bad guys that were exploiting children on the Internet. I can tell you that the work that those officers do is absolutely exceptional. When we're expanding one piece of legislation that talks about the children that are being exploited and what that means, I'm concerned that also isn't applying to the criminal charges for those bad guys that are essentially exploiting children.

The other piece, Madam Speaker, that is somewhat concerning is how it relates to the lack of supports and services that are required to enable this legislation. When it comes to securing children and protecting them in confinement, what supports and services are being provided? We know that when we're taking away rights, that this government has done against data, against proof, that doesn't necessarily encourage rehabilitation, changes in behaviour. We're not seeing the supports and trauma-informed practice being included in this legislation. We're not seeing an increase to the types of services that families can access, that children can access.

I know the workers that do this work every day are exceptional in what they do to support children and youth that are impacted by sexual exploitation, but that's one worker. Can they access timely sexual abuse and exploitation support? Can they access the different areas that are needed to actually escape from the perpetrators? It's not always an unknown person. Sometimes it's family; sometimes it's a trusted friend that is doing this. There's so much trauma that happens to these children that requires supports to keep them in a safe and healing place, and the legislation doesn't address any of that.

There are terms about wanting to keep families together. They're talking about bolstering kinship placements, which is absolutely essential. We know that children's outcomes are best when they are supported by community, by family, by familiarity. Yet the legislation doesn't talk about how they're going to actually do that. They don't talk about what a cultural plan looks like for these children. It isn't trauma informed, trauma led. There isn't any information about how we're going to support and enhance the capacity of the DFNAs, the designated First Nations authorities, to support the work of healing families.

So I'm happy that there are pieces of this that are being enhanced. I'm disappointed that all of the recommendations from the panel aren't being implemented. Why have a panel when you're not going to implement all of the recommendations? So I hope that the minister is truly listening to the concerns that are being raised on this side of the House and will take the efforts to support some of those much-needed changes and supports to really do what's best for the children in Alberta, to support the best outcomes and their futures.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will take my seat. Thank you.

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

Dr. Metz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I also rise today to speak to Bill 36. While I will support this bill because it has things in it that are important, that we need to do, I'm also going to use this opportunity to talk about what I hope will be considered to make things better within the ministry of child and family services.

I recently met with a young man who lives in my constituency. He is a student at the University of Calgary. It happens that this was just a couple of weeks ago before this bill was introduced. His story, his life experience really highlights what is missing from this bill. I wish to tell a bit of his story as I understand it, as I'm not a social worker and don't have the experience that some of my colleagues do in this area. This is the experience of someone who was raised totally through the care system. I hope that the minister will hear this story and come to understand some of the issues and make some changes to make things better for these children. We need to understand that we are responsible for them and trying to launch them into the world as important, valued citizens. It's unfortunate that these are not included in this bill.

He was raised in the care of the government from early infancy. He originally moved from foster home, from one to another. He is Indigenous, as are 77 per cent of children at this point in time in care, and he was never placed within his own community.

12:40

At the age of 16, he was allowed to become independent, which meant that he was supported at that time by a program called support and financial assistance, which was designed to transition children from age 18 to age 24, and so he moved into that early so he could live in his community, which was in my constituency, and continue at the local high school. At this time it was very challenging. He was in a group home where others coming out of a remand centre were often placed there, and it was really a very unsafe environment.

But this program had a framework for transition for these children, and he had the opportunity to, despite all of this, continue with his education. This program offered financial assistance, housing support, health care coverage, and some funding for education. An important component of this was a caseworker who provided guidance to help build his personal and professional networks, and it was relatively straightforward moving through this system.

However, in 2021 when the federal government transferred child supports to Indigenous communities, he was suddenly transferred by the ministry to be under Siksika Nation, but they had no connection with him whatsoever, and they actually had not been given any supports to provide these resources.

Suddenly he had no income, no supports. As a teenager, a very smart, industrious teenager, he moved to Lethbridge so that he could be out of the region of Siksika and resume his supports under this government program.

He had to start his life over. He had to start with a new caseworker. He had to start getting all new friends, family, and backup, as he was at the same time trying to finish high school.

Then in 2022 this government ended this program and brought in a new program called TAP, transition to adulthood, but this program came with reduced funding. His total income became $1,100 per month. That is less than half of what MLAs now get for accommodation alone. He had to pay for accommodation, transportation, food, clothing, and everything else like nonprescription medications, laundry, et cetera. To make this worse, there was no longer a caseworker, just a call centre.

I suspect if I treated my own teenagers like that, I would be considered abusive, yet this is how this government treats children

that are in their care. I don't know how it is that we can make these kind of budget cuts, these cuts to individuals, and not realize that we are now no longer investing in the future of children that are in our care.

This bill provides no supports to the families of the victims and the children that are abused. Sexual abuse and exploitation are very serious and have very long-standing impacts for children and their families while this government continues to make people pay more and more for necessary health services.

We all know that counselling is generally not covered under the bucket of health services unless it is delivered by a physician or a very limited number of counselling agencies, often not-for-profits, which are losing more and more funding and are variably available. Now, a physician counsellor is not going to be the ideal person. We need people that know this system, so I am asking that this government come to bring in the funding for the resources that are needed to help the children that are in care and the children that are exploited through all the Internet and other sexual exploitation. This will be a critical part of moving forward and building the lives of these people.

With that, I wrap up my debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to participate in this debate?

Seeing none, would the minister like to close?

Mr. Turton: Waive. I'm sorry.

The Deputy Speaker: You can just wave next time.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a second time]

Bill 38
Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and speak to Bill 38, the Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. Alberta has a strong postsecondary system, and our government wants to keep it that way. But for the system to remain strong, it needs clear expectations, consistent standards, and accountability. Right now there are areas where those expectations are not as clear or consistent as they can be. Students should be able to easily understand the rules and processes at any institution they attend. Postsecondaries also need greater clarity around expectations for freedom of expression and institutional neutrality on campus. And our approach to tuition needs to better balance affordability for students with the actual cost of delivering high-quality programs. Bill 38 addresses those issues.

At its core the legislation is about establishing clear and consistent expectations across Alberta's publicly funded postsecondary system while respecting the autonomy institutions need to govern themselves. That balance is important. Our universities, colleges, and polytechnics are all different, and that's a good thing. They serve different communities, offer different programs, and have different needs, but they all need to follow some basic standards that need to be consistent across all of them.

Students should have confidence that conduct processes are fair, transparent, and timely, regardless of where they study. They should be able to express their views, hear different perspectives, and participate in open debate. And students should know what their education will cost and have confidence that affordability is being considered when tuition policies are made. Our institutions should also have clear expectations from government about what is required of them so they can provide the best possible education to Alberta's future workforce. That is what this bill is about, Madam Speaker, creating the best system we can for our postsecondary students. We are establishing clarity by using common-sense principles that will inform regulations that are forthcoming.

This legislation, if passed, would establish a clear framework in three key areas: student codes of conduct, institutional neutrality, and freedom of expression, and tuition. I'd also like to make targeted amendments to the Professional Governance Act to support the new professional regulatory framework.

Madam Speaker, let me, first, speak to the tuition piece because affordability is one of the most important concerns facing students and families today, and it will always be a top priority for Alberta's government. We have a number of initiatives that focus on affordability, but I'd like to focus on Bill 38. This side of the House remains committed to keeping postsecondary education affordable with tuition that is predictable and stable, and that is what Bill 38 will do. The current system we have in place is based on an annual growth cap.

For domestic students an institution can increase tuition for an individual program by as much as 10 per cent, provided the average increase across the institution does not exceed 2 per cent in that year. That creates uncertainty for those looking to study at some of the best postsecondaries in the world because they don't know what they could be paid. It can produce significant differences among programs, and it doesn't consistently align tuition with the actual cost of delivering the program. It also doesn't give students a clear explanation for why their program costs what it does. Bill 38, if passed, would move Alberta from that growth cap model to maximum tuition amounts for programs or groups of programs.

12:50

Institutions continue to set tuition, but they would do so within the applicable maximum. The goal is to give students and families clear information, provide greater predictability, and better align tuition with program delivery costs over time. This helps them plan for their future. A maximum is a ceiling; it's not a target, and it's not permission for unlimited increases. For '27-28 existing students would be protected from a tuition increase of more than 2 per cent. In some high-demand programs maximum tuition amounts could be lower for students, meaning those looking to start their career would be able to do so at a lower cost.

Madam Speaker, some have tried to present this tuition change as evidence that our government is cutting postsecondary education or asking students to make up for underfunding. This is just not true. Alberta's government has and will continue to invest in the next generation of Alberta's workforce through Advanced Education in massive ways. Through Budget 2026 we're providing $2.2 billion for postsecondary operations. That's $125 million more than in '25-26. Budget '26 also provides nearly $1.1 billion in student aid. That includes $887 million in Alberta student loans, expected to help close to 115,000 students. There's also $107 million in scholarships and awards expected to support over 50,000 students. Support that students do not have to repay, like grants, scholarships and awards, increased from $170 million to $182 million this year.

When students and families raised concerns about how parental income was treated in provincial student aid assessments, we listened and made corrective changes. Our government is removing parental income from provincial student aid assessments. For eligible students that change is expected to provide this year alone access to an additional $118 million in provincial student loans within the existing disbursement budget. Those are not the actions of a government walking away from postsecondary education. They are the actions of a government working to keep education within

reach, expand access to high-demand programs, and help students meet the cost of pursuing an education. By making these changes through Bill 38, we are helping create the best system we can for Alberta's future learners.

Madam Speaker, postsecondary institutions should be a place where ideas are examined rather than imposed. Students should be able to hear perspectives they agree with and perspectives they reject. Faculty should be able to teach, research, question, and criticize. Debate should be open, lawful, and vigorous. Institutional neutrality helps protect that environment. As one student told us in a focus group, during postsecondary education there's room to grow from hearing different opinions. Institutional neutrality does not silence students, it does not silence faculty or staff, and it does not weaken academic freedom. Neutrality protects the space in which individuals can form and express their own views.

The Alberta Post-Secondary Network put it this way.

> By remaining impartial on social and political questions outside of matters affecting our educational, research and institutional mandates, our institutions help preserve the broadest possible space for members of the academic community to express their views, challenge ideas and engage in open inquiry.

Presidents and other senior officials as private individuals would still be able to express personal views within the law. Institutional policy would make clear when someone is speaking on behalf of the institution and when that person is speaking for themselves. Institutions would also continue to speak about matters that directly affect their academic commission or operations. They would remain free to criticize government policy, including funding decisions that affect the postsecondary system.

Madam Speaker, our government isn't deciding which individuals can speak on campus. Institutions will continue to manage invitations, event logistics, and campus safety. The point is to protect lawful expression, not to control it. Publicly funded postsecondary institutions have been expected to maintain freedom of expression policies since 2019 and have been required to report annually on campus freedom of expression since the fall of 2024. Bill 38 would formalize these expectations in legislation and regulation.

Some have suggested the government intends to police Alberta campuses, but that is not what this legislation does. Government will not monitor classroom discussions. It will not police individual statements. It will not approve or reject speakers. It will not decide what a professor may teach or what a student may say. Our role is to establish a consistent minimum standard for publicly funded institutions. It's their job to write and administer policies that meet that standard. Setting a common floor is not the same as running a campus. Requiring a policy to protect freedom of expression is not the same as deciding what views should be expressed, and ensuring an institution meets minimum requirements is not an attack on autonomy. It is reasonable public accountability.

Madam Speaker, the same principle applies to student codes of conduct. Every public secondary institution already has a student code of conduct. These codes address serious matters, including academic misconduct, nonacademic misconduct, and sexual and gender-based violence. Students need to know what is expected of them, and they also need to trust that a concern will be handled through a process that is understandable, timely, and fair. In 2025 my ministry reviewed nearly 200 student code policies and procedures from across the system. That review identified significant variation between institutions. The problem arises when the basic clarity of the rules, the fairness of the process, or the privacy protections available to a student depend on where that student happens to be enrolled. Fairness should not change from one campus to the next.

Bill 38 should allow government to establish minimum requirements through regulation. Another student put it plainly: there seems to be a lack of clarity when it comes to free expression and student codes of conduct. If the institutions don't know how to handle these situations, how can the students know what to do? Alberta needs student codes that are clearly written, accessible, and easy to understand. They would support fair, timely and transparent processes with clear privacy and confidentiality requirements. Institutions will continue to write their own codes through their own governance structures.

Our government isn't taking over those cases. Our role is to ensure institutional policies meet the provincial minimum requirements. If an institution meets the minimum standard, it continues to manage its own policy and processes. Our government is not looking for reasons to interfere, but if a policy does not meet the minimum standard, we need to be able to require that the standard be met. That is not overreaction; that is measured oversight and, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, just makes sense for Alberta postsecondary students. They need to be able to understand what the rules are, and Bill 38 does exactly that.

Some have framed these provisions as an attempt to restrict lawful protests on campus. Again, that is not what Bill 38 does. The focus is on whether the rules are clear and accessible, whether processes are fair and timely, whether privacy is protected, and whether institutions are accountable for meeting the minimum requirements. This legislation creates the enabling framework. The detailed requirements will be established through regulations developed in 2027. That work will clearly distinguish what has been decided in legislation from the implementation details still under development.

Madam Speaker, we can and will continue to invest in postsecondary education, but we can also address the issues we are seeing at the same time. In fact, a strong system requires us to do both. It requires public investment, support for students, and space in high-demand programs. It also requires transparent rules, fair processes, open debate, and accountability for publicly funded institutions.

These decisions did not come out of nowhere. We took a serious look at the recommendations from the Expert Panel on Post-Secondary Institution Funding and Alberta's Competitiveness, commonly known as the Mintz panel. That work helped inform our thinking about how we are making funding and tuition more transparent to better reflect enrolment and the cost of delivering programs and keep postsecondary education affordable for students. Bill 38 is one part of that broader work to build a funding and tuition system that is sustainable, predictable, and fair.

1:00

Madam Speaker, Bill 38 also includes targeted amendments to the Professional Governance Act. The amendment would support implementation of a new professional governance framework and respond to a joint request from the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta and the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta. Those organizations agreed that professional technologists should no longer be jointly regulated. Bill 38 would bring professional technologists and professional licensees together into one professional limited licensee class regulated by APEGA. That would reduce overlap, make the system easier to navigate, and better align Alberta with other provinces while maintaining professional accountability and public interest oversight. The bill would also make technical and administrative changes so the Professional Governance Act can operate as intended when it is proclaimed.

Madam Speaker, these are practical changes. They respond to professional advice, reduce unnecessary duplication, and keep public protection in place. These provisions in Bill 38 are practical. They

create a clear, common-sense approach to tuition while protecting existing students through the transition. They protect lawful individual expression and academic freedom by distinguishing those voices from the official voice of an institution. They establish consistent minimum requirements for student conduct policies while leaving individual cases and day-to-day administration with the institutions. and they do so while government continues to increase operating support, expand high-demand program spaces, and provide nearly $1.1 billion this year in student aid.

Madam Speaker, Alberta's postsecondary students should be able to count on a basic standard. They should be able to understand the rules that apply to them, and they should have access to fair and timely processes. They should be able to hear and express different views within the law, and our postsecondary students should be able to plan for the cost of an education with clearer, more predictable information. That is what Bill 38 is designed to deliver. It's not about government policing campuses. It's not about restricting lawful debate. Bill 38 is about setting reasonable and consistent standards, respecting institutional responsibility, and putting the interests of students at the centre of the system.

In closing, Madam Speaker, Bill 38, if passed, will help build a stronger, clearer, and more accountable postsecondary system. It will support affordable, predictable, and stable tuition. It will protect open debate and academic freedom. It would make student conduct processes clearer, fairer, and more consistent, and it would make a targeted improvement to professional governance by reducing duplication while preserving accountability. These changes are measured. They are responsible. They are focused on students. We are bringing common sense to campus. I urge all members of the House to support this important legislation.

I will now move second reading of Bill 38.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise with interest to talk about some of the elements of Bill 38 just as outlined by the Minister of Advanced Education.

First and foremost, Madam Speaker, we need to make sure that our advanced education system – our colleges, our polytechnics, and universities – are accessible, that they are affordable, that there are spaces for our growing population here in the province of Alberta and are rigorous and vigorous in the broadest way possible. I think that Alberta has been quite rightly proud of our postsecondary system – our colleges, universities, and polytechnics – but over the last seven years these institutions have been targeted by this UCP government by historic, unprecedented cuts, more than a billion dollars taken out of the operating expenses of our system as a whole, and really it just has not recovered. Coupled then with an increased population and the demand for spaces in our universities, colleges, and polytechnics, we have a number of flashpoints, crisis points, that need to be addressed.

When I saw that the government was bringing forward a postsecondary bill, I was cautiously optimistic that they would address the issues around affordability and funding, but the only part of this bill that talks about that is around tuition, moving the ability to increase or change tuition rates to the minister. Well, you know, Madam Speaker, maybe I'm wrong, but do you think he's done that in order to decrease tuition? I don't think so, right? He's obviously moving this capacity and this power over to himself in order to increase tuition.

You know, the minister talks about following some of the suggestions by the expert panel on postsecondary, otherwise known as the Mintz report. Well, he's missing the key element to actually making that Mintz report work, and that is to reinvest in our universities, colleges, and polytechnics. That's what he says explicitly in his report, Jack Mintz. His comments about this Bill 38 – here I am agreeing with Jack Mintz; there you go – are that lot of postsecondaries already do these governance principles around a student code of conduct and institutional standards and so forth. That's what they do. That's what they have been doing, in some cases, for more than a hundred years. What you need to do is to make sure that you are funding them properly so that they can execute the thing to which they're responsible, which is providing postsecondary education here in the province of Alberta.

I'm going to visit a number of postsecondaries tomorrow. I will hear from faculty. I'll hear from administration and from students. Each place has unique issues, but there are several universal issues that are absolutely critical that Bill 38 does not address at all. Number one is to create more spaces in our postsecondary system. We have a shortage, and shortages end up distorting so many elements of education, including the entry requirements for engineering, for nursing, and for many, many different faculties. The numbers that you need from high school to get into these places has gone up to a 90 per cent, 95 per cent, 96 per cent average just to be able to apply for some of these faculties in school. Why is that? Because there's a shortage of spaces. There are hundreds of thousands of students moving through the K to 12 education system, Madam Speaker, and lo and behold, now they need a place in a college or a polytechnic or a university. This government just has not planned for that. They have not built the spaces we need for our students to go to school and to further our economic aspirations and to build a better society for all. They just didn't do it. We need to turn that around. We need to turn that around right away.

You know that a New Democrat government would make those investments like we invested in K to 12 education, building more than 240 school projects. We would build and fund and staff an expansion of our postsecondaries in order to meet the needs of our population, right? It's not easy. It's ambitious, but we deserve to do no less in order to, as they say, grow and diversify our economy, to retain our young people in the province, and to ensure that they enjoy the standard of living which they should expect, which includes health, which includes good-paying jobs, which includes having an education to appreciate and have a quality of life that comes along with that. We deserve to provide no less.

I just want to go through some of the elements of this Bill 38 around tuition, for example. There are a number of issues, I mean, besides the fact that, as I said, dollars to doughnuts the minister is moving the ability for him to change tuition rates because he's going to increase those tuition rates. That's patently obvious. It's building this idea that came from consultations that the minister engaged in over the summer around the province and this idea of clustering different programs together and setting tuition rates based on the economic performance of those clusters, the relevance to our job market and so forth and what other discretion that the minister chooses to use.

I'll say absolutely emphatically that it's important for our colleges, polytechnics, and universities to educate students for our workforce and for emerging trends in our workforce. I mean, this is very obvious, but I would say, Madam Speaker: who are the best people to ask about where those trends might be coming from and where they're going? It's from the general business population. It's from the institutions themselves. Do we think, honestly, that the office over here of Advanced Education should be determining which of those places we invest money into in our universities, colleges, and polytechnics? No. We defer to the expertise that exists in those very places and defer to the expertise that exists in our business community. So often you see, by choices that our government is making about which priorities to fund in regard to education, that it ends up being an abysmal failure, two steps behind

where the actual direction of our economy is going and so forth. I find that to be very disturbing as well.

1:10

We know that institutions are looking for money where they can get it. As I said, more than a billion dollars taken out of the operating function of our postsecondary system over the last seven years. So we don't blame them because they need to keep the lights on. They need to pay their staff. They need to keep a semblance of normalcy during a shortage in public funding. But the notion that you can simply switch over and increase and meet those financial needs of your school by increasing tuition, you know, defies gravity and defies the reality that many students are living in, where, simply, you do that; they'll end up not being able to go to school. We want more of our young people especially to get a postsecondary education that will be relevant to their future career, not less of them to do so.

We know very well that so many students are on the brink of that same affordability crisis that we are experiencing throughout Alberta, the general population. It's there. It's exacerbated even more amongst our postsecondary population because they're studying often mostly full-time and trying to make ends meet at the same time as well. That's where the crisis point is in our postsecondary system, and we have a responsibility to do something about that. General affordability measures for the whole population will help, certainly. If we find a way to make the cost of living around rent, around groceries, around transportation, energy, and fuel and so forth, we will be helping students as well as the general population. But around tuition, that is a very specific place, and it is mentioned quite a lot explicitly in the Mintz report that we need a way to provide not just student loans but a comprehensive grant system for students to be able to afford the cost of tuition and other expenses while they're studying.

That's what we should have seen in this Bill 38, but what we do see instead is, as I say, an implicit and obvious increase in tuition that will be borne by the students. Some people can afford it; other people won't be able to go. Some students will have to go to part-time studies; some students will simply have to stop studying. That is the very antithesis of investment in postsecondary. It is a way by which we exclude people who need and want to go to improve themselves in our colleges, universities, and polytechnics.

The other part of this bill – well, there are two other parts, actually – is in regard to the student code of conduct and institutional neutrality, okay? As I said from the outset, I mean, these are things that schools have been doing since they started, right? From the University of Alberta and its inception in 1905, I guess, is the very first bill that was passed here in this Legislature, to start the University of Alberta, so it was something around that time. There always have been codes of conduct, and this idea of needing to do so from the minister's office is absurd. Of course, there are standards and there are laws as well. We have a legal system, a Justice minister, right? We have provincial and federal laws that dictate all of our behaviours here in the province, including school students and including our schools. Why would the minister be bringing this up at this very inflection point where we actually need to do something substantial around our colleges, universities, and polytechnics?

Well, the minister would have to probably answer that, but I would say that it is a diversion, Madam Speaker. It's a diversion and a distraction in order to make it look like you're doing something with this important file, but actually you're just saying something to get people divided and riled up. It's the same kind of culture war garbage that is imported from the United States to cause division in our society at a time like never before, when we need to be working together and co-operating.

Of course, there are different opinions in a university, right? I mean, I went there, and there were all kinds of opinions flying every which way. It's great. You get to learn about all kinds of different things, and you get to decide for yourself what works for you and what fits in with what you believe in and what your values are. That's how you strengthen them: through the diversity of opinion, through active debate, and through the idea of taking a stand on issues as well.

I know another part of doing this kind of thing, where you try to make some rules where there already are rules and you are saying, "Well, we're not going to be policing or dictating schools and students and so forth" – the implicit message, Madam Speaker, is that that exactly is what's going to be happening, and you'd better keep your mouth shut because you never know who's going to be watching and how they will judge you for that. It's a technique to control people. It's a technique to scare people, and it's defining a problem that doesn't even exist.

Of course there are different ideas and of course there's freedom of expressing those ideas in our universities, colleges, and polytechnics. Are you going to be able to enhance that by making some edict from the Minister of Advanced Education's office? Absolutely not. Absolutely not. Also, it's important not to take the bait on that and divert from the real issue, which is affordability for postsecondary and the investment or the lack thereof in advanced education here in the province of Alberta.

We have some of the best universities around. There's no two ways about it. They are rated very high, they're keeping the lights on, and they're keeping that standard of excellence despite a lack of support by this UCP government. They're doing it in spite of, as I say, a billion dollars' worth of cuts coming out of their systems. They're scrambling and they get the job done, but you can't do that forever. You're living on borrowed time, as the saying goes, and that borrowed time is about past due now. Now let's make an investment in our postsecondary education system. Let's make sure that we have spaces, that we can meet the needs of our growing population and make something that we can all be proud of. Bill 38 does none of those things, and really I'm quite disappointed.

The third area of Bill 38, which is actually quite interesting, again goes back to this idea of clustering a whole bunch of different things into one bill. You have a couple of maybe ideas that are okay – right? – like this idea with APEGA and professional associations. It's something that should have been done a long time ago, quite frankly, but it's hanging on this bill where you're not addressing the important affordability issues of the time, and it makes it difficult to debate all of these things together.

I welcome further debate on Bill 38. I would have a number of specific questions that I will bring up in other stages of the debate for the ministers so that we can perhaps get some clarification on those issues.

1:20

Madam Speaker, can I just close by saying how important investing in our colleges, universities, and polytechnics is right now at this juncture in history. We can see our economies expanding and changing. We can't necessarily predict how those changes will take place, but if we build foundational skills in problem solving, in being able to think critically, to work co-operatively, and to work and think imaginatively, then we will do the best service for our young people, for our next generation, for this generation, and to ensure the strength of our economy and our society as we move forward.

Thank you.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and speak to this bill, which is the – oh, I guess it's just

called the Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, which is actually a much more appropriate title than the title that has been given to it in public with respect to neutrality.

I want to touch on a few things in this bill. I think the first is the whole "trust us" piece, right? "Trust us. We'll take the rules off tuition increases." I mean, Madam Speaker, trust is earned, and this government has done absolutely nothing to earn it. Everything to the contrary, in fact. Yeah. I'm not going to go ahead and trust them that they're just taking these rules off, but don't worry; in the background they won't let any tuitions go up more than 2 per cent. I mean, we'll have to wait to see if I'm right, but I just do not believe that that is true.

There is some good governance in here, and that's fine. I think what stands out most to me about that good governance is that the UCP can never just do good governance. They can never just show up to work and do their job. They have to make a tickertape parade and create a culture war and shoot at someone and make people afraid of someone and create a bogeyman. Like, most serious people, when they turn up to work, can just be trusted to turn up to work and do their job, and this just isn't a serious government, right? They can't even do basic good governance without making a weird culture war show out of it.

Recently that cost the taxpayers millions of dollars, right? Hundreds of millions of dollars that they spent on a referendum to try to distract from the fact that they can't just quietly do good governance like every other government. I don't know. It's like it's become innate in them, like it's reflexive, you know? They just can't open their mouths without trying to take a shot at someone, and that's because they're in power, right? Like, it's because Albertans are too smart. They see through it. They know that this government is the source of their problems, so the government feels the need to try to point to somebody else, but they're not very good at it.

I might also point out the deep irony of the fact that saying that you are creating neutrality in an institution is not a neutral statement. It suggests that the neutrality doesn't exist at present. Again, this is this government creating some bogeyman. You know, they have to protect neutrality from some imagined figure that is attacking it, that is creeping up and trying to take neutrality away. For the most part, the people they want you to believe are those bogeymen are teachers and librarians and university professors, which is just like – boy, it's so absurd.

But it is doing something in our society, right? It is trying to make the public think that, for instance, the opinion of someone that read something online once and did their own research is somehow as good as someone who has multiple advanced medical degrees and PhDs in the subject. It is to make you think that medical training, legal training, academic training doesn't give someone a stronger basis. Do you know what is the first thing that that training tells you to do? It tells you to go to primary sources. That's exactly what this government doesn't want. If research becomes a Google search, then the weird misinformation they seem so interested in circulating suddenly is on all fours with actual information. This is how disinformation spreads, and that is what this bill is really about.

This government really likes to talk about merit, but this bill is doing the absolute opposite of that. By allowing tuition rates to balloon at God knows what rate, they are basing access to education on your parents' finances rather than your merit. That's what that does. It means that rather than people having access to education based on their own abilities, they are denied that access based on insufficient money, or they are required to take on hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of debt that they don't know they'll be able to pay back. And for people who grew up in situations where they didn't have a lot of money, like, every fibre of their being screams against taking on that kind of debt. Yeah. It is not neutral, and it certainly is not merit based.

I agree that there needs to be better alignment between what our economy needs and programs at the university, but there is a long list of people, many of whom work at these institutions, that I think would be significantly better placed than this government to make that determination. I mean, this is a government that just today defended billing taxpayers thousands of dollars to take booze cruises. I don't think that they should be giving any lessons on how employment ought to work or what our economy needs.

A little note on this neutrality. I think this bogeyman, culture war that this government is trying to use to distract from their own failures is very problematic. Can't be bothered to plan school infrastructure? Blame immigrants. It's really gross.

But let's look at what's actually happening here. What's actually happening here is the shutting down of debate. Forcing someone to argue their right to participate in a conversation as a precondition of having an opinion at all forces certain views out of the debate. This is what this government doesn't see in this neutrality thing. They say that it's freedom of speech to allow one person's debate argument to essentially be that the other person isn't qualified by reason of personal characteristics to participate, and by personal characteristics I mean their gender, their religion, their gender expression, their sexual orientation, the colour of their skin.

When we allow those views as though they are neutral views to permeate our institutions, what they actually do is force some people to argue for their right to participate in the debate before they can have an opinion, and that does force ideas out of the debate. It does not make debate better. Like, this is just wrong, and I will leave it there. These individuals who are arguing their participation in spite of being female or whatever it is are framed as hostile or aggressive or the problem, and then their arguments aren't listened to. Yeah. I don't like it. I don't like it. It's not good.

I mean, this is ultimately how the status quo is maintained and how change in opinion is avoided. When someone sort of comes up and suggests that we ought to change the status quo, they are attacked on a personal level, and then the attacking of them, based on their personal characteristic, is defended as someone just having an opinion that needs to be protected. Meanwhile the person who is being attacked: their opinion isn't protected at all. So this isn't neutral. It doesn't do what it purports to do, and it does silence people.

1:30

Let's delve down a little into where the rubber meets the road here. What's actually going to happen with something like this is that they say, "neutral," and that is open to interpretation. What happens is that it goes to the lawyers, and the lawyers look at what that means, and they read case law, and they discover there are some clear things that are outside, there are some clear things that are inside, and there's a whole swath of things that are in the middle, that may be outside or inside; we can't say for sure. And then they draft a rule, and they draft it on the restrictive end because a lawyer's job is to protect you from litigation as an institution. So they already write it on the restrictive end, and then someone is going to go to implement it, and they know that a bunch of people are going to interpret it, and they worry about the breadth of that interpretation, so they make it still more restrictive. Ultimately, you wind up in a situation where all of those things that may have been in and may have been out and some of those things that definitely weren't impacted are not allowed by policy. That's what happens when you put in rules like this, which is that everyone gets scared. There's literally a term for it. It's called a chilling effect, and that's exactly what is happening right here.

Yeah. I mean, this government is saying, like, "Don't worry; we won't come in with a big hammer," but look what they did to schools before the postsecondary level, right? You know, it started with trying to make teachers the bogeyman for saying the truth, and then there was the flag thing, and now there's a snitch line, where you can snitch on your teacher. I think that's a real problem. Like, you want to talk chilling effect: nothing quite like a witch hunt to create a chilling effect. This is extremely problematic.

The thing that really bugs me is that in a certain way it's set up to prevent people from speaking the truth, right? Now, this isn't explicitly in this particular act, but the government has done this multiple times before, so I think we can – the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. I think what this government has said in previous acts is probably relevant. The way they frame theirs is essentially that you couldn't say the truth. You couldn't say: we had residential schools in this country, and that has an effect to this day on people who weren't at those schools because it had an impact on their parents.

I'm going to tell a bit of a story here. Here's an example. I had a friend in law school who was from Vancouver, and her parents were interned during World War II for being Japanese. When they were interned, they were expropriated of their property, and that property was waterfront property in Vancouver that they owned. That property was taken away, and it was taken away because of their race. What the government is trying to suggest is that that isn't still having impacts today, that she is in no way impacted by that experience. Of course she's impacted. Her family had millions of dollars taken away from them. It might not have been worth millions of dollars at the time, but it sure is now. It was theirs, and it would have continued to be theirs but for their race. So the argument that this government is making, that it's somehow neutral to claim that my friend was not impacted by those events because they occurred in the past, is absurd, and I think anyone listening to the end of the argument can see the reasons why it's absurd.

So, yeah, I don't like it. I don't like it. I particularly don't like it, Madam Speaker, because I have very strong opinions on public communications and the duties that we owe to the public, and I think that when the government puts forward this absurdity and this attempt to make certain people argue their right to be in the conversation as neutrality, they do a disservice not just to the impacted institutions but to everyone that hears them speak. I just think that it is really sad that we are at a place where a government can simultaneously say that your access to education should depend on your parents' income but also that you cannot look back in time and say the truth.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I think it is incredibly problematic, and these exorbitant tuition increases under this government do exactly that. They can claim and I know that they think that everybody has an infinite supply of money . . . [Ms Ganley's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 38, Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. I am, like my colleagues, opposed to this bill for a few reasons. I also think that there are good components in and around governance, but the main reason I'm opposed is because I think that this bill will make life harder for young people.

I am a mom. My daughter graduated from university with her undergraduate degree this last May. That's got to be one of the proudest moments of my life so far, Mr. Speaker, but I saw her struggle. I mean, we are a family who is not poor. I don't think we're that affluent, but we supported her as best we could, and my daughter is still graduating university with tens of thousands of dollars of student loans. The reality was that her student loans didn't cover her tuition and her living expenses, so we as a family were faced with the choice of either paying for her tuition or paying for her rent. It was a difficult decision for us. It was difficult financially. Of course, we did it because I want her to succeed.

The reality is that life is hard for young people right now. Most young people don't even think owning a home is in their future. They struggle to pay rent and put food on the table. I would literally, like, order groceries online for my daughter to make sure that she was eating vegetables because I was very concerned that Ichiban was forming too much of the core of her diet. I think we were all in university. We all ate a lot of Ichiban, but it's different for young people now, Mr. Speaker. I think that they really struggle. The reality is that even with my daughter working part-time, even with her student loans, even with her working full-time over the summer, it was not enough to cover her tuition and her financial living expenses.

I want my daughter to succeed in life, and I want all the young people of her generation to succeed. I want them to follow their passion and go to university and learn the things that they're passionate about and contribute to our society. What I'm seeing in this bill is nothing that helps them do that. Alberta students already graduate with some of the highest levels of student debt in the country, and I'm saddened by that because what about households that don't make as much money as I do and my husband? What about households that are struggling more financially just right now? I don't know if you've heard about the affordability crisis, Mr. Speaker, but it seems like a lot of people are just struggling to make ends meet. For those families, university or postsecondary education is this very out-of-reach concept. The reason why this bill makes those problems worse is because it actually allows the minister to decide what the maximum tuition amounts will be.

Again, my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View has said that she doesn't trust the government to just not raise tuition. I don't either, but it's also this recurring pattern in this government to put a lot of decision-making power in the hands of the minister's office. I've said it about tourism and environment and all of these other ministries. The person sitting in the chair changes over time. When we put the power in the minister's hands, it does not provide certainty, and it does not guarantee what decisions will be made.

1:40

This bill is the first step in creating a situation where the minister can get rid of the 2 per cent per year tuition cap. This bill also reduces that certainty because degree programs last at least four years. When I was doing my undergraduate degree, and my master's, and my PhD, because for some reason I was addicted to university for a while, I wanted to look in time across the years my degree would take, and I wanted to know how much my tuition would cost because that impacted how much money I saved when I worked over the summer months or if I needed to think about having a part-time job while also being in school. This bill takes away that certainty, and without that certainty, it turns postsecondary education into a little bit of a scary idea for some folks, Mr. Speaker, and that means that postsecondary education becomes less accessible for people who think that they can weather the cost of the increased debt that they will be sure to incur.

Between 2000 and 2023 average tuition for a bachelor's program doubled, and I can tell you that when I was sitting down at the computer with my daughter looking at her tuition costs, I almost started crying. I was just like: I can't believe how much more expensive this is from when I did my degrees. Higher tuition makes postsecondary less accessible, and education shouldn't only be for wealthy people or people who can afford it or people

who are comfortable taking on $100,000 of debt. Postsecondary education should be available for everybody who wants it.

I know that the minister is thinking that he's not going to increase tuition by that much there – it's okay; just relax – but this government has already cut postsecondary operating budgets since they've come into power in 2019. What is there for us to think that they won't continue to do so and that they won't put the burden of those increased cuts on students through tuition? There's nothing. There's no evidence to suggest that will be the case, so I feel for the students who are in postsecondary education. I'm worried for them that they will graduate with increased debt loads because this government doesn't want to properly fund public access to postsecondary institutions. It's just really a shame.

Another part of this bill that bothers me is, as usual, the power given to the minister, not only in tuition but also that the minister can decide to fund high-demand program seats, often potentially at the expense of programs the government believes are less likely to address labour market needs. Instead of letting postsecondary institutions allocate funds to the programs that they see fit based on the demand that they see in registrations or costs or whatever, the government wants to decide where that money should go. The government wants to pick winners and losers in the system of postsecondary education. This government talks almost daily about federal government overreach, and, "We just want the federal money, but don't tell us how to spend it," and now they're doing, again, overreach into postsecondary institutions, saying: we'll give you funding, but you have to spend it on the programs that we want you to spend it on.

This is not fair and equitable access to postsecondary education; it is a government trying to manipulate the system. It is the government actively reducing the freedom of choice in study subjects for Alberta students. A government should not decide what areas of focus are important for study. I want the next generation, Mr. Speaker, to be able to follow their passions, to do the things that they love. I have two daughters who are living on their own as young adults. One just finished a degree in architecture and design, and the other one is living in Nelson being a hippie, and I am equally proud of them both. They are both finding their path in this life. They are both following the things that make them feel passionate and motivated. They are both active members in their communities, and they're out there being good people, and that is really what they want.

When I was deciding what to take in school, Mr. Speaker, my dad was an engineer. Anybody in the room who's an engineer knows that all engineers believe everything in life is engineering, so obviously my dad wanted me to be an engineer, to which I said: "No. I'm not an engineer. I'm a biologist." I had the freedom to choose what I wanted to study, Mr. Speaker, because the tuition was the same cost. That was a big part of it. It was the same amount of money to take engineering as it was to take biology. I have no regrets. I love being a biologist. I love understanding wildlife and habitats and ecosystems. My education choice had nothing to do with what the government of the day thought was important. Nothing. I didn't even think about what Ralph Klein wanted when I decided what I wanted to do in school. I just did what I wanted to do in school. Artists are just as important as engineers. It doesn't matter what the government priorities are.

Funding to postsecondary institutions should not be based on what the government priorities are. For example, let's just explore my field as a conservation biologist. It has become increasingly clear that this government doesn't prioritize environmental conservation or protection or management or, really, anything to do with the environment. We have a current environment minister who literally dismantles environmental protections for species at risk and habitats almost every single day. We also have an environment minister who launched a review of the most important piece of environmental legislation in Alberta, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, and gave stakeholders nine days – nine days, Mr. Speaker – to comment on the most important piece of environmental legislation in Alberta.

Now, it's clear that environment is not important to this government, but I guarantee you that the people who were actually able to participate in the appeal consultation with nine days' notice are pretty friggin' smart. They're educated in environmental conservation and habitats and species and how ecosystems function. Does this government think that those educations are less valuable than other educations because they're in an area that the government doesn't assign importance? Poppycock. Please. Give me a break. Every profession is just as important when you're following what's important to you and what you're passionate about.

In fact, while this government chooses to ignore environmental protections and conservation on a regular basis, those jobs and that knowledge becomes increasingly important to ensure that a diversity of views are actually incorporated into land-use planning and decision-making. It's not about what the government sets as the priority. It's about making sure that we have people across society who represent a broad view, perspective, a broad knowledge base. We want to have people across our society who know a lot about a lot of different things, Mr. Speaker. That's what creates a functioning, happy, healthy society that evolves and moves forward.

This government doesn't want a society that moves forward. It wants to pigeonhole all of us to only think about things in one certain way, to talk about neutrality or no ideology. They want to take ideology out of the classroom by injecting ideology into the classroom. So it's totally okay, if what you think is the conservative way of thinking. That's totally fine. You're in. But if you have any other thoughts that fit outside of that box, that's a little problematic. That's not neutral. Come on.

This government should fund education without getting in the way of education. This bill is just another attempt to do exactly the opposite, telling universities to embrace neutrality so that people have equal opportunities for learning. Yeah, we do. I did. You know, I met all kinds of people in school, and we talked about all kinds of things. University and postsecondary institutions are the breeding ground for those thoughts and creative thinking and teaching people how to debate and teaching people how to listen to views opposite to their own and to consider and recognize that not everybody sees the world the same way that you do, and that's a good thing. That's a good thing. We want that. Democracy is founded on that diversity and difference. Democracy is founded on working together and collaborating and compromising, which actually means that nobody gets everything that they want. One of my friends always says: compromises; nobody wins.

Universities teach you, postsecondary education teaches you how to be a critical thinker and how to have those difficult conversations. It doesn't matter if you're in the arts or the sciences or engineering or medicine or whatever. It is about being able to examine information and think about it critically. This bill wants the government to interject itself into those conversations, and that takes away the neutrality of universities. It takes away the opportunity for students to brainstorm and listen to each other and to not be afraid of sharing their views or perspectives.

That's the problem with this bill, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't make things better. It makes life more expensive for our young people, it reduces neutrality in universities, and it just kind of is really the government interfering in stuff that it should keep its nose out of.

Thank you.

1:50

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Member Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time to speak on Bill 38, Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. Since this act does talk about access to advanced education, I'd just like to start out, like, full stop: public education and access to advanced education in this country, in this place, is the great equalizer. It is why we are the beautiful place that we are, that people can succeed and prosper, and it's time for this government to back off. Let the professionals do their work, teach our kids. Let our kids learn to learn and to express themselves. Back off.

This minister has taken some notes from the previous Minister of Finance: boring introduction, nothing to see here, this is just common sense. But, Mr. Speaker, as we have heard from my colleagues, like so many of the legislative proposals from this government, Bill 38 is problematic.

We heard from the Member for Banff-Kananaskis about the, you know, decisions that this government now thinks that they should be making about which programs are getting funding and which ones aren't getting funding, which ones are important for our economy. Now, I'm all about the economy, Mr. Speaker, but I think we also need to stop and think about: if the government wants to get into the meddling of postsecondaries and which programs we deliver and where the funding goes, are we going to think about the arts?

Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, we were astounded by a choral group singing *God Save the King*. Is this government going to give deep consideration to music programs in Advanced Education despite the fact that many music students don't necessarily specifically get a job in music immediately after they graduate? Are we going to think about fine arts in postsecondary as we look up at this beautiful Chamber that we are in, the ceiling that we are under, the art that adorns each end of this Chamber? Are we going to think about the arts when we think about where our programming funding goes?

Are we going to think about philosophy, and history, and these programs, again, where students don't necessarily specifically get a job immediately upon graduation but where we learn about who we are as people, where we learn to debate, where we understand the mistakes that we have made in the past, and we try and correct course and make different decisions in the future? That's what concerns me about this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for Banff-Kananaskis for raising that and causing me to speak on it for a little bit.

Let's also talk about affordability, Mr. Speaker, something this government refuses to act on. This bill is going to make things worse for young people. You know, the minister talked about how this bill is going to create certainty for tuition. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? If you can see what the tuition is this year and you know that there's a cap of 2 per cent on that tuition, you can pretty much figure out what the tuition is next year. But now we have a bill where the minister is going to decide what the maximum tuition is for each individual program. That does not sound like certainty.

This bill removes the tuition cap for postsecondary programming. I'd like to remind, since we are often reminded of the actions of Alberta's NDP government in this Chamber, that we froze tuition and we maintained funding for postsecondary institutions. The UCP government took away those tuition freezes, then students saw 15 to 25 per cent increases year over year from 2019 to 2023, in some cases students paying $500 more each year. At the same time inflation was at the highest it has been in decades, and students were making decisions to live in their vehicles and pay for tuition instead of buying food. This is happening, Mr. Speaker.

At the same time this UCP government cut more than $1 billion of funding from postsecondary institutions in this province, leaving them with no choice but to cut programs, cut services, and cut supports. Students were paying hundreds of dollars more each year in tuition but were provided fewer services and supports to help them through their programming.

The UCP government hides behind their claims to not increase taxes, but in the two most recent budgets the UCP government increased fees and taxes on dozens of items, including education property taxes increasing by hundreds of dollars a year for the average Calgarian. If any Albertan thought that they could scrape together the funds for a local stay-cation, this government increased destination marketing fees at hotels and levied taxes on rental vehicles. They're hoping that Albertans are just going to look the other way. They're hoping that Albertans won't notice as they systematically increase the cost of living at every turn, and that is what they are doing with this bill.

They are also banking, Mr. Speaker, that vulnerable people will not speak up when they are being punched down on. Make no mistake, that is what this government is doing. They're doing that and making students pay more with the implicit message that they should just be thankful for the place that they have. Know your place, as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre was saying earlier. That they should just be happy where they are, that they have the privilege to be in that school, and not question the decisions that this minister is making.

This bill is also going to, you know, put the minister in the place where he's going to decide the code of conduct inside and outside the classroom of students, as this bill requires postsecondaries to have a code of conduct and for that code of conduct to be vetted by the minister. The minister may talk about this bill; like, they're not going to meddle; they're not going to overstep. But the code of conduct needs to be vetted by the minister, and included there the minister needs to be able to see who was consulted in creating the code of conduct. One has to question: why does the minister want to see who was consulted?

As we have heard already, this government is in no position to be talking about code of conduct. We have ministers defending other ministers spending $5,000 on booze cruises and billing them as taxi rides. This government has, again, at every turn systematically stripped down the Conflicts of Interest Act that governs their actions. They do something wrong. It's called out. It gets the attention of the media. No problem. Just change the Conflicts of Interest Act so that they can do it again tomorrow, and then they're within the bounds of what the Ethics Commissioner is looking at. This government is in no place to talk about code of conduct when they brought forward changes to the Municipal Government Act, stripping out codes of conduct that already existed in municipalities, and here we are a year later with no replacement and no guidance on what those municipalities are supposed to be doing.

What are we trying to solve here, Mr. Speaker? Postsecondaries already have codes of conduct for students. I went to the University of Calgary for my undergraduate. The University of Calgary has the Student Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

> This policy applies to Students' actions, interactions and behaviours that take place:
>
> (a) in or on University Facilities;
>
> (b) off University Facilities, including online, including through social media, online communication platforms, remote work applications, or other online means, where such actions, interactions or behaviour have a negative impact on a member of the University Community such that it materially interferes with their University learning, working or living environment;
>
> (c) when participating in a University club or organization, or a student club or organization, including . . . clubs or organizations sanctioned by the Students' Union or Graduate Students' Association; or
>
> (d) at a University Event.

2:00

It sounds like they kind of have this handled. That sounds pretty comprehensive to me, Mr. Speaker, and I'm curious: what does the minister believe that he's going to include here that is going to ostensibly make it better? A quick search, Mr. Speaker, as I was preparing to speak, shows that every single postsecondary institution in Alberta already has a student code of conduct, so what are we doing here?

When we see in here that we need to see the consultation in creating these codes of conduct, again, I'll kind of reflect on the actions of this government. It's unfortunate that this government didn't conduct any consultation at all before paving the way for tech billionaires to build hyperscale data centres wherever they wanted. This government doesn't care about consultation. In this instance, they just want the information of who disagrees with their policies.

The minister says that every student in Alberta should be able to speak their mind on campus. Let's be clear. I'm an advocate for a student code of conduct, but I'm unclear how the minister weighing in on that code of conduct is going to support students being able to speak their mind. When this government talks about speaking their mind, free speech ideology, what they actually mean is the exact opposite, as we have seen in their actions in the K to 12 system.

Earlier today we heard the Minister of Justice state in this House that protecting all Albertans is this government's priority, that Albertans should be able to move safely around. That's not what this legislation is helping out with. We see again and again the language that this government uses that is in the legislation actually acts to minimize vulnerable people and to put vulnerable people at risk, and that's what this legislation is going to do.

The UCP government is waging a cultural war against Albertans. Through their claims to remove ideology, eliminate DEI, and ensure freedom of speech, they're limiting the rights and access of vulnerable Albertans. If a student is allowed free speech, will student clubs be permitted to fly a progress flag on their campus club door? They're not allowed to do that in the K to 12 system.

This government just passed legislation for professionals to speak their mind without repercussion, but now this legislation wants to control what university administrators are allowed to say in public. Can this government even see how those two things are at odds with one another?

The UCP government's efforts are relentless, systematic, and insidious. We are now seeing it in almost every bill this government brings forward. We see it in ministers taking direct control of funding allocations, removing funding to organizations supporting safety and access to justice for vulnerable Albertans. We see it when this UCP government blundered into thinking that they could control research grants from the Tri-Council research studies and what our universities were allowed to research and what they were not allowed to research.

Why is this government wasting their time with actions that do harm to Albertans instead of policies that actually help Albertans? Why is this UCP government so obsessed with their ideological cultural war instead of making the lives of Albertans better?

People can't afford to buy food, and this government's response is to increase tuition. People are struggling with the cost of rent and paying their mortgage, and this government's response is to control what postsecondary administrators are allowed to say in public.

In the referendum Albertans rejected this UCP government's ideology. In the by-election in Calgary-Shaw Albertans rejected this UCP government's ideology. This week we saw the citizens of the United States reject the very same ideology.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve better, and they're going to get better in the next general election when they elect an Alberta NDP government.

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

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer some thoughts on Bill 38, the Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. I want to start off my comments by just comparing and contrasting our government's approach to the advanced education sector and the current UCP government's approach to the advanced education sector. I'll follow that up with some thoughts on affordability and tuition, and then I want to hopefully end off with some advice that if anybody from the university sector is listening to will find helpful, I think, in making sure that the university sector is well prepared for government interference on campus.

So to start off I just want to share with the House what our government did with respect to promoting advanced education here in Alberta. We significantly increased base grants to universities and colleges over the previous PC government whose budget we inherited when we were elected in 2015. We significantly increased capital spending on campuses and built many, many facilities on campuses all across the province. We also froze tuition and, for four beautiful years between 2015 and 2019, Mr. Speaker, average tuition and fees in Alberta were actually below the Canadian average, and that's the only time in Alberta history that I'm aware of where university and college tuition and fees were below the Canadian national average.

Now, compare that to what happened to the advanced education sector when the UCP took power in 2019. They cut spending dramatically, not just on base operating grants but also on capital funding. In fact, if you compare the final year of capital spending from when I was minister in 2018-2019 to the current year of capital spending under this minister, not only are they spending $30 million less in nominal dollars on capital spending; that works out to about $90 million in real dollars when you take into account the effects of inflation. So this minister is dramatically underspending on infrastructure compared to when I was Advanced Education minister.

When I was Advanced Education minister, Mr. Speaker, Alberta had one of the best-funded postsecondary systems in the entire country on a per-student basis. Most recent data shows that Alberta is now under the Canadian average for . . . [interjections] No, and I see the Minister of Advanced Education is taking issue with it. I'm using information from Statistics Canada, so if he has issues with the information that Statistics Canada is presenting, then he should take it up with them.

Alberta is spending less per student in universities – in universities – than the Canadian national average, and that was not the case when I was Advanced Education minister. So this significant reduction in spending is showing up both in the operational capabilities and in the infrastructure condition of postsecondary education in this province, and both have deteriorated significantly under this government.

But don't take it from me, Mr. Speaker. I just want to read into the record some excerpts from an article written by Daniel Doz, who is the former president of the Alberta University of Arts. This was an article that appeared in *Alberta Views* magazine in their May 2026 edition, and he wrote:

> The NDP government, perhaps not surprisingly, created strong connections between the ministry and the various student associations, sometimes even more so than with respective administrations. It was clear this was a government very much focused on students. I believe this focus is how [the Alberta

> College of Art and Design at the time] was able to finally get the university status it needed, so our students would be perceived at parity with others in Canada. I recall that before we became AUArts it was easier for one of our students to pursue a graduate degree at an American institution instead of at a Canadian university – because the Canadian university wasn't sure it could accept our students, for the sole reason that we weren't called a "university" (even though our degrees were full professional ones).

2:10

> The NDP's advanced education minister . . .

Me.

> . . . was very keen on treating students fairly and protecting them, and he worked hard to help ACAD become AUArts, including ensuring we had additional funding to support this critical transition. Among many benefits, this enabled AUArts to create a permanent Indigenous staff position to support our then new Indigenous centre, the Lodgepole.
>
> At the same time, the NDP government also decided to freeze tuition. This was of course helpful for students.

Then he was quite honest. He said,

> It had consequences. Freezing of tuition and of non-unionized staff salaries became problematic for revenue generation as well as staff retention. While the NDP gave our institutions more government support than the PCs or the UCP did, the underlying structural [problems] . . . went unaddressed.

Then this led to a crisis when the UCP came to power.

> Premier Jason Kenney's UCP government brought in the largest cuts to the post-secondary system (about 20 per cent) that I saw in my 15 years as president. Unfairly . . . this major funding reduction was not applied evenly across the [province]. At AUArts we saw a 20.4 per cent cut to our operating grant over four years, which, calculating for inflation, amounted to a massive cutback of 35 per cent!
>
> For the only time during [his] tenure, a few staff at AUArts had to be let go or not replaced. Very sadly, this happened a lot in higher education across the province. Students suffered, not least because when Kenny's government cut our budgets, they also ended the tuition freeze. Most PSIs raised tuition to the maximum 7 per cent allowed for three years in a row to fill the hole in their budgets. But raising tuition beyond inflation created a huge burden for many students – and was a risk for us because, depending on the type of institution and programs offered, you might price yourself out of the market.

Then, when the current Premier became Premier in 2022, they met quickly with the new Premier in Edmonton.

> During that one-hour meeting, she focused on the relationship of the post-secondary sector to the job market and expressed at some length her frustration with it for not supporting enough conservative voices to be heard.

Therein lies, I think, the heart of this section of Bill 38, that deals with institutional neutrality.

Dr. Doz then closes off the article by saying that

> The reality is that, to date, it has been more effective for institutions to work on their own rather than as a system, because backroom deals were in the end more beneficial for individual schools. Once, in conversation with a government official, I questioned why a particular institution had received quite a substantial matching grant through a program that had been terminated a while ago, and – as they had received those funds – why couldn't my institution also benefit from the "terminated" program? I was told I was not allowed to ask such a question.

I think this article paints quite a damning picture of the state of postsecondary education since 2019, when the UCP was elected, and this is from a person who had significant experience and an insider's view of the system for more than 15 years.

One of the things that he mentioned was that because the government has significantly reduced base operating grants to universities, tuition and fees are really the only lever that universities and colleges have left to pull to increase their revenue. Certainly, the federal immigration minister's reduction in allowable international students has also had a significant impact on the bottom lines of universities and colleges.

It's interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, to know that we have a government that is actively discouraging immigration to our province. They don't want immigrants to come to this province. When that happens, when the federal government gives them what they want, they're not even willing to step in with their own money and backfill that lost revenue so that universities and colleges, in particular, who have been the hardest hit by the reduction in international students, can continue operating at funding levels before these immigration reductions were applied. You would think that a government that believes so strongly in supporting Albertans and the Alberta domestic students would at least cough up the cash that went missing when the immigration reductions that this government was asking for were put in place. Unfortunately, that's not the case.

My colleagues here on this side have raised a number of issues with respect to the creation of a tuition maximum. I'm not going to rehash that, but I do want to raise the issue of mandatory noninstructional fees, Mr. Speaker, because I think that has gotten short shrift in this discussion. When I was Advanced Education minister, we not only took into consideration caps on tuition increases; we also put strict limits on mandatory noninstructional fees and what could be done with those. Not only did universities have to have consultation and student input into what a mandatory noninstructional fee was; they also had to provide clarity around what the mandatory noninstructional fees provided. Unfortunately, that intent was never met because shortly after we passed that into legislation, we lost the election, and then the UCP government undid all of those things around mandatory noninstructional fees. So students are left with skyrocketing mandatory noninstructional fees and no way to get clarity around what they're even paying for.

I just want to share my own example, Mr. Speaker. I recently paid tuition to the University of Alberta, and that included these noninstructional fees: an academic success fee of $98; an athletics and recreation fee of $104.80; an enrolment support fee of $98.36; a student experience support fee of $94.04; a student health and wellness fee of $70.24; a Graduate Students' Association fee of $85.87; a GS assistance program fee of $10.90; dental plan, $300; health plan, $400; PAW Centre, $29; and U-Pass was $182.50, for a sum total of $1,473.79. Now, compare that to what my tuition was for that semester. I paid $1,674.04. Mandatory noninstructional fees are almost equal, in my case, to the tuition that I paid this past semester.

The minister has absolutely nothing to say about mandatory instructional fees. Maybe he could even stand up at some point during debate and tell me where my $98 for academic success are going or my $98.36 for enrolment support or what even the PAW Centre is at the University of Alberta, that I'm paying $29 this semester for. When I ask those questions of administration, I don't get any answers and no student does. How is it that this minister can claim to be defending affordability and providing transparency and certainty in the cost of higher education when he has absolutely nothing to say about mandatory noninstructional fees? He can't claim to take affordability around higher education seriously if he's unwilling to look at this backdoor way that universities and colleges use to increase their revenue while escaping the regulations that he creates under the tuition maximum.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Twelve seconds.

Mr. Schmidt: Damn it.
Thank you.

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

2:20

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A student in my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie wants to study history. She works a part-time job at a fast-food store after her class. Every single dollar she earns goes to tuition. She and her mom are doing the math at the kitchen table. Rent, books, bus pass, tuition, and when those numbers don't add up, she picks up another shift, and her shifts have become never-ending.

Tuition for a bachelor's degree in this province doubled in the past decade. We all know that they doubled not on their own but because of direct policies of this government. Albertan students graduate with some of the highest debt in this country. The wealthiest province has the students with the highest debt. How shameful is that, Mr. Speaker? Instead of fixing the mistake, this government has come up with the new Bill 38, a bill that says that from 2027-28 a minister can set the price of her program. Isn't it mind-boggling?

This bill does not even hint to cap tuition, let alone lowering the tuition, and the price may depend on cluster, high-priority or low-priority. Which one is history? This government won't say that. That's why this bill matters in Edmonton-Ellerslie, Mr. Speaker. This bill is a distraction. Her mom knows that since 2019 the UCP has cut deep into postsecondary budgets, and my colleague just explained that. The minister's own expert panel asked for a new funding formula, and it still isn't here. Think about that. The panel this government picked, the advice this government asked for, is still sitting on the shelves in dust.

Instead, that hard-working student and her mom hear about rules on what university boards can say. Her mom does not need a lecture about campus boards. She needs to know if her daughter's classes will be there next fall or not, that the degree she is paying for will still mean something. My colleague from Edmonton-North West said it very well: seven years and still no real plan for advanced education.

This bill changes the subject. Her mom is proud of her girl, Mr. Speaker, and worried about the tuition. Rent, groceries, family support back home pile up their worries. Now this government tells her: "Don't worry. We are making campuses neutral." Every public board has to write a neutrality policy, then the minister approves it or rejects it or exempts any board.

The Premier says that universities should teach students how to think, not what to think. We have heard these lines before, south of the border. It is the MAGA playbook, Mr. Speaker. Go after DEI, police campus speech, and call it neutrality. It is culture war politics imported from the United States, and bill after bill this government keeps bringing it here.

This week American voters rejected that divisive agenda of politics. They voted on the prices, on honest government. Albertans made it clear earlier in the referendum on separation, the question this government put on the ballot, and Albertans handed a thumping defeat to this UCP government, that this government rightly deserved. On both sides of the border people are saying: "Enough is enough. No more division. No more culture war. No more waging neighbour against neighbour." But this government isn't listening. Right now it is picking a fight with our kids. Albertans are watching, and the next election is closer than this government thinks.

Here is what the mom should know. Her daughter's university already reports on free expression every year. It's that simple. When her daughter goes to university, she's not brainwashed.

So what is being fixed with this Bill 38? The answer is that this government is not fixing the real problem. It is pretending to fix a problem that does not even exist. This legislation is not full of solutions. It is full of red tape. The rules come later in regulation and the penalties are not decided. The minister says that there will be consequences but can't say what. Lee Easton from the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations said it best. "We're really worried about who gets to decide, at the end of the day, what constitutes openness, what constitutes neutrality."

This bill is not about the student. This bill is not about the professors. This bill is not about the parents, too. This bill is about only one person, Mr. Speaker, and that is the minister. It doesn't matter how much water you pour on sand; you won't be able to end its thirst. Just like it doesn't matter how much power you give to the ministers of this government; they're always hungry for more.

This bill gives more power to the minister, and the 2 per cent cap ends after 2026-2027. After that, the minister sets the maximums by order. Never-ending power. Isn't this the same government that talks about less government? I'm wondering: what exactly do they mean by government? It seems like they call government something else than what we all understand, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, for just one more year that student in my riding gets a 2 per cent safeguard. After that, the minister won't say what it's going to be. Can the minister explain how she can plan four years of school on one year of promises?

I'll give the minister credit for one thing, Mr. Speaker. Parental income will no longer count for student loans. That frees up about $180 million, and that's a good step, but a loan is still debt. It does not restore a single dollar cut since 2019, and it does not tell that mom what history will cost once the safeguards end.

The expert panel said that it grouped programs by what they cost to teach. This program appears to group them by labour market alignment. Cluster 1, high priority; cluster 5, low priority. About 30 to 55 programs in each, Mr. Speaker.

Her mom wants to know: where does history land? English, philosophy, the arts: they haven't told us. The programs that teach us who we are could be the first ones treated like they don't count. Mr. Speaker, that mom is not alone. This is the pain of every parent in this province. Your son wants to be a nurse. Your daughter wants to study history. Your kid wants a red seal. This bill puts the price of the dream on the minister's desk.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's 2:30. The House is adjourned until Monday at 1:30 – oh, hold on. I'm saying the Monday 11 days from now, November 16, at 1:30. The House is adjourned till then.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:30 p.m. to Monday, November 16, at 1:30 p.m.]

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

Activity to Thursday, November 5, 2026

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

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

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

Bill 1 — International Agreements Act (Smith)
First Reading — 6 *(Oct. 23, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 77-85 *(Oct. 28, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 109-18 *(Oct. 29, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 133-35 *(Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 184-87 *(Nov. 4, 2025 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 250-52 *(Nov. 6, 2025 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force November 26, 2025; SA 2025, cI-3.8]

Bill 2 — Back to School Act (Horner)
First Reading — 26 *(Oct. 27, 2025 aft., passed on division)*
Second Reading — 27-28 *(Oct. 27, 2025 eve.)*, 29-35 *(Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 35-36 *(Oct. 27, 2025 eve.)*, 37-45 *(Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Third Reading — 45-46 *(Oct. 27, 2025 eve.)*, 47-54 *(Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Oct. 28, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force on October 28, 2025; SA 2025 cB-0.5]

Bill 3 — Private Vocational Training Amendment Act, 2025 (McDougall)
First Reading — 65 *(Oct. 28, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 135-37 *(Oct. 30, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 187-93 *(Nov. 4, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 215-16 *(Nov. 5, 2025 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 334-37 *(Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 371-73 *(Nov. 19, 2025 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c17]

Bill 4 — Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (Ellis)
First Reading — 121 *(Oct. 30, 2025 , passed)*
Second Reading — 193-201 *(Nov. 4, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 216-24 *(Nov. 5, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 289 *(Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 323-34 *(Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 408-13 *(Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 447-55 *(Nov. 24, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force November 26, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c18]

Bill 5 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Schow)
First Reading — 271 *(Nov. 17, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 322-23 *(Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 407-08 *(Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 589-90 *(Nov. 27, 2025 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force December 11, 2025; SA 2025 c23]

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

First Reading — 150 *(Nov. 3, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 252-60 *(Nov. 6, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 289-98 *(Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 337-39 *(Nov. 18, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 341-51 *(Nov. 18, 2025 eve., adjourned; amendments introduced)*, 455-65 *(Nov. 24, 2025 eve., adjourned; amendments introduced)*, 504-14 *(Nov. 25, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 681-86 *(Dec. 2, 2025 eve., passed)*
Third Reading — 713-21 *(Dec. 3, 2025 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c19]

Bill 7 — Water Amendment Act, 2025 (Schulz)

First Reading — 121 *(Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 224-35 *(Nov. 5, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 298-307 *(Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 351-55 *(Nov. 18, 2025 eve., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 480-93 *(Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 536-43 *(Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 661-63 *(Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c27]

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

First Reading — 478 *(Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 663-70 *(Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 737-44 *(Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed with amendments)*
Third Reading — 766-71 *(Dec. 4, 2025 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force December 11, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c26]

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

First Reading — 319-20 *(Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed on division)*
Second Reading — 378-91 *(Nov. 19, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 493-501 *(Nov. 25, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 549-54 *(Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 676-79 *(Dec. 2, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 815-22 *(Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 855 *(Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 873-80 *(Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Third Reading — 891 *(Dec. 9, 2025 eve., adjourned on division)*, 892-900 *(Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force December 11, 2025; SA 2025 c24]

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

First Reading — 271 *(Nov. 17, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 374-78 *(Nov. 19, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 514-21 *(Nov. 25, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 543-49 *(Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 670-76 *(Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 728-29 *(Dec. 3, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 744-45 *(Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed)*
Third Reading — 789-94 *(Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c25]

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

First Reading — 426 *(Nov. 24, 2025 , passed)*
Second Reading — 555-64 *(Nov. 26, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 590-96 *(Nov. 27, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 637-46 *(Dec. 1, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 808-15 *(Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 856 *(Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 867-73 *(Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division with amendments)*
Third Reading — 913-14 *(Dec. 10, 2025 aft., adjourned on division)*, 916-22 *(Dec. 10, 2025 aft., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c21]

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

First Reading — 478 *(Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 693-98 *(Dec. 2, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 731-37 *(Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 745-50 *(Dec. 3, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 850-55 *(Dec. 9, 2025 aft., passed with amendments)*
Third Reading — 860-67 *(Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025)* [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c20]

Bill 13 — Regulated Professions Neutrality Act (Amery)
First Reading — 404 *(Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 564-73 *(Nov. 26, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 629-37 *(Dec. 1, 2025 eve., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 686-92 *(Dec. 2, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 801-08 *(Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed)*
Third Reading — 887-91 *(Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025)* [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 cR-13.3]

Bill 14 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Amery)
First Reading — 763 *(Dec. 4, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 794-801 *(Dec. 8, 2025 eve., adjourned)*, 844-50 *(Dec. 9, 2025 aft., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 856 *(Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 880-87 *(Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division with amendments)*
Third Reading — 922-23 *(Dec. 10, 2025 aft., adjourned on division)*, 924-31 *(Dec. 10, 2025 aft., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force December 11, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c22]

Bill 15 — Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Ellis)
First Reading — 943 *(Feb. 24, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 972-83 *(Feb. 25, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1141-48 *(Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed)*
Third Reading — 1337-44 *(Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Apr. 16, 2026 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force April 16, 2026; SA 2026, c5]

Bill 16 — Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act (Boitchenko)
First Reading — 963 *(Feb. 25, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1065-68 *(Mar. 12, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1148-52 *(Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed)*
Third Reading — 1216-19 *(Mar. 24, 2026 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Mar. 26, 2026 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026, cT-6.7]

Bill 17 — Fiscal Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Horner)
First Reading — 1039 *(Mar. 10, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1210-16 *(Mar. 24, 2026 aft.)*, 1241-44 *(Mar. 25, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1270-73 *(Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed)*
Third Reading — 1273-76 *(Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Mar. 26, 2026 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2026 c3]

Bill 18 — Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act (Amery)
First Reading — 1124 *(Mar. 18, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1332-37 *(Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1462-65 *(Apr. 14, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1524-28 *(Apr. 16, 2026 morn., passed)*
Third Reading — 1607-12 *(Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026 cS-0.3]

Bill 19 — Appropriation Act, 2026 ($) (Horner)
First Reading — 1140 *(Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 1222-27 *(Mar. 24, 2026 aft., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 1248-58 *(Mar. 25, 2026 aft., passed on division)*
Third Reading — 1278-88 *(Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Mar. 26, 2026 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force March 26, 2026; SA 2026, c1]

Bill 20 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2026 ($) (Horner)
First Reading — 1197 *(Mar. 23, 2026 eve., passed)*
Second Reading — 1219-21 *(Mar. 24, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1244-48 *(Mar. 25, 2026 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 1276-78 *(Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Mar. 26, 2026)* [Comes into force March 26, 2026; SA 2026, c2]

Bill 21 — Interprovincial Trade Mutual Recognition Act (Schow)
First Reading — 1261 *(Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 1344-49 *(Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1404-08 *(Apr. 2, 2026 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 1453-55 *(Apr. 14, 2026 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(Apr. 16, 2026 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026, cI-9.5]

Bill 22 — Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026 (Sigurdson, RJ)
First Reading — 1299 *(Mar. 30, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1399-1404 *(Apr. 2, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1618-20 *(Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed with amendments)*
Third Reading — 1643-47 *(Apr. 23, 2026 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026 c6]

Bill 23 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Amery)
First Reading — 1299 *(Mar. 30, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1455-62 *(Apr. 14, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1492-98 *(Apr. 15, 2026 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 1520-24 *(Apr. 16, 2026 morn., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(Apr. 16, 2026 outside of House sitting)* [Comes into force April 16, 2026, with exceptions; SA 2026, c4]

Bill 24 — Alberta Whisky Act (Nally)
First Reading — 1329 *(Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1393-99 *(Apr. 2, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1498-99 *(Apr. 15, 2026 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 1532-36 *(Apr. 16, 2026 morn., adjourned)*, 1607 *(Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026 cA-37.7]

Bill 25 — An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act, 2026 (Nicolaides)
First Reading — 1329 *(Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1465-71 *(Apr. 14, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1499-1504 *(Apr. 15, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1647-51 *(Apr. 23, 2026 morn., adjourned)*, 1833-39 *(May 11, 2026 eve., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 1874-80 *(May 12, 2026 eve., passed on division)*
Third Reading — 1901-07 *(May 12, 2026 eve., adjourned)*, 1925-26 *(May 13, 2026 aft., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on Proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2026 c13]

Bill 26 — Immigration Oversight Act (Schow)
First Reading — 1353 *(Apr. 1, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1528-32 *(Apr. 16, 2026 morn., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1620-24 *(Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 1739-42 *(May 6, 2026 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026 cI-0.3]

Bill 27 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Horner)
First Reading — 1353 *(Apr. 1, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1487-92 *(Apr. 15, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1612-18 *(Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1746-49 *(May 6, 2026 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 1769 *(May 6, 2026 eve., adjourned)*, 1769-71 *(May 6, 2026 eve., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2026 c8]

Bill 28 — Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Williams)
First Reading — 1385 *(Apr. 2, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 1636-43 *(Apr. 23, 2026 morn., adjourned)*, 1752-56 *(May 6, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1757-59 *(May 6, 2026 eve., adjourned)*, 1839-46 *(May 11, 2026 eve., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 1880-86 *(May 12, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1893-95 *(May 12, 2026 eve., passed on division)*, 1887 *(May 12, 2026 eve., adjourned)*
Third Reading — 1928-36 *(May 13, 2026 aft., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2026 c10]

Bill 29 — Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (LaGrange)
First Reading — 1420 *(Apr. 13, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1651-57 *(Apr. 23, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1716-23 *(May 5, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1867-74 *(May 12, 2026 aft., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 1887-93 *(May 12, 2026 eve., passed)*
Third Reading — 1936-43 *(May 13, 2026 aft., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force May 14, 2026, with exceptions; SA 2026 c9]

Bill 30 — Expedited 120-Day Approvals Act (Jean)
First Reading — 1450 *(Apr. 14, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1706-11 *(May 5, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1771-76 *(May 6, 2026 eve., passed)*
Third Reading — 1776-77 *(May 6, 2026 eve., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026 cE-12.8]

Bill 31 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Nally)
First Reading — 1627 *(Apr. 23, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 1711-16 *(May 5, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1749-52 *(May 6, 2026 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 1800-1806 *(May 7, 2026 morn., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force May 14, 2026, with exceptions; SA 2026 c12]

Bill 32 — Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2026 (Amery)
First Reading — 1635 *(Apr. 23, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 1743-46 *(May 6, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1759-69 *(May 6, 2026 eve., adjourned)*, 1846-53 *(May 11, 2026 eve., passed on division)*
Committee of the Whole — 1895-1901 *(May 12, 2026 eve., passed on division)*
Third Reading — 1907-12 *(May 12, 2026 eve., adjourned)*, 1926-28 *(May 13, 2026 aft., passed on division)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on May 14, 2026; SA 2026 c7]

Bill 33 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2) (Amery)
First Reading — 1973 *(Oct. 27, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1990-97 *(Oct. 28, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 2018-23 *(Oct. 29, 2026 morn., adjourned)*, 2076-81 *(Nov. 3, 2026 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 2128-30 *(Nov. 5, 2026 morn., passed)*

Bill 34 — Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Nally)
First Reading — 1990 *(Oct. 28, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 2010-18 *(Oct. 29, 2026 morn., adjourned)*, 2081-86 *(Nov. 3, 2026 aft., passed)*

Bill 35 — Education and Childcare (Securing Parental Involvement) Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Nicolaides)
First Reading — 2009 *(Oct. 29, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 2068-76 *(Nov. 3, 2026 aft., adjourned)*

Bill 36 — Children and Family Services (Supporting Alberta Families) Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Turton)
First Reading — 2009 *(Oct. 29, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 2130-36 *(Nov. 5, 2026 morn., passed)*

Bill 37 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Schow)
First Reading — 2009 *(Oct. 29, 2026 morn., passed)*

Bill 38 — Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (McDougall)
First Reading — 2067 *(Nov. 3, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 2136-46 *(Nov. 5, 2026 aft., adjourned)*

Bill 39 — Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2) (Justin Wright)
First Reading — 2097 *(Nov. 4, 2026 aft., passed)*

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025 (Ganley)
First Reading — 121 *(Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 154-65 *(Nov. 3, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 274-76 *(Nov. 17, 2025 aft., defeated on division)*

Bill 202 — Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025 (Kasawski)
First Reading — 248 *(Nov. 6, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 276-84 *(Nov. 17, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 427-31 *(Nov. 24, 2025 aft., defeated on division)*

Bill 203 — Energy Storage Planning for Investment Act (Al-Guneid)
First Reading — 319 *(Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 431-39 *(Nov. 24, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 608-13 *(Dec. 1, 2025 aft., defeated on division)*

Bill 204 — Public Interest Disclosure (Publicly Funded Health Entity Whistleblower Protection) Act (Sweet)
First Reading — 534 *(Nov. 26, 2025 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 613-20 *(Dec. 1, 2025 aft., adjourned)*, 1014-20 *(Mar. 9, 2026 aft., defeated on division)*

Bill 205 — Non-Disclosure Agreements Act (Johnson)
First Reading — 1129 *(Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 1169 *(Mar. 23, 2026 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities)*

Bill 206 — Accessible Alberta Act (Renaud)
First Reading — 1063 *(Mar. 12, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1081-94 *(Mar. 16, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1166-69 *(Mar. 23, 2026 aft., defeated on division)*

Bill 207 — Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Dyck)
First Reading — 1269 *(Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 1300-1311 *(Mar. 30, 2026 aft., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1424-32 *(Apr. 13, 2026 aft., passed)*
Third Reading — 1549-51 *(Apr. 20, 2026 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force on January 1, 2027; SA 2026 c11]

Bill 208 — Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Amendment Act, 2026 (Petrovic)
First Reading — 1507 *(Apr. 16, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 1551 *(Apr. 20, 2026 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future)*

Bill 209 — Consumer Protection (Affordability Measures) Amendment Act, 2026 (Eremenko)
First Reading — 1635 *(Apr. 23, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 1672-84 *(May 4, 2026 aft., adjourned)*, 1820-22 *(May 11, 2026 aft., defeated on division)*

Bill 210 — Consumer Protection (Fraud Prevention Measures) Amendment Act, 2026 (Deol)
First Reading — 1781 *(May 7, 2026 aft., passed)*
Second Reading — 1822-28 *(May 11, 2026 aft., defeated on division)*

Bill 211 — Patient Outcomes Reporting Act (Batten)
First Reading — 2009 *(Oct. 29, 2026 morn., passed)*
Second Reading — 2036-50 *(Nov. 2, 2026 aft., defeated on division)*

Bill 212 — Pharmacy Statutes (Rewards Points) Amendment Act, 2026 (Pitt)
First Reading — 1923 *(May 13, 2026 aft., passed)*

Bill 213 — Alberta Personal Income Tax (Emergency Services Volunteer Tax Credits) Amendment Act, 2026 (Lunty)
First Reading — 1923 *(May 13, 2026 aft., passed)*

Bill 214 — Alberta Health Care Insurance (Protecting Public Health Care) Amendment Act, 2026 (Hoffman)
First Reading — 2127 *(Nov. 5, 2026 morn., passed)*

Bill Pr1 — The Ranchmen's Club Ordinance Amendment Act, 2026 (Ceci)
First Reading — 1269 *(Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills)*, 1450 *(Apr. 14, 2026 aft., reported to Assembly; proceeded with)*
Second Reading — 1972 *(May 7, 2026 morn., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1792 *(May 7, 2026 morn., passed)*
Third Reading — 1867 *(May 12, 2026 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force May 14, 2026]

Bill Pr2 — Prairie Bible Institute Amendment Act, 2026 (Sawyer)
First Reading — 1269 *(Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills)*, 1450 *(Apr. 14, 2026 aft., reported to Assembly; proceeded with)*
Second Reading — 1792 *(May 7, 2026 morn., passed)*
Committee of the Whole — 1792-93 *(May 7, 2026 morn., passed)*
Third Reading — 1867 *(May 12, 2026 aft., passed)*
Royal Assent — *(May 14, 2026 morn.)* [Comes into force May 14, 2026]

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

ISSN 0383-3623