

Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 16, 2026

Day 67

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)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP)
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
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Elmeligi, Sarah, Banff-Kananaskis (NDP)
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP), Official Opposition House Leader
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (PTP)
Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)
Hoyle, Rhiannon, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)
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Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC), Government House Leader
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
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Wright, Hon. Justin, ECA, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC), Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
Vacant, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland

Party standings:
United Conservative: 46 New Democrat: 39 Progressive Tory: 1 Vacant: 1

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Al-Guneid
Armstrong-Homeniuk
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Ip
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Rowswell
Yao

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m. Monday, November 16, 2026

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

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

Hon. Members:

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

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

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

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, the beautiful rendition of *O Canada* today was performed by Rebecca Kreklo. Rebecca is an 18-year-old singer and pianist from Sherwood Park. She has performed the national anthem at several notable Hockey Canada events, including the 2025 Telus Cup in Chilliwack, B.C., and the QMJHL prospects game in Moncton, New Brunswick. In addition to music, Rebecca is a lifeguard and is currently studying psychology at King's University. Outside of music and academics, she enjoys spending time with her family and her German shepherd as well as being outdoors. Rebecca is joined by her parents, Roxana and John Kreklo, and her 11-year-old brother, Michael Kreklo. Please all rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

School groups today, starting with the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly students, parents, and teachers from the Hastings Lake Learning Pod group, a homeschooling group from my constituency. I just want to invite you all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly 24 grade 9 students from Meadows Christian Academy. I would invite them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Guests, starting with the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you education advocates and Albertans who have signed on to the Education 4 All petition: Gloria Antipán, Tiffany Efird, and Nicole Gatner. I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce a good friend of mine, Nelson Nottveit, who I hope is in the gallery behind me here, working as an electrical engineer in Edmonton. I ask that he rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Calgary-Klein.

Member Tejada: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly activists and people concerned about education: Rashpal Singh Sehmby, James Kriese, and Amber Nicholson. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you Rhiannon Rutherford, Wai-Ling Lennon, and Adrian Xavier, who are here today to witness the tabling of a petition. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you board members, friends of mine, former colleagues, and staff from Alberta canola commission. This vital industry contributes approximately $12 billion annually to our provincial economy and represents over 12,000 producers. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to introduce folks who signed on to the Education 4 All petition. There are teachers, teacher educators, and teacher representatives. Wanda Chell, Tim Roden, Lea Nicoll, and Heather Quinn, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I'm honoured to introduce some incredible advocates for so many issues that matter, but today they're here as part of Education 4 All, fighting for all kids to have access to public education regardless of their status. Please welcome Samantha Vaux, Jason Foster, Trisha Estabrooks, Chris Gallaway, and Gill Mayers. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you four distinguished guests from the Alberta Federation of Labour who are here to defend the principle that all children have a human right to an education. I invite you to welcome Whitney Haynes, Cori Longo, Gil McGowan, and MC Breadner. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Rutherford.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you Kennedy Daniels Peterson, who is a proud Albertan, public education advocate, and an artist who uses creativities in a way to defend public education. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Calgary-East.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you our guests who are the leaders from the South Asian community. Their dedication to serving the community is greatly appreciated. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Lethbridge-West.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you – I think she's behind here – an amazing young woman who is the University of Lethbridge Students' Union vice-president external and a member of the Alberta Students' Executive Council. Ms Rylee Mae, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and to all members of the House my constituent Trevor Tarangle. Trevor is here to watch the Legislature in action this afternoon, so let's show him the legislative hospitality that I know we're capable of. Trevor, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

1:40

The Speaker: Are there other introductions? The hon. Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Michelle Clayton from Calgary, who is joining us here at the Legislature today for a visit with her friend, my chief of staff. Michelle is a proud mother and talented graphic designer who is also actively involved in a variety of charitable and community initiatives. I'd ask that she please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Dean Lumague, Parvin Tasharofi, and Reverend Mickey Wilson. They are great advocates of a quality education in our province. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Oil and Gas Development

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, for more than a century our energy industry has been the driving force behind our province's prosperity. It has built Alberta into the economic engine of Canada while supporting thousands of jobs. Since forming government in 2019, our UCP government has fought tirelessly to defend our energy industry, attract investment, and secure the economic future. We fought to scrap Ottawa's nine bad laws, advance plans for a 2-million-barrels-per-day pipeline capacity, and secure recognition of the Pacific link pipeline as a project of national interest. This past Friday we took another major step forward. Our government introduced the oil sands growth program, a bold initiative designed to unlock the next wave of oil sands development, attract billions in private investment, and create thousands of good-paying jobs, the kind of investment that dried up under the NDP-Trudeau alliance, who drove investors away and dismissed our oil and gas as a so-called sunset industry.

Well, I have news for the opposition. The sun is not setting on Alberta's oil and gas industry. It's rising on a whole new era of opportunity. With the fourth-largest oil reserves in the world Alberta has set an ambitious goal of doubling production to 8 million barrels per day by 2035, and thanks to the work of our UCP government we're positioning Alberta to become the world's preferred supplier of reliable energy. The potential economic benefits are enormous, with projections of billions in additional revenues by 2040 and as much as $1.3 trillion by 2060. That's money that can build hospitals, schools, highways, and strengthen our communities. Mr. Speaker, while the opposition spent years trying to shut down our industry, our government has been working hard to unleash its full potential.

2026 Grey Cup Champions

Ms Goehring: The green and gold shone brighter than ever in Calgary last night, Mr. Speaker; green like our vast forests, gold like our rolling fields of canola. This is a big moment for Edmonton and a huge moment for the Elks in their history as a team. Elks players, fans, and leadership struggled through adversity and displayed great resilience in getting to this moment and putting Edmonton and Alberta back on the path to victory. Last night the Elks achieved the greatest honour in Canadian football.

None of this would have been possible without Larry Thompson and his family, and our city is saddened that he was not there to see this historic comeback season. Larry followed the franchise for over 50 years, was a dedicated supporter, fan, and eventually the owner of a team that he held and loved so dear. Larry's efforts and vision and his family's work to continue his legacy have been a crucial part in stabilizing the Elks, bringing fans back to Commonwealth Stadium, and leading Edmonton to its first Grey Cup in this new era.

We Edmonton sports fans are quite accustomed to long years of drought, Mr. Speaker, so it was excellent last night to see Cody Fajardo lead the Elks to victory and remind Canadians why we are the city of champions. I am sure I speak for everyone in Edmonton if not everyone in the Legislature when I say that we hope the Stanley Cup will be next. But today we are proud to chant that green and gold is bold, and when we're done, we'll tell the world we're proud of Edmonton and the Edmonton Elks. Let's go. [applause]

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

Government Achievements

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today as a proud Albertan, proud to be part of a government that has spent the last four years building a province that attracts investment, creates jobs, and delivers on opportunity. For the third consecutive year Alberta leads the country in interprovincial migration. Why are people moving here? The same reason I moved here years ago: opportunity and a province governed by common-sense policies, policies that support free enterprise and attract small businesses that helped create over 84,000 new jobs in the last 12 months, unlike the members opposite who, when in government, told Albertans that maybe they can go and work in B.C. until it gets better and come back home.

According to Calgary Economic Development last year Calgary alone secured 34 major investment wins representing $793 million. Leading the way are Lufthansa Technik, investing $120 million; Coca-Cola, another $75 million. This is economic diversification, Mr. Speaker.

Our growing economy allows us to invest in the services that Albertans depend on. We have the most physicians our province has ever had, Mr. Speaker, nearly 15,000. We've stood up for parental rights and protecting girls in sport. We continue to invest in choice in education as we recognize that parents, not government, know what's best for their children. We've lowered personal income tax, saving individuals up to $750 a year and families up to $1,500 per year. All this while also delivering five consecutive budget surpluses and growing the Alberta heritage savings trust fund to a record $32 billion.

Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Calgary-Lougheed and a very proud Albertan I'll continue to fight for the great people of this province. Thank you.

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

Mr. Kasawski: Once again, Mr. Speaker, this government is making international headlines for all the wrong reasons. The U.S. publication *Newsweek* is reporting on the minister of service Alberta's Kentucky booze cruise. The minister and his entourage, which included his chief of staff and her husband, who is a failed UCP candidate, toured 11 distilleries in an air-conditioned luxury You Sip, We Drive service complete, the company says, with an in-vehicle cooler.

It's ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. Not only did the minister fail to stand up for Canada, but his office also wasted thousands of taxpayer dollars on an American booze cruise while our local industries struggled under Trump's tariffs. At the same time the minister was checking out Kentucky bourbon, Canadians from coast to coast were standing together and taking American liquor off the shelves to fight back against Donald Trump's trade war and his threats to make Canada the 51st state.

Records show that failed UCP candidate Gary Davidson was included in the pretrip planning as an additional guest with his personal costs billed to the public purse. Gary Davidson does not work in the minister's office. How did a trade mission turn into a romantic getaway to the Appalachian hills for the minister's chief of staff and her husband? If it wasn't a getaway, why was Mr. Davidson there in the first place?

To be clear, the problem is that the government's own policy is that ministers and MLAs cannot expense the purchase of alcohol and this minister tried to pass off a booze cruise as a $4,000 taxi ride. How many other trips has the UCP made Albertans pay for for their friends, family, and failed candidates? Albertans expect better. The minister should apologize and pay Albertans back for it.

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

Bonnyville Health Centre Auxiliary

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul I've had the honour to witness the character of our communities from time to time. The residents of the Lakeland are among the kindest, most generous of anywhere in the province. Today I rise to recognize a group of volunteers that generously dedicated many years of their lives, 75 in fact. The Bonnyville Health Centre Auxiliary has received Covenant's 2026 service through Christ award, recognizing exceptional contributions to Catholic health care and a commitment to compassion, dignity, and service.

For more than a century the Bonnyville health centre has been an important part of our community. Today the auxiliary has 46 members who give their time supporting patients, residents, families, and staff. They operate the hospital gift shop, organize fundraisers, and help purchase essential medical equipment, but their contributions go well beyond fundraising. They spend time with long-term care patients, helping them enjoy activities and outings, and offer companionship and comfort to patients receiving cancer care. These acts of kindness may seem small, but for someone facing difficulty today, that could mean the world for tomorrow.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, these volunteers embody an important teaching of Christ. In Matthew 25:40 we are reminded that whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me. Through their compassion and dedication these volunteers put their faith into action. Bonnyville has been called by some the heart of Alberta's Lakeland region, and that spirit is embodied in the auxiliary's volunteerism. For 75 years generations of volunteers have quietly stepped forward wherever help is needed, asking for nothing in return while making a lasting impact.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

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

Economic Development and Job Creation

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another month, another dismal jobs report for Alberta. We lost 24,000 jobs in October. Our unemployment rate remains the highest outside of Atlantic Canada at 7.3 per cent. Most shocking, youth unemployment was up by nearly three full points in one month. The Premier has been in office for four full years and, despite her rhetoric, unemployment has only gone up. It's nearly two points higher than it was the day she became Premier. Will she admit today that the government has no economic development strategy; they're making it up as they go along?

Ms Smith: I'll do nothing of the sort, Mr. Speaker. If you go back to October of 2022 and you look at how many jobs have been created, it's almost 300,000 jobs. There's always variation. In fact, the previous jobs report showed that we had increased jobs and that we had reduced youth unemployment. We want to make sure that we're mindful of monthly variation, but we look at the long-term trend. The reason why we sometimes have a higher unemployment rate is that people know that this is where the jobs are being created.

They move here. There's a little bit of a delay in them getting their first job, but when they do, jobs go up.

Mr. Nenshi: I'm happy to look at the long term. Unemployment up two points, higher than it was under Rachel Notley, under this Premier, and all she does is blame immigrants for it.

Now, her close ally Ian Brodie notes that Alberta's high inflation compared with our stagnant wage growth – we actually fell below the top wages in Canada under this Premier – means Albertans are falling further and further behind. What is the Premier doing to address this very serious quality-of-life issue for Albertans beyond encouraging them to go to cheaper stores and buy No Name food?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a line in the report that the member opposite needs to look at, and it's called the workforce participation rate. If you look at that, you will find that in Alberta there is more workforce participation here than in any other province. It's about 69 per cent. In addition, if you look at the average weekly earnings, we continue to be the highest in the country. Sometimes Ontario manages to catch up with us, but most of the time we're ahead. So on both of those measures, people being able to get good-paying jobs, mostly in the private sector, we're leading the country.

Mr. Nenshi: Labour force participation is so high because people can't get by and they need additional jobs in order to do it.

We used to celebrate head offices opening here in Alberta. Under this Premier we lose them: Imperial Oil closing its Canadian head office, ATCO sold, Parkland sold, today Telus' Edmonton-based jobs perhaps shipped off to Montreal. Why is the Premier so limited in her economic vision that she can only focus on AI data centres instead of agrifood, biotech, life sciences, financial services, media production, and all the entrepreneurship that creates jobs?

Ms Smith: Is he kidding me, Mr. Speaker? When we came in, we had venture capital investment of $34 million per year. It has been up to $700 million per year. We now have 80,000 tech workers in Calgary alone. It is one of the fastest growing in all of North America. We've had $5 billion in agrifood investment, creating good-paying jobs for value-added here. We've created a brand new industry in aviation and aerospace. WestJet, CAE, Lufthansa, De Havilland: all of them are going to be building their supply chains closer to home. Tourism: we're about to double it. We're well on track for jobs in multiple industries.

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

Mr. Nenshi: Yet unemployment is higher than it was during a global recession.

High School Graduation Requirements

Mr. Nenshi: Now, Mr. Speaker, like every Albertan, I was surprised to hear on Friday afternoon that the UCP plans to dumb down the graduation standards for Alberta students. Let's unpack where this came from. Parents' groups were not consulted. Teachers, including the Alberta Teachers' Association: not consulted. Educational experts, people who actually know what they're talking about: not consulted. This House: certainly not consulted. So who exactly told the Premier to do this, and why?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, all he has to do is look at the statistics. About 33 per cent of kids go on to university. About 17 per cent go on to college. About 50 per cent of kids who graduate don't go to any formal education at all. We have a high school graduation rate that is around 80 per cent. What we need to do is make sure that those kids get more meaningful trades education, more meaningful vocational education, more meaningful education on financial literacy, make sure that they've got mental wellness training as well as phys ed. Those are the things we're adding.

Mr. Nenshi: But, of course, what she's doing doesn't accomplish any of those things.

The minister's press conference on Friday was, frankly, embarrassing. He couldn't answer the simplest questions about what is going on here. Here's one. If the government is tripling the phys ed requirement, that means they need to triple the number of gyms in schools because no school gym is ever empty during the school day. Many schools don't have the shops for the trades the Premier is talking about. So what resources is the government planning on budgeting to renovate and expand every single high school in Alberta?

Ms Smith: Well, speaking of embarrassing press conferences, let me just quote from the member opposite's press conferences. He says that we're creating factories for workers for jobs of the past. Mr. Speaker, trades are not jobs of the past. In fact, trades workers are the ones employed right now fixing his broken water pipes in Calgary. That's why we need to have trades education, because those are the jobs of the future. Those are high-paying jobs, those are jobs that lead to careers, and those are jobs that lead to them becoming business owners themselves one day.

Mr. Nenshi: I'm impressed at the Premier's self-restraint. It took her five questions to get to the personal attack.

What we know is that what she is talking about does not actually increase trades in this province at all. This weekend I was approached by innumerable teachers, parents, principals who were unbelievably upset about this change. Here's a quote I saw online. "As a Social Studies and English teacher, I am particularly concerned about any changes that reduce students' exposure to history, government, literature, and the world around them." Kevin Van Lagen, UCP candidate. Since her strongest supporters don't support this, who does?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we have been hearing from parents that they want financial literacy taught to their children in school so that when they graduate, they know how to open up a bank account, they know how to pay their bills, they know how to invest. We have also been told that kids have mental health challenges, and phys ed is one of the best ways that you can deal with mental health as well as long-term physical health. That's the reason why we want to make sure that that is also built into the curriculum. When we know that kids need to be attached to careers in trades, we need to make sure there's time in the curriculum and the schedule to do that, and that's what we're doing.

The Speaker: The third set of – just before I carry on, let's make sure we can hear the questions and the answers.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: How deeply insulting that the Premier thinks tradespeople don't need math, science, English, or history.

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

Mr. Nenshi: Now, records show that the minister of service Alberta's senior finance officer flagged his distillery cruise as

wrong. He wrote in an e-mail that he was concerned about it being disclosed as a taxi expense, but, quote: this seems like more than a taxi. Unquote. Oh, it sure was. Even the minister's own accountant wasn't buying it, so why did the Premier sign off on her minister's Kentucky booze cruise even after her officials said it was wrong?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's deeply insulting that the member opposite continues to call down blue-collar workers. We won't on this side. We value trades workers, and we're going to make sure that as many kids as possible have an avenue to go into that line of work.

Mr. Speaker, every single trade mission my ministers go on has a meaningful purpose. This one allowed him to develop what he needed to do for the Alberta Whisky Act, which the members opposite supported. It's allowed us to create an industry that we hope will grow to the size of one of the best in the world. When you want to find out what the best in the world is, you go and visit it, and we made sure that every single expense was legitimate.

2:00

Mr. Nenshi: But do you have to bring back bottles? Do you have to drink during the workday? The Premier expects us to believe that the taxpayers paid for the alcohol on this trip, but the minister did not indulge. Someone else drank it all, despite all the photos of the minister posing with glasses in his hand.

Records we uncovered showed that the minister told the Premier that he'd visit two or three distilleries and that the cost for ground transportation would be minimal. Instead, he spent four days visiting 11 distilleries at a cost of over $5,400. Since the Premier was kept in the dark, how does she have confidence in her minister?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, ground transportation is a part of every single trade mission, as are hotels, as is airfare, but what is not part of any trade delegation is alcohol expenses. When we looked into this expense, it was indeed for ground transportation. The minister not only visited places we could replicate if we were to develop our own Alberta Whisky Trail; he also visited with those who are decision-makers and legislators and others who could give some advice on developing the Alberta Whisky Act. We've got a great act, and we're going to have a great industry as a result.

Mr. Nenshi: The $5,400, to be clear, included alcohol. On November 5 the Premier said in this House, "We have to make sure we stay within a reasonable amount for transportation costs." Does she believe $5,400, which does include alcohol, whether you drink it or not, is a reasonable amount to cruise around Kentucky with the minister; his chief of staff, Pam Davidson; and her husband, Gary Davidson, who the Premier paid an undisclosed amount to chair her COVID task force after he failed to win a UCP nomination? Can Albertans believe any of this is reasonable?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I need to correct some misinformation that the member opposite put into this Chamber. There were only soft drinks in the transportation vehicle. There was no alcohol paid for in the context of that transportation.

Sometimes you have a multipassenger vehicle that you rent so that you can reduce the cost of transportation. Mr. Speaker, it would have been more expensive for everybody to rent their own car, for everybody to take their own taxis and Ubers. This was the most cost-effective option for the entire mission.

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

Electoral Boundaries

Ms Pancholi: The UCP is gerrymandering Alberta's electoral maps. This isn't a partisan issue; it's a democratic issue. The UCP

> abandoned a rules-based approach that provided independent oversight and public input for one that allows its hand-picked appointees to draw their own lines behind closed doors. Why did they do [that]? Simply because they didn't like the outcome.

That's Dr. Jared Wesley. And this, from Don Braid. "The UCP has destroyed faith in a riding boundary system that was trusted for decades . . . one thing is clear. Trust in the process is dead and buried." Does the Premier even care that this will be her legacy?

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. We've said time and again and I'll repeat for the benefit of members opposite that the report was prepared by an independent advisory panel that was chaired by the former Court of Appeal justice Justice O'Ferrall, who is a highly respected jurist who has served Alberta's courts for over two decades. The panel was focused on the most important thing, and that was to find effective representation and the balance needed in order to meet that, stemming from the recommendations of the original boundary commission report. That's what they did.

Ms Pancholi: The Premier and her chief of staff, Rob Anderson, have said the quiet part out loud. For them electoral boundaries are about levelling the playing field for the UCP, but as Rob Breakenridge said, "by arguing [that] the result helps to 'level the playing field,' [the UCP] is acknowledging [that] a very political consideration has entered into that process – one that by design was supposed to be left out." Electoral boundaries should have nothing to do with being fair to political parties. It's about effective representation, voter parity, and communities of interest. It's about being fair to the people of this province. Will this Premier ever put the interests of Albertans above her own political interests?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If we reference the act and the parameters that the panel was looking at, they were looking at things like effective representation, population growth. They were looking at communities of interest, and they were looking at the importance of making sure that they connect rural and urban constituencies together because that's how the world is going currently. Urban and rural communities are so interconnected today that it simply makes sense. It's where the entire country is moving to. It's where the panel recommendations are going, and we support them.

Ms Pancholi: The UCP's maps ignore the public's input, especially those of the people of Calgary and Lethbridge, during the actual independent process. As writer Jen Gerson put it,

> hypocritical that [some] people who have made careers railing against the way Alberta is under-represented by population . . . seem to get . . . huffily defensive over . . . new electoral districts that would leave urban Albertans meaningfully under-represented.

The UCP could have used their referendum defeat in the cities and in Calgary-Shaw as a sign to actually listen to urban Albertans. Instead, they chose to drown their voices out more. Does the Premier realize Albertans agree with journalist Richard Warnica, who said that this isn't just undemocratic; it's obscene?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the position is absurd. The panel considered effective representation in everything that they did. They looked at the input from Albertans. They looked at the submissions that were made. They looked at the materials. They looked at population growth. But that's not the only consideration. Effective representation means that a rural population can see its MLA and doesn't have to travel seven hours to get to an MLA's office. Effective representation means being able to see your elected representative no matter where you live in this province. That's what the report does. That's what we support.

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

Member Gurinder Brar: Thousands of Albertans still cannot renew their IDs because of the barriers the minister of service Alberta created. But listen to what happened when he went on an American booze cruise. He hired Sip Kentucky, whose tagline is You Sip; We Drive, for himself, his chief of staff, and her husband, a failed UCP candidate. Will the minister apologize to Albertans for his mistakes and pay back the booze cruise tab?

The Speaker: I'm not sure how close that is aligned with government policy.

The minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All expenses were expensed and disclosed in conjunction with government policy.

But let me tell you about this trade mission. It was about investment attraction. It was about job creation, Mr. Speaker. Listen, we want to have the same ambitions for this industry as Kentucky. They're a $10 billion industry; we're $750 million. We've got a lot to learn, and we went to go see the best jurisdiction to see what we could bring back. That brought forward the Alberta Whisky Act, which those members, thankfully, voted in favour of.

Member Gurinder Brar: Given that Albertans, even lifelong residents, must now produce birth certificates to renew their driver's licence and the ID that they already have and given that records indicate that the minister may have needed extra luggage space for bringing home Kentucky bourbon while officials spent weeks chasing him for a debrief on the trip, did the minister learn anything on the booze cruise vacation to help Albertans, or is it government policy to help his own palate?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This was a trade mission about investment attraction and job creation, and no amount of manufactured outrage on behalf of the NDP is going to change that. We went down there because they're a $10 billion industry. We used that trade mission to help inform us as we've moved forward with the Alberta Whisky Act. I'm proud to say that it's going well, and now the Alberta Whisky Trail is going to be next.

Member Gurinder Brar: Given that it is the minister's job to reduce red tape and given that thousands of Albertans still cannot renew their ID because of the new red tape that this UCP government has created and given that this minister's Kentucky booze cruise included stops at 11 distilleries, will the minister roll back the terrible changes he made and pay back the booze cruise tab?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I'm getting whiplash from thinking of all the different questions that member is asking me. I will say again that all expenses were according to government policy.

In terms of the driver's licence I am happy to report that the vast majority of Albertans are able to come into a registry, and it's a seamless process to get their new driver's licence. In fact, we offered 60-day extensions for anyone who had trouble getting their additional paperwork, and I'm happy to say that about 1.8 per cent of Albertans took us up on that. The vast majority are able to get their driver's licence in a seamless manner.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

2:10 Oil Sands Growth Program

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's been little doubt about this government's intentions to develop our energy sector. It is the backbone of our economy and has built this province for over a century. On Friday our Premier, the Minister of Energy and Minerals, and President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance unveiled a historic new program that will ensure the economic future of Alberta. Could the Minister of Energy and Minerals tell this House about this new program?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, Friday was an amazing, historical day for the people of Alberta. They're still talking about all the tens of thousands of jobs that this announcement is going to make. We introduced the oil sands growth program. It sets the stage for tens if not hundreds of billions of dollars of investment right across Alberta. While all of these jobs disappeared under the NDP in their four years of power, we're bringing them back. This is the key for meeting our goal of doubling oil production to 8 million barrels per day, this is the key to filling new pipelines, and this is the key to a great economy and great quality of life and jobs for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Minister for your efforts to ensure Alberta's prosperity. Given that this program will bring in new production and given that Alberta is close to full capacity on our pipelines and given that the majority of Alberta's oil still goes to one customer and further given that the world demand is set to continue to rise for decades, could the same minister tell this House why a program like this is necessary today?

Mr. Jean: Well, Mr. Speaker, after four years of the no development party chasing jobs out of Alberta and actually destroying much of our economy, we're coming back. This government has brought investment back to Alberta. It has brought certainty back from international investors, and we have more pipelines right now in the queue than ever before. We have promised that they would be filled through private investment, and they will be. These things fund schools, hospitals, everything that Albertans want, and we're going to deliver.

The Speaker: Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. This is exciting news. Given that, thanks to this government, there are already projects in the queue to increase Alberta's pipeline capacity to 2 million barrels per day to different coasts, including the 1-million-barrel-per-day Pacific link pipeline, which will begin in my riding of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, could the minister of Treasury Board and Finance tell this House

what the oil sands growth program means for Alberta's economy in the short and long term and the future of this province?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance and president of treasury.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP told the oil industry to pack up and go away. Their leader continues to campaign against it in this country right now. What this important legislation does is that we continue our bet on the oil and gas industry. It will continue to make hundreds of thousands of high-paying jobs as a result of the decision that was made Friday and bring in hundreds of billions of dollars in increased royalties to Alberta, which builds the hospitals that we need, builds the schools that we need, and provides the services to Albertans that we need. That's why we continue to stand with the oil and gas industry in Alberta.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the hon. Member for St. Albert.

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

Ms Renaud: The minister of service Alberta admitted he took his chief of staff's husband on his Kentucky booze cruise, but in records released under freedom of information, the booze cruise transportation company never invoiced Gary Davidson, and there are no records that he repaid the government a cent. Instead, taxpayers and industry had to pick up Gary Davidson's tab for his 11-stop booze tour. When records show Gary Davidson did not pay his own tab, why did the minister claim otherwise? Why was he on this booze cruise vacation in the first place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's just not true. I can tell you that Dr. Davidson paid for all of his own expenses, and not a dollar of taxpayer revenue was used to pay for Dr. Davidson at all.

But I would throw out, since we've answered this question already: why don't we ask a different question, Mr. Speaker? Why don't we ask if anyone from that caucus is going to apologize to the 1.6 million Calgarians that got a three-minute shower today? I've got to tell you Calgarians are outraged, and Albertans are equally as mad. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

I'm just getting it quiet for you here, hon. member.

Ms Renaud: Given the minister's documents listed the failed UCP candidate as an additional guest but the receipts show he didn't pay a cent for the You Sip, We Drive booze cruise and given his attendance was hidden from the public until we exposed it and given the minister only told the Premier he'd visit two or maybe three distilleries, not 11 at a cost of $5,400, why are taxpayers picking up the tab for a bourbon-filled vacation for the minister, chief of staff, and her husband?

The Speaker: Now it's time to be quiet for the minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I appreciate the question, I don't appreciate that member campaigning in this Chamber. Here's what I can tell you, and I'll answer the question again. All expenses were expensed and disclosed in conjunction with government policy.

But again that caucus over there has failed to ask the question: who is going to stand up and apologize to the 1.6 million Calgarians that all took a three-minute shower because a previous mayor spent too much money on artwork and bike lanes?

The Speaker: Minister, we address people here as hon. member. The term I'm not sure exactly what it was, but I'm pretty sure it was not "hon. member." That's what we'll all address each other by.

Ms Renaud: Given this government failed to bring down the price of groceries and the minister's constituents couldn't afford to take their spouses on a Kentucky booze vacation and given the minister still has not provided any insight into what value his chief of staff's husband added besides an additional suitcase for duty-free booze and given that all international travel requires approval by the Premier's office, why did the Premier approve a failed UCP candidate to travel with the minister and his wife to Kentucky on the taxpayers' dollars? Why?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member. It's rich coming from that hon. member whose constituents are in my office on a regular basis asking why their MLA isn't in St. Albert. I don't know the answer to that. I know that the hon. member doesn't live in St. Albert. I didn't know and I was unaware that she doesn't go to St. Albert either. But I think that member should probably spend a little more time in her riding working with her constituents and letting them know what she does all day. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. [interjections] Order. Remember, when I say order, that's the time when you should stop talking.

High School Graduation Requirements
(continued)

Member Irwin: The UCP have decided, seemingly unilaterally, to fundamentally change education in Alberta. The changes they're proposing to high school graduation requirements are alarming, and I say this as a former high school teacher. One concerning change is the removal of mandatory grade 12 social studies and English, courses that encourage students to think critically, to communicate effectively, to explore multiple perspectives, and much more. It was Donald Trump who said: I love the poorly educated. Does the minister of education feel this way, too? How else could he possibly justify reducing core academic requirements?

Mr. Nicolaides: What a disappointing comment, Mr. Speaker. I don't view people who take trades education as poorly educated. I don't view people who pursue a college degree as poorly educated. I don't view people who take a polytechnic education as poorly educated. What we've done is create more flexibility so that students can choose the passions and interests that best align with their priorities. But it's no surprise the NDP is opposed to choice. It doesn't allow them to push their own agenda onto kids. We believe in letting kids choose.

Member Irwin: Given that it's clear this was a political decision made without students in mind, we're left to wonder: who was consulted? Given that we know teachers certainly weren't – the Alberta Teachers' Association is alarmed that the UCP would make such consequential decisions without discussing them first. Neither were parents. The Alberta School Councils' Association has many concerns, including the impact on students' postsecondary options. Albertans have a lot of questions for this education minister. Who was consulted? What evidence supports these decisions? Who wanted this?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, there are a number of studies, including one from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute that I can refer the member to. Other studies from [inaudible] and further studies demonstrate the importance and the effectiveness of increasing elective options to strengthen student participation, strengthen their enjoyment of education. One of the interesting groups that the member forgot to leave out, though, was students. Mr. Speaker, we've talked extensively with students who wanted to see changes to CALM programming, to career education and financial literacy as well.

2:20

Member Irwin: Given that it's clear we won't get clarity, let's ask about another pressing education issue. In the gallery today are advocates from Education 4 All.

The Speaker: Let's start again without a preamble. I'm going to let you start over.

Member Irwin: Oh. I said "given."

The Speaker: Then I didn't hear it.

Member Irwin: I can do it again.

The Speaker: I'm going to let you start over. Just go for it.

Member Irwin: Okay.

Given that we won't get clarity, let's ask about another pressing education issue. In the gallery today are advocates from Education 4 All. Their mandate is to ensure that no children are denied access to education, regardless of their parents' immigration status. But given that it was this minister who supported his government's xenophobic referendum questions that, among other things, would withhold public education from refugee children and the children of new immigrants as well, does this minister believe that all of Alberta's children deserve access to public education, and will he meet with these advocates after question period today?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, I'm not sure what the last question has to do with the two previous ones, but I'll leave that to you, Mr. Speaker. That being said, when it comes to the right to access education, the Education Act is clear. Anyone who is here on an approved and legal immigration status receives a fully funded education, so we will continue to abide by the standards that are provided in the Education Act. Again, as I mentioned, we'll continue to make sure students have access to choices so that they can find an area that's a passion and maybe translate that passion into work or into postsecondary options.

Provincial Fiscal and Energy Policies

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, the UCP have lost the plot. Alberta families are struggling to pay their bills. Unemployment is rising. Yet the UCP boasts of their fiscal prowess. And what's the plan? Spend billions on carbon capture and a pipeline that industry won't fund, all to benefit some of Canada's most profitable companies, gifting them lower royalty rates while oil trades at historic levels. To the Premier: how can you find billions for insider friends while sticking Alberta families with higher costs?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP came into power, created a regulatory regime in partnership with Justin Trudeau that caused no oil sands investments to take place in our province for decades. The question this House should be asking right now is: can we afford not to create a stimulus environment to be able to make sure that our largest industry can continue to go forward? This comes with no increased cost to the fiscal situation in Alberta. What it comes with is increased revenue to Alberta, hundreds of millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs, which in turn make hospitals, make schools.

Mr. Guthrie: Given the UCP boasts of a pipeline but was outmanoeuvred by Ottawa in a recycled social licence scheme and given the MOU is tied to a $65 billion carbon capture project and given TMX was 500 per cent over budget, private capital won't touch it, yet the UCP wants taxpayers to flip the bill, to the Premier. Spending is up 30 per cent in three years. You need $75 oil to balance a budget. Before Albertans bankroll your grand bargain, be honest about how much you're willing to gamble to save your political hide.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is completely wrong. The last budget that this Legislature balanced, that this government balanced was at $67 a barrel. We are going to continue to be able to make sure that we meet our fiscal responsibility while also creating the wealth-driving industries that this province depends on. If that member is now joining the NDP and their leader calling for the end of the oil and gas industry, shame on him. We're going to bet on this great industry and the men and women who work in it, and it's going to create hundreds of billions of dollars of more revenue for this province.

Mr. Guthrie: Given the UCP calls the MOU a victory, let's take a look. Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill: struck down but still around. C-48, the tanker ban: still the law of the land. Clean electricity regs: sound as a pound. The industrial carbon tax: locked and loaded. So given the UCP is preparing to spend more, collect less, and pile on more debt, to the Premier. You went to war with Ottawa and got schooled. Was there ever a plan, or was picking a fight as far as you got?

Mr. Nixon: Wow, Mr. Speaker. I'm surprised to see my old colleague go full socialist like that. Let me just focus on one part of his question. Let's talk about Bill C-69, where the Court of Appeal upheld the great decision that confirmed the birthright of every Albertan to be able to develop their resources. We should be very proud of that as a province, and I want to thank the federal government for confirming they will drop this issue once and for all. Thank you to the Premier, thank you to the former Premier, and thank you to this government who fought it each and every day when the NDP wanted to surrender to the Justin Trudeau Liberals. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Physician Compensation Model

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week reports came out that the UCP government has a secret technical working group to build an American-style physician billing framework. This news comes out as the government does everything it can to privatize our health care system and model it after a much more expensive American system. Why is this government looking to copy Americans, who run one of the most expensive health care models in G-7 countries, instead of strengthening Alberta's public health care system?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, from the day that I became the minister of health back in 2023, I was approached by the Alberta

Medical Association, who wanted to reform the process, the schedule of medical benefits. It's very cumbersome. There are over 3,000 codes. It is very complex. They asked me to have a look at the American model that sells that model to over 60 countries.

Mr. Haji: Given that is really, really fascinating and given that Alberta's lobbyist registry shows that the American Medical Association registered to lobby with the Premier's office, with Executive Council, with the minister of primary care and preventative services, with the minister of surgical services and hospitals, given that the billing system that is being developed determines how much money flows through private insurance and the public health care system, why should Albertans believe this proposal is anything other than a two-tier, American-style system?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the member opposite finds it fascinating. I found it fascinating, too, that over 60 countries around the world are using that particular billing model. It's one of others that we're looking at to ensure that we find a model that will actually be efficient and will meet the needs of our physicians here in this province. I'm not going to apologize for trying to make the system better. The members opposite had a chance; they didn't take it. We're going to make sure that we actually have a billing system that will in fact meet the needs of our physicians and our people.

Mr. Haji: Given the Premier and the minister routinely point to the European health care model while actively aligning with the American billing system designed for a private system, given that Albertans were never told before the election and they were never told during the referendum that the government would be considering an American-style model behind Albertans and given that this new secret proposal fundamentally alters how the health care billing system is delivered in Alberta, will the government stop moving ahead with the private system without a clear mandate from Albertans?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is mistaken once again. We have looked at European models of care, and we're actually going to emulate some of them. Why wouldn't we emulate Sweden and Denmark where they have better access to health care? They can get in faster. They can get their surgeries done quicker. They are strong, publicly funded health care systems with, in fact, a smaller private component. We're going to continue to make sure that Albertans get the health care they deserve.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Federal Budget 2026

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government's latest budget outlines billions in new spending and federal initiatives that could affect areas of provincial jurisdiction. Alberta has already fought to defend its constitutional authority over natural resources, and the courts have raised serious concerns about Ottawa exceeding its powers. To the Minister of Justice: has our government identified any measures in the new federal budget that threaten Alberta's constitutional jurisdiction, and are we prepared to challenge those measures in court if Ottawa once again exceeds its authority?

2:30

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. We will always stand up for Alberta's jurisdiction. We will always stand up for Albertans. In fact, Alberta just won in court once again. The Member for Airdrie-Cochrane should take note. The federal no new pipelines act was found to be unconstitutional, and it was struck down. Bill C-69 is gone, and we will continue to do everything we can to challenge federal overreach, federal encroachment on our jurisdiction, and anything that the federal government does that harms Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Petrovic: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that. Given that Alberta's energy sector is the backbone of our provincial economy and further given that Albertans deserve assurance that federal dollars will not come with conditions that undermine provincial authority, to the Minister of Energy and Minerals: how is our government ensuring that the federal budget respects Alberta's constitutional jurisdiction over our natural resources and electricity while protecting our energy sector from additional federal interference?

Mr. Jean: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's natural resources belong to Albertans, and we're going to make sure that every single step of the way we defend our constitutional authority to develop them. While the NDP and the leadership over there continue to water down the rights of Albertans through a number of different factors, including bad management in the water system there, we are going to stand up against Ottawa when necessary, but when not necessary, we're going to work with them, because they're actually focused on what Alberta's been focused on and this Premier's been focused on for some time. That's bringing and delivering a better quality of life to Albertans through jobs and through a better economy.

The Speaker: Livingstone-Macleod.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Ottawa's latest budget proposes significant investment in housing, infrastructure, and other areas where provinces have important constitutional responsibilities and further given that though federal funding can support these priorities, it must not become a means of bypassing provincial government or dictating provincial policy, to the Minister of Justice: what is Alberta doing to ensure that the new federal budget respects provincial jurisdiction, and will the government push back against funding conditions that undermine Alberta's autonomy?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. As I've mentioned, we have numerous challenges ongoing. We're challenging the plastics ban. We're challenging the clean fuel regulations. We've got a ton of tools available to us to push back against harmful federal actions. We've got the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, and we have the Provincial Priorities Act, which requires provincial entities to obtain prior approval before entering or engaging with agreements with the federal government. We've got a lot of tools available. We will not hesitate to use them to protect Albertans, and we have and we will continue to do so whenever needed.

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

Public Consultation and Government Policies

Member Ceci: Thank you. The Premier and members of this government have long stoked separatist flames to satisfy the membership of their party and to keep themselves in power – then they lost their referendum – but when it comes to consulting Albertans on what matters to them, it's a choir of crickets from this UCP government. They want to gerrymander the province's ridings without listening to a single Albertan after a sham of a process. To the Minister of Justice: why does direct democracy only apply to the Premier's pet projects while Justice Miller's majority report on boundaries, which hundreds of Albertans participated in, is ignored?

Mr. Amery: Well, Mr. Speaker, according to that member the panel report only applies when they like the results. The fact of the matter is that an independent advisory panel has tabled a report in this Legislature. Those recommendations have been and will continue to be debated in this Legislature by all members of the Assembly. The Assembly will vote on it. Democracy prevails time and again. Unfortunately, for the members opposite, they don't seem to like the democratic processes in this province. We'll continue to respect democracy and allow the process to take shape.

The Speaker: Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you. Given that this government wasted untold millions on a referendum that only appealed to separatists in the UCP and given Albertans repeatedly tell this government not to privatize their health care, to take their hands off CPP, and to stop forcing disabled Albertans off AISH and given the Premier refused to put any of these matters to a referendum because she knew she would lose even worse than she already did, to the same minister: what can the word "consultation" possibly mean to this government?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No idea where that question was headed, but the reality of the matter is that the referendum and the 10 questions that were put to Albertans was consultation. We heard loud and clear from Albertans where they wanted to go with the questions that were put forward. We respect the results of the referendum. We've moved forward. The only people that have not yet moved forward from the referendum are the members opposite.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Member Ceci: Thank you. Given that this government lost their separatist referendum, lost their previously held seat in Calgary-Shaw and given the Premier is losing approval from Albertans every quarter and is now at a new low in the polls and given that this sad state of affairs has led them to try and rig the election boundaries process and to produce gerrymandered maps to help them win the next election, is any minister, any member across the aisle ready now to acknowledge that their government could not care less about what Albertans think?

Mr. Amery: Well, Mr. Speaker, no matter how many times that member says it, it doesn't make it true. This government has supported a strong Alberta within a united Canada from the very beginning. We advocated for that. That was the result of Albertans in this referendum. We are happy with the result. We embrace the result. We support the result. This government wants Alberta to be the strongest province within the entire country. Despite what they'll do to discredit Albertans and to disparage them, on this side of the House Albertans can take comfort that their government stands with them.

Renewable Fuel Standards

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, Alberta produces more than 6 million tonnes of canola annually, yet nearly half leaves the province in raw form instead of being processed here. A stronger renewable fuel standard would create new demand for millions more tonnes of canola seed and attract new processing investment, which would help growers and industry. Why has this government failed to use its renewable fuel standards to drive value-added processing, job creation, and economic growth in rural Alberta?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I want the member to know that we are in the process of actually going through consulting with Albertans about these standards. Those standards will come forward in January of next year, and I hope that she stays tuned to take a look at that report as we provide it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta already has more than 1.3 billion litres of renewable diesel and biodiesel production capacity and five refineries capable of producing low-carbon fuels but industry says that the current renewable fuel standard sends only a weak investment signal, what specific actions is the minister taking to ensure renewable fuel production, refining, and processing investments are built here in Alberta instead of moving to competitive jurisdictions and importing it as we are today?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, actually that was probably the best question that came from the NDP today. I will say that it was great to be able to have the Canola Council come and speak with me. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

For goodness sakes, we got a compliment. Let's hear the answer.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, if I gave them a compliment, just think what they would do if I didn't.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is I met with the Canola Council. We talked today about these important issues that face our canola growers. We think that we have a solution here when it comes to renewable standards. This is something that we need to work with the federal government on as well. I hope that the member takes yes for an answer.

Ms Sweet: Well, given that the government thinks it's so important, yet none of the government members have ever asked a question about biodiesel or any of those things in this House – and you're welcome for the question – and given canola contributes nearly $12 billion annually to Alberta's economy and supports almost 70,000 direct and indirect jobs and given industry estimates that stronger renewable fuel requirements could increase demand for Alberta-grown canola, strengthen farm gate prices, and create new rural employment, why is this government leaving economic opportunities on the table for farmers, processors, rural communities, while also lowering gas prices?

The Speaker: And the manners just keep on coming. That's good.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that sustainable aviation fuel is really on the rise in the world and we are going to make sure that we are being able to provide that kind of certainty for those

people who are going to be doing that in this province, not just our growers but also those people who are going to be doing the refining as well. We have a system set up in Alberta that's going to make it very attractive for these companies to come in and set up. We have the agrifood processing tax credits. We have ACCIP. We have lots of vehicles that are going to be able to provide for this going forward.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

2:40 Road Construction in Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government continues to put the work into getting projects built, like the new bridge over the Athabasca River at Athabasca. The new bridge opened for public use in October, and it is very good to see promises turned into successful projects. Budget 2026 included $50 million for replacing the highway 33 bridge near Fort Assiniboine. Can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors please provide an update on the work being done for the Fort Assiniboine bridge?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank that well-dressed member for that very important question and also his advocacy for this project.

The Speaker: Hon. member, we don't make comments on each other's clothing in here, even if they're positive ones. Go ahead.

Mr. Dreeshen: Coming from a Stamps fan.

The new highway 813 bridge over the Athabasca River is complete, which is just a great example of promise made; promise kept. The bridge was completed on time and on budget. Also Budget '26 includes a $50 million commitment for the highway 33 bridge at Fort Assiniboine. Mr. Speaker, design is 80 per cent complete, and we're looking forward to also having that project on time and on budget.

The Speaker: Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that highway 28 is a vital highway in this province that stretches all the way from Edmonton to Cold Lake while going through four ridings, including mine, and given that 28 connects to highway 33 to Fort McMurray, which is a very busy corridor within our province, can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors please outline what improvements are expected to take place on highway 28?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Budget '26 actually commits $14.8 million in safety improvements along highway 28 between Smoky Lake and Cold Lake. These improvements include 26 intersection improvements, new safety rest areas, additional passing lanes as well as twinning. Construction is also under way on a 41-kilometre overlay on highway 36. These are very important projects and we're happy to make sure that the work continues on them, so we can get them done on time and on budget.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that two of the top highway concerns that I've heard from my constituents are the conditions of highways 18 and 44 going through the town of Westlock and highway 769 in the county of Barrhead and given that both projects are identified as in the design phase in the 2026 highway construction program, can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors provide an update and timeline on the progress being made on these highway projects within my riding?

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. These projects are going through the proper design, engineering, and then construction phase. But do you know who did not follow the proper schedule when it comes to building projects? The NDP leader when he was mayor of Calgary. Don't just take my word on it. Here was what the mayor of Calgary just said about neglected maintenance in Calgary. He said: "When governments put off maintaining infrastructure, the problems don't go away. They get bigger, repairs get more expensive, and taxpayers are left paying the price." We have learned from the NDP leader and his decades of neglect in Calgary, and we'll never let that happen again. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Your time is up.

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

Members' Statements
(continued)

Government Health Policies

Ms Hoffman: Alberta just became the first province in Canada to legalize two-tier American-style health care. The UCP's Bill 11 bends over backwards for private insurance lobbyists who don't make money by paying for medical treatments. They make money by denying them. Every dollar taken as corporate profit is a dollar stolen from front-line patient care. During the last election the Premier promised that no one would have to pay out of pocket for health care, yet let's look at the facts.

First, prescription drugs. After kicking spouses and dependents off the seniors' drug plan and raising copays, now in Alberta everyone must exhaust their private insurance before public coverage kicks in, driving up premiums during an affordability crisis. The UCP rejected the federal funding for universal contraceptives and diabetes medication.

Second, surgeries. Rather than expanding operating hours in existing hospitals, the government handed bloated contracts to private insiders like Sam Mraiche, a close relative to the Justice minister. When the AHS CEO raised concerns and contacted the RCMP to investigate, the UCP fired her. Meanwhile rural operating rooms sit vacant as staff leave for lucrative 9 to 5 jobs in private urban clinics.

Third, doctors' time. Bill 11 doesn't expand our pool of physicians. It splits the doctors' hours into two lists, a short one for those who can pay and a longer one for everyone else regardless of medical need. UCP government policy is that your bank account should determine your access to health care, and no one voted for that.

Health care in this province was built on a promise that everyone gets the care that they need, not just the care that they can afford. If the Premier and her UCP caucus actually intend to honour their election pledge, they need to prove it by passing Bill 214, the protecting public health care act. It's time to end the double talk, stop the Americanization of our hospitals, and put patients before profits. All members should pass Bill 214.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: Hon. government whip, do you have a petition?

Mr. Lunty: No. I have under the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices reports . . .

The Speaker: No.

It's petitions that we're calling for here now, and that would be the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I did work with the table officers to confirm that this does follow the official petition process. Here we have 3,893 Albertans who signed the Education 4 All petition. A number of the organizers for that petition are here in the gallery today. Thank you for all of the work that they've done. We'll also have an additional petition with some that aren't officially the approved status of a petition process for the Legislature, so almost 4,000 Albertans.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister for Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration. [interjections] Well, someone who's standing up. The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, just for clarification, this is Notices of Motions? Yes?

The Speaker: This is Notices of Motions.

Mr. Schow: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 41, Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, sponsored by the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Bill 40
Electoral Divisions Act

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move first reading of Bill 40, the Electoral Divisions Act.

The proposed Electoral Divisions Act would repeal the existing electoral boundaries and replace them with new boundaries as approved in a resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 40.

[Motion carried; Bill 40 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have an additional 601 signatures from folks who also joined in the Education 4 All petition in recognition that all children have the right to education in alignment with the international obligations.

The Speaker: Yeah. Just do the tabling. Okay.

Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Just explaining what it is, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: More tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of an article co-ordinated by the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights entitled The Public Costs of Excluding Children without Status from Education in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of handwritten notes from a ministry official outlining that ground transportation for the minister of service Alberta's trip in Kentucky would have been $2,272.90 Canadian, half the cost of the booze cruise.

The Speaker: The hon. government whip. [interjections]

Order. We're trying to do tablings here, so if you've got conversation, please do it somewhere else.

Go ahead.

Mr. Lunty: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I am pleased to table the committee's report recommending the reappointment of Ms Terri Pelton for another five-year term as Child and Youth Advocate. Copies of the report will be available online.

2:50

The Speaker: Are there more tablings? Edmonton-Decore, is that a tabling? Sorry, folks. It's just hard for me to tell whether you're getting up to leave or you're getting up to do a tabling, so forgive me.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Amery, Minister of Justice, pursuant to the Legal Profession Act Alberta Law Foundation 2026 annual report.

On behalf of hon. Mr. McDougall, Minister of Advanced Education, pursuant to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta 2025 annual report, Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta 2025 annual report; pursuant to the Chartered Professional Accountants Act Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta 2025-26 annual report with attached financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2026; pursuant to the Agrology Profession Act Alberta Institute of Agrologists annual report 2025; pursuant to the Architects Act Alberta Association of Architects 2025 annual report; pursuant to the Land Surveyors Act Alberta Land Surveyors' Association Report of Proceedings of the One Hundred and Seventeenth Annual General Meeting, April 16 to 17, 2026.

On behalf of hon. Mr. Nicolaides, Minister of Education and Childcare, pursuant to the Education Act Alberta Teaching Profession Commission 2025-26 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, what I hope is a helpful note. No one is really being criticized here. Just a request for understanding. When we're doing tablings – and I know it's a normal part of the day for some people to get up and leave – it's like whack-a-mole for me when I see people standing up and I'm just trying to recognize who's next so I don't miss anybody with an important tabling.

And now you have my eternal gratitude for a vigorous debate day with no points of order.

Orders of the Day

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

Bill 212
Pharmacy Statutes (Rewards Points) Amendment Act, 2026

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

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No bill should be brought forward lightly, nor should it be passed lightly. After introducing Bill 212 just before the summer break, I did what I believe every member should do. I met with stakeholders. I listened to pharmacists, regulators, pharmacy operators, patient advocates, seniors, people with disabilities, anyone that had anything to say about Bill 212, and what I heard was not consensus on this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm constantly looking for ways to make life more affordable for Albertans, and at this time this bill is not it. So with that, I request unanimous consent of this Assembly to withdraw Bill 212, the Pharmacy Statutes (Rewards Points) Amendment Act, 2026, from the Order Paper.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Bill 213
Alberta Personal Income Tax (Emergency Services Volunteer Tax Credits) Amendment Act, 2026

The Speaker: The hon. government whip.

Mr. Lunty: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am in fact very pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 213, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Emergency Services Volunteer Tax Credits) Amendment Act, 2026.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, at the heart of this legislation is recognizing people who rarely seek recognition for themselves. It is about acknowledging the sacrifices made by volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers across Alberta. These are individuals who answer the call when their communities need them the most. They leave family dinners, holidays, community events, and, yes, even their beds in the middle of the night to respond to emergencies. They don't do it for recognition; they do it because their neighbours need help.

Madam Speaker, Bill 213 would create a provincial non-refundable tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers who complete at least 200 hours of eligible service during the year. The proposed credit would help recognize the significant contributions these volunteers make to communities across our province.

Madam Speaker, if I may, I'd like to talk about why this is a particularly meaningful piece of legislation because of where I grew up. Many of the members here would know that I grew up in Forestburg, Alberta, which is a small rural town and, of course, had a volunteer fire department. I had many family and friends who have served and continue to serve on that volunteer fire department, and their service to Forestburg and the surrounding area is commendable. I know there are a lot of rural communities, not just Forestburg, that depend on their volunteers and their volunteer fire department.

Madam Speaker, I've seen this in action my whole life. In fact, when I was growing up, Forestburg had a 5:30 p.m. fire bell every single day. The reason for this is that we needed to test the system. I would joke that, well, the reason for it was to tell us kids that it was time to go home for dinner, which is also what this bell turned into. The reality was that before cell phones, before modern technology, before you could get everyone in the same place at the same time, if there was a fire in town, the bell would ring and everyone would rush. That's how they would go to the fire hall, and that's how our volunteers would know it was time to go serve their community. So the history of service and volunteerism goes way back.

I would say that whenever we heard the bell in the middle of the day, as kids everyone would, you know, get on our bikes. We'd go see where the fire was. Then when you get older, you drive and you see where the fire was. But you always had comfort because you knew that your neighbours and your friends and your family had your back. They were the ones who were going to be first on scene. They were the ones who were going to possibly save your house or your garage or respond if you were in an accident or just if you needed someone to be there. That's what that bell meant. Of course, we've now aged into a more modern means of summoning our firefighters, but I know I will personally always remember not just that it was time for dinner at 5:30; it meant that our community was safe.

We know that these are the types of actions that we see across Alberta so that when an emergency does happen, our volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers put on their gear and they step forward and they help their community. I know that a lot of their time is spent training and learning. I've witnessed some of that training in action, Madam Speaker, and it sure feels very real to me. It feels very professional when they go through the paces. I know there are monthly training activities. Some folks travel quite a bit to take the courses that they need to take. They're up there running up the tower with the packs on their back. They're crawling through houses. They're facing real flames and real danger, and they do it because they know that when the time comes, they're the first line of defence. Whether it's a structure fire, a grass fire, a motor vehicle collision, or really any emergency, you have to be nimble to respond. I know that all Albertans appreciate when a volunteer shows up and when they complete their training and when they make sure that they have the equipment and the knowledge that they really need.

I think it's important to remember, Madam Speaker, that this is a calling that is a 24/7 commitment. Emergencies don't tend to work 9 to 5, Monday to Friday. There are often times in the middle of the night, in the middle of maybe celebrating a holiday or a birthday for a loved one, and our volunteers don't think twice. They'll drop whatever they're doing, they'll rush out, they'll face the danger head-on, and they'll make sure their communities are safe. That's why I would certainly ask that all members, you know, support this legislation to show a little bit of gratitude to our volunteers, and I do believe that it's just a first step that we can take.

3:00

I'll also say that, you know, when I'm speaking to our front-line emergency services, whether they are volunteers or whether they are our professional services in Leduc and Beaumont, what always strikes me, and it's a universal constant in those types of situations, is that you're often dealing with someone in a very stressful situation. I've often heard the phrase: on the worst day of your life. Your house is on fire or you've been in an accident. It's a very traumatic experience, as you might imagine, Madam Speaker.

I constantly hear from folks, and the way that they interact with the people on scene matters a lot. You're stressed. Maybe you've been in an accident, and you look up and you see your neighbour there willing to give you their hand, to say: I'm going to volunteer

my time when you need it the most. That's what our volunteer firefighters and emergency responders and folks do all the time, Madam Speaker.

I'm very, very hopeful that we can show this piece of gratitude. Again, this is going to be a way to retain some of these volunteers across Alberta. Often as you get more rural, you get more remote, you get into our smaller communities, as I mentioned, these are often the places where they rely more heavily on a volunteer force.

This is a piece of legislation that is going to be felt and seen and heard throughout the province, and it's just going to give everyone a peace of mind that, you know, maybe this will help retain one or two volunteers. Maybe this will help attract. Maybe this will motivate someone who was on the fence. I want to serve my community; I'm not sure how. This lets them know that they're respected and they're appreciated and that we're going to give them a chance to serve their community.

I think it's important to note, Madam Speaker, we have a 200-hour threshold that is proposed in this legislation. This is certainly not an insignificant amount of time to be serving in this capacity, so we want to make sure that those folks who do continue to step up and serve in that number of hours do get a chance to benefit from this tax credit. I think it's a meaningful and impactful way to, you know, show our appreciation.

I've already touched on some of the breadth and depth of cases or ways that they serve our community but, you know, in the rare case where there might be a missing person or an emergency operation, these are times often of crisis for communities, and our volunteers step up. Of course, that's not the only way that our volunteers serve our communities, but this is a very specific way that we can honour those who assist in time of need, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to Bill 213? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very, very happy to be able to stand before this Legislature today in support of Bill 213, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Emergency Services Volunteer Tax Credits) Amendment Act, 2026. Of course, on behalf of my colleagues, we are very, very happy to support volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers for the incredible work that they do. As noted by the minister, they do indeed deserve something tangible in terms of recognition. Thank yous are lovely, but this does indeed provide a bit of a first step towards some of that tangible recognition.

It's also fitting, Madam Speaker, that as we're discussing these sorts of things today, our discussion today is happening on the eve of the Curtis Noble legislative conference, which is an annual event that not only honours Mr. Noble himself but also goes a long way toward talking about some of those really pressing issues in terms of safety and standards that face all firefighters today. One of the main points of that conference is conversation, and, as I said, I'm very grateful that we are able to have this conversation together today.

Without volunteer firefighters and the work that they do – and I have a number of friends as well as relatives who live in both rural and remote communities – far too many of Alberta's smaller communities would be left without this sort of essential protection. And it is not at all an exaggeration to say that the work they do is not just essential; it is a lifeline for folks. They keep their neighbours, their friends, their families safe, and, as I mentioned before, they, of course, do deserve more than just simple recognition for all that work, all those hours, and all that sacrifice. This bill is a small step in letting these really important folks know that the work they do is valued by each and every Albertan.

As the minister talked about, this bill offers two new tax credits for Alberta's volunteer firefighters – they'd be a volunteer firefighter tax credit as well as the search and rescue volunteer tax credit – and, happily, this bill would also see Alberta come in line with other provincial jurisdictions and governments as well as the federal government, which presently offers similar tax credits, Madam Speaker.

The reality, however, is that we are discussing this bill alongside a shortage of volunteer firefighters not just here in Alberta but across Canada and in the United States as well. Of course, there are a myriad of factors at play. If one were to go to the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs web page, you will find from three years ago, just as one example, resources that are very supportive of the federal government's efforts to pass their similar bill a few years ago, and that was a bill which was meant, of course, to compensate those volunteer firefighters for some of the work that they do. It was understood that this work is essential, that this work, as I said, does indeed provide a lifeline for so many of our smaller communities, but it was also, Madam Speaker, a recognition that that particular working force, if you will – even though folks are sort of talked about as being volunteers, they do indeed receive honoraria for the work that they do. But it was indeed a recognition of the very valuable work that volunteer firefighters play in the whole of the country.

At that time, in 2023, a few of the things that the chiefs themselves noted: they talked about how they do a census every year, and their census of firefighters in 2023 showed that there were 126,000 firefighters in Canada, of which around 90,000 were volunteer. Those volunteer firefighters provide fire and all-hazard emergency services to their communities. Many of them receive some form of pay on call and are on an honorarium or are given some funding to cover expenses, but they do not draw a living wage from the firefighting work that they do.

Their report also noted, Madam Speaker, that of those volunteer firefighters, more than 30 per cent were over the age of 50, and they, of course, as fire chiefs were very concerned about that rate of folks retiring. They understood that there was an issue with recruitment. They knew that something had to be done, and that was the reason for their ask that the federal government increase that tax credit. As well they also noted that the tax credit itself had not been increased since its inception.

I will say that it will be interesting to see if the changes that came about in 2023 have indeed resulted in a tangible number of folks taking up that call across Canada, not to mention Alberta itself, to off-set those numbers, for instance, even just those basic numbers of those folks set to retire in the next number of years. And I will say as well that it will also be interesting to see – and I do hope there's a plan for gathering data like this, our own version of Stats Canada. Should this bill pass and if these new tax credits indeed result in an increased number of new folks joining Alberta's volunteer firefighter contingents across the province, I'd love to see the data on that as well, just to make sure that it really is an effective way to encourage folks to join but also to stay.

The work that volunteer firefighters do in Alberta – apparently Alberta has got about 10 per cent of the country's contingent of volunteer firefighters, which in a province, quite frankly, that's known for its volunteer force, Madam Speaker, is entirely commendable. But what that means is that we've got about 9,000 of our neighbours, relatives, and friends who do this work. These are volunteers who serve their communities in a variety of roles, but those who serve as volunteer firefighters do so knowing the danger that they are about to wander into, wander toward, as many of them would say.

Their jobs, of course, have changed immensely over the last number of years. There are extra requirements for training, for proper use of PPE, processes and protocol and procedures, ensuring that their certifications stay up to date. They sacrifice their time, they sacrifice their families, and unfortunately sometimes they sacrifice themselves, all to keep us safe.

3:10

One of the things I wanted to do in my address to everyone today, Madam Speaker, was to highlight a few of the stories that come from those volunteer firefighters themselves. I was interested to see a report that was done about 12 years ago. It was a Global News report, and it was done in three different sections. It highlighted some of the issues facing volunteer firefighters, but it also very much spoke to the reason why people are interested in not only joining but staying with a volunteer firefighter force.

Their very first report was titled Meet Parkland County's volunteer firefighters, and in that report the reporter shared details about a horrific train derailment that happened on October 19, 2013. For those of us of a certain age, we probably remember those times. It happened in Gainford, Alberta, and it was a massive explosion that "rocked the community of Gainford, Alberta after 13 train cars carrying oil and liquefied petroleum gas left the tracks." I can't imagine what that would be like, Madam Speaker, that sort of massive derailment. We know that there was an 82-hour evacuation of residents, and we also know that most of those who responded were volunteers from the Parkland county department.

As that report notes, those volunteer firefighters who are expected to carry pagers and who, of course, even at that time knew that they'd be called on to report for duty at any time – the fire chief at that time estimated that at one point they had as many as 50 volunteers attend the scene, some of which spent more than 20 hours at a time on-site. The chief noted at that time as well that he had to tell several of them to go home and rest. That really does speak to their commitment to their community as well as to their neighbours themselves.

One of the firefighters who was involved at the time said that he was focused on protecting the community and the environment. "It's a call he never thought he would have to answer when he first signed up to be a volunteer, but it showed him just how important the job can be." Way back then, all those 12 years ago, folks knew at that time as well that there was an issue with a declining force, those declining volunteer numbers, Madam Speaker.

The second of that three-part series speaks about, for instance, that a new hall in the Acheson industrial area had been opened, and they needed 40 volunteers, but at the time – and I hope it's increased now – they only had 12. They were talking at that time, Madam Speaker, that Parkland county itself might have to look toward a full-time contingent, and the Parkland chief at that time made mention of the fact that they responded to about 1,000 calls in a year. That's many, many calls for a relatively small contingent of folks. It's hard to do sort of when you're doing any volunteer position but also when that volunteer position competes with your full-time job, that job that actually pays the mortgage or pays the rent and pays your car payment.

That same report, Madam Speaker, also talked about the fact that the job description was quickly changing. The volunteer firefighters were moving from just putting out fires to being full-fledged emergency responders.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in support of Bill 213, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Emergency Services Volunteer Tax Credits) Amendment Act, 2026.

First, Madam Speaker, I want to tell a little story. It was not last Saturday but the Saturday before. I woke up to many missed phone calls and messages saying: we're on our way to your house, helping to evacuate you. When I woke up Saturday morning, I thought, "Wow. I missed something big last night," and I was pretty terrified to look outside my windows at the farm. What I found out is that at one of our neighbours' houses one of their hay bales had spontaneously combusted. And at that time in southern Alberta we had 110-kilometre winds. Luckily, due to our volunteer firefighters, everyone's homes were saved. We lost lots of outbuildings, and it took several days to have the fire extinguished, and it was all because of our volunteer firefighters in southern Alberta. They all came together, and they saved homes that night, including my own. When you're dealing with fires of that capacity and winds of that capacity, it takes highly trained individuals to ensure that people can continue to be able to live safely. It's because of the volunteer firefighters in Livingstone-Macleod that I was able to sleep and just wake up to text messages talking about an evacuation and not actually having to be a part of one.

I know that across Alberta there are thousands of individuals who dedicate their time, energy, and personal safety protecting the communities that they call home, just like mine. These individuals are not motivated by financial reward or public recognition, even though that same Saturday was the firemen's ball in Fort Macleod, and we were able to publicly recognize all of those who had committed their time and energy for upwards of 30 years in our communities, serving them, protecting them. They do not receive a paycheque for the hours that they contribute, but these guys step forward because they believe in their communities. They really care about the people around them, and it's because they understand that someone needs to be there when that call comes in. Simply put, the commitment deserves recognition.

The proposed amendments that my colleague has brought forward would establish a nonrefundable provincial income tax credit of up to $3,000 for eligible volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers. To qualify, individuals will need to demonstrate that they served in an eligible volunteer capacity during the taxation year and have completed at least 200 hours of eligible volunteer service, which I think for most of our volunteer firefighters is a drop in the bucket of the number of hours that they put in serving our communities.

But this is a practical way for our government to recognize the people who give so much to our communities. It's an opportunity to put meaningful support behind the words of appreciation we so often express towards our emergency service volunteers. When we think about emergency services, we almost always picture the moment when an emergency happens. We think about the flashing lights, the sirens, the fire trucks arriving on scene, or we think about the search teams heading into difficult terrain to locate missing persons, but what we do not have to see is everything that happens before that moment. We do not see the hours of training, the preparation, the equipment checks, the countless evenings and weekends spent ensuring these volunteers are ready when their communities need them most. They are neighbours responding to neighbours.

These volunteer firefighters maintain the skills necessary to respond to dangerous and unpredictable situations. They must be prepared to respond to structure fires, vehicle collisions, hazardous incidents, and wildfires that can threaten entire communities like my own. These responsibilities demand commitment and discipline and the willingness to put the needs of others ahead of one's own convenience because in the event of an emergency, these individuals leave their loved ones behind to help protect someone else's. These are friends protecting our friends, and they are community members who have chosen to take on a responsibility that many others could

not even imagine undertaking. When someone calls for help, they respond. That's the kind of community spirit that has helped to build this province, and it's something we should actively encourage and support.

The reality is that volunteer emergency services come with real personal and financial costs. There are training requirements, time commitments, transportation costs, and personal sacrifices that come with being ready to respond at a moment's notice. For someone who volunteers 200 hours or more in a year, that represents a substantial investment of their time. That's missed birthdays, missed Christmases, missed anniversaries. It's many, many missed hours with families. These are hours that could be otherwise spent enjoying personal interests, their own personal jobs, time with their families, but these individuals choose to dedicate that time to the safety and well-being of others.

This proposed provincial tax credit is a way of acknowledging that contribution. It recognizes that volunteer emergency services are valuable and that the people who provide them deserve tangible appreciation. Realistically, there is no tax credit that could ever adequately compensate someone for putting themselves in harm's way to protect another person. These are the individuals that are running into danger while everyone is running away. We know this, but this legislation is not placing a dollar value on someone's willingness to save a life. Rather, it's about recognizing that service comes with sacrifice and ensuring our tax system provides meaningful recognition of those sacrifices. Quite frankly, it would be a significant addition that strengthens support for our emergency service sector.

Across Alberta emergency response organizers depend on dedicated volunteers to maintain their capacity to respond. Recruiting and retaining volunteers is crucial to ensuring that communities continue to have the emergency services they need. When individuals consider becoming a volunteer firefighter or search and rescue volunteer, they are making a commitment that extends well beyond responding to emergencies. They are committing to a high standard of excellence that requires rigorous training and investment. Providing a tax credit is just one way that Alberta can demonstrate the value of this commitment. It sends a message to existing volunteers that their service is appreciated while also helping demonstrate to potential volunteers that their contributions matter.

3:20

These organizations also provide opportunities for Albertans to develop leadership, teamwork, discipline, and practical skills. They teach an important lesson about the responsibility we all have to look out for one another. By establishing clear eligibility requirements and requiring proof of service, this legislation provides a framework for recognizing those who have truly made this commitment. This threshold recognizes individuals who have made a meaningful commitment to volunteer emergency services throughout the year. It ensures that the tax credit is directed towards those who have dedicated a substantial amount of time to eligible firefighting or search and rescue activities.

I think it's worth more than taking a moment to reflect on what this legislation represents. When a family is standing outside of their home watching a firefighter work to contain a fire, I am certain they are not thinking about the distinction between volunteer or paid professional. They are thinking about the safety of their family, their home, and everything they have worked to build. When someone becomes lost in the wilderness, their loved ones can find comfort in knowing that someone is out there working tirelessly to bring them home safely. When a serious collision occurs on one of Alberta's highways, the people involved are depending on emergency responders to arrive, provide assistance, and help protect lives. In those moments, the dedication of our volunteers becomes incredibly clear. They are there when people need them the most. They are there during some of the most frightening and uncertain moments families can experience, and they do so because they have chosen to serve.

Madam Speaker, we often talk about the importance of strong communities. We talk about neighbours helping neighbours, people taking responsibility, and individuals stepping forward to make a difference. Volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers embody those values. They represent the very best of Alberta's community-focused spirit. They remind us that protecting our communities is not solely the responsibility of government or emergency service institutions. It is also made possible by individuals willing to give their time, energy, and sometimes put their own lives at risk for the benefit of others.

It's our responsibility to ensure their contributions are not overlooked. This is why I am proud to stand in support of this bill, and I encourage all members of this Assembly to support this legislation and stand with the volunteers who serve our communities.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really honoured to be able to stand and speak to my support of this bill, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Emergency Services Volunteer Tax Credits) Amendment Act, 2026. The Alberta NDP will always support volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers for the incredible work that they do. They deserve recognition for the sacrifices they make and the countless hours they dedicate to keeping other Albertans safe.

We've seen similar tax credit programs in other provinces as well as federally. In general volunteerism is a critical value, a very important value of Albertans and of Canadians. We help each other. That's the way we get by. That's the way we thrive. We need to recognize that while Indigenous land was gifted to early immigrants, those immigrants, including my paternal grandparents, who came from near Odessa as children around 1900 to Saskatchewan to homestead, had to get by by volunteering, by being collectivist within their groups. They supported each other. Our society in western Canada was really built on collectivism.

I'm very pleased to see that this bill is one way of recognizing the expertise as well as the volunteerism and the support of the firefighters and the rescue personnel. It does signal that there's really an importance and a recognition of that amongst Albertans. It comes at a time, though, where I find it generally difficult to reconcile this with many of the other things that this government is doing, including shutting out newcomers to health care and education. At least their bizarre questions on our recent referendum suggest that this is the way that this government wishes to go.

Canada is a place of kindness and prosperity. I support the bill while understanding that it doesn't fit with a lot of the other things this government is doing right now – wasting tax dollars, increasing administrative costs wildly, turning taxes into fees and downloading costs on municipalities, ignoring and distorting evidence – but this bill does support collectivism, and I absolutely support that. It recognizes the volunteer spirit. Sometimes volunteering does need to be very organized, needs to be counted upon, and in the case of these volunteers there's both a lot of expertise as well as danger that comes with this. Search and rescue as well as firefighting can be very, very dangerous. There's both the immediate danger as well as the long-term danger from exposure to toxins.

This tax credit is a first step. It does not quite match the tax credits in some of our neighbouring provinces such as Manitoba and

Saskatchewan, which are double the amount of this tax credit, but it's a start. But it also makes me think: should we be looking at this for other services, particularly other emergency services? I have not formally consulted anyone on this. I'm not sure where else it might be available, but I know that my grandmother in rural Saskatchewan had a similar volunteer emergency role in that she delivered babies all over her remote area, being the only nurse and midwife in the area. A knock would come at the door, sometimes in the middle of the night; she would leave her five children and go to help a woman who was in labour. She was often the only qualified person to help.

We still have many remote communities without access to adequate obstetric care. We have women living in fear that they're going to go into labour early or just even having a normal birth, but there's nowhere near, and the services might be there one day and not another time. I think that this bill, which is very important in helping recognize the volunteer firefighters, also could be considered a signal that we have other services that we also need to appropriately provide, and one of those may be looking at obstetric care, looking at those urgent wellness checks on someone in a remote community. I've known people that have done wellness checks only to find that there's been a suicide. That can be a very traumatic experience, so having an organized team of volunteers who have an idea of what to expect and what might be there when they go and check on someone could be another piece of a volunteer activity that not only would we like to recognize but requires understanding, expertise. There probably should be somebody on call or someone available to do some of those activities. I do commend all of the volunteers that are involved in firefighting and recognize that this is critical for many small and remote communities and that we need to incentivize, recognize in addition to thanking them for their heroism in going in and helping our communities.

3:30

I would like to hear from other communities about other types of resources that are lacking there that maybe could be filled on a volunteer basis for things that they don't really have enough need for on an ongoing basis but where knowing who to call would be valuable and having people that would be trained up for those particular activities.

I understand that this bill amends the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. It creates the volunteer firefighter tax credit and the search and rescue volunteer tax credit, and this credit can be for up to $3,000 when a person dedicates at least 200 hours of service each year to any combination of those two. People won't be able to claim both. The minister can request proof of hours, and the bill will come in upon proclamation.

I do understand that in 2021 70 per cent of Foothills County Fire Department were volunteers. That's a very high percentage. For many years rural fire departments have faced a lot of challenges with recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters. In some cases the role and the training has led some firefighters to start as volunteers and then move into being professional firefighters as their career. I'm very pleased to support this bill and very glad that there is a bill that is not watered down or has other things included in it that make it in any way difficult to support.

With that, I will cede my few seconds left to the next speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 213, the emergency services volunteer tax credit amendment act. Years ago I was also serving in a volunteer fire department. We didn't have any staff at our fire department. All of us were volunteers. We all worked in our various businesses in town. When a call came in, the call would come to the person who had the phone for the day. It was his or her job then to go to the fire department, ring the bell, the siren. Then the rest of us got the notice, and we all congregated at the fire hall. Whoever got there first jumped in the truck and got the gear on, and away we went.

I remember that my very first call was a house fire that was about 15 miles out of town. By the time we got there, it was basically too late to save the house, and the house burned down. The family lost their home. Yeah. It was a pretty tragic story.

Volunteer fire department firefighters go through a lot. They volunteer their time. The businesses who hire these people also give up sometimes an hour or two or maybe four or six hours in a day while these employees attend to the business of firefighting. Yeah. I just wanted to acknowledge that volunteer firefighters who selflessly serve their communities and those who contribute often go unnoticed until an emergency arises.

Across our province volunteer firefighters are the backbone of emergency response in countless communities. They are our neighbours, our friends, our co-workers, and our family members. They coach our children's sports teams, operate local businesses, as I already spoke of, work on farms, teach in our schools, and serve in countless other roles. Regardless of what may be going on in their personal lives, when the emergency call comes in, they set aside their daily responsibilities and answer the call to protect others.

Our volunteer firefighters embody the very best of public service. While most of us are moving away from danger, they are moving towards it, and they do this not for recognition or financial reward. They serve because they care deeply about their communities and because they understand the importance of helping others in times of crisis. Their presence provides assurance to residents that, no matter the hour or no matter the circumstance, someone will answer the call.

We ought to recognize the tremendous sacrifice and dedication that these brave men and women have. That is why we will be creating a tax credit for our volunteer firefighters. This bill will reduce their provincial taxes to a maximum of $3,000. It will provide Alberta volunteer firefighters with financial benefits for financial relief so that they can focus on the moments that matter and allow them to spend more time with their loved ones.

Madam Speaker, I want to highlight how important this legislation is for our rural communities such as some of the communities found in my region of Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Many smaller communities and municipalities and rural areas depend heavily on volunteer firefighters to provide emergency responses. These volunteers are often responding to incidents across large geographic areas, sometimes travelling considerable distances to reach someone in need. Without their dedication many rural communities would face significant challenges maintaining the emergency response services that they rely on. When we provide a tax credit to recognize these individuals, we're also recognizing the important role that they play in keeping rural Alberta safe. Strong rural communities depend on strong emergency services, and those services depend on dedicated volunteers. Every second matters during an emergency.

We need only to look at the threat of wildfires to truly understand the importance of volunteer emergency services in rural Alberta. Many communities across our province are surrounded by forests, agricultural land, and vast stretches of open country. When a wildfire threatens a rural community, volunteer firefighters can play an important role in protecting homes, farms, businesses, and the livelihoods of the residents. These volunteers are often working alongside other emergency responders in difficult and dangerous situations. Their contributions help protect not only individual

properties but entire communities and the economic activity that sustains them.

Recognizing their service is recognizing the importance of rural Alberta. These individuals willingly place themselves in dangerous situations to protect people they may never have met, whether it's entering burning buildings, responding to serious highway collisions, assisting during floods and wildfires, or providing support during some of the most traumatic events a community can experience. The commitment required to perform these duties is nothing short of incredible, and it simply comes down to the willingness of Alberta's firefighters to respond at all hours of the day.

Modern firefighting demands extensive training, technical expertise, and ongoing education. Firefighters must learn firefighting techniques, hazardous material awareness, rescue operations, emergency medical responses, and incident management procedures. They attend training sessions in the evening and on weekends, all while balancing careers, family responsibilities, and community involvement. The reality is that their service also comes with many personal sacrifices. Family dinners are interrupted by pager alerts. Holidays and special occasions are cut short. That's a significant burden. It's undertaken for the most selfless reasons.

3:40

Beyond emergency response volunteer firefighters play a critical role in prevention and education. They conduct fire safety presentations in schools, support community events, inspect equipment, participate in preparedness programs, and they help residents understand how to protect themselves and their families from preventable emergencies. Their work often prevents tragedies before they occur.

Volunteer firefighters have also become increasingly important as communities face new and evolving challenges. In recent years many regions have experienced large wildfires, more severe weather events, and growing demands on emergency services. These challenges have highlighted just how essential volunteer firefighters are to the residents and the safety of their communities.

We must acknowledge the emotional toll that emergency response can take. These brave individuals routinely witness tragic loss. They comfort families during their worst moments, shoulder experiences that most people never encounter. Madam Speaker, when we discuss public safety, it is easy to focus on equipment, infrastructure, and budgets. While those things matter, public safety ultimately depends on people. It depends on individuals who choose to serve others, often without recognition and at great personal sacrifice.

Volunteer firefighters represent the spirit of a community in its purest form. They remind us that public service is not just measured by a title or compensation; it is measured by the willingness to step forward when others need help. Their commitment strengthens the social fabric of our towns, villages, and rural communities. Their courage protects lives. Their dedication protects property. Without their dedication many communities would face significantly longer response times during fires, motor vehicle collisions, medical emergencies, natural disasters, and other critical incidents.

Today let's recognize the extraordinary contributions of volunteer firefighters and express our gratitude for their service. Let us continue to work to ensure that they have the resources, training, and support they need to carry out their vital mission safely and effectively, and let them also . . .

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

Mr. Eggen: Well, thanks, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to just say a couple of words on the Alberta personal tax emergency services amendment act. I think it certainly is a good idea, an idea that's time has come. I mean, I always find it interesting how this UCP government is sort of pulling up the rear in regard to initiatives like this. As far as I can see, there are probably almost all other jurisdictions in Canada, including, really, the federal government as well, that have these tax credits for volunteer firefighters. Yeah. It's not just an idea that's time has come, but it's long overdue.

We know that we rely on the volunteer firefighting to cover the majority of the geography of Alberta, which is immense, and we certainly know that, due to drought and climate change and so many things, we see increased incidents in fires both urban and rural here in the province of Alberta. We didn't see as big of a fire season here this year because it rained so much, but now it's dry again and, you know, it's back. I know there are some fires that have been recorded wildfires and so forth in the Grande Prairie region recently, so we're kind of in a late end of what has been a cycle of fires both urban and rural here in the province of Alberta. It's wonderful that we have a volunteer firefighting network throughout the province. The Rural Municipalities of Alberta have been advocating for a provincial tax credit to commensurate or to mirror the federal tax credits for quite a few years now. Yeah. Again, it's an idea whose time has come and is overdue as well.

We know the devastating impacts of fires to property damage and loss of life in some circumstances, as evidenced by the terrible situation that occurred in Wainwright last month. You know, these incidents are increasing and, as we have more fires together with more developments in both urban and suburban and rural areas, then we rely and count on volunteer firefighters to help us out. Indeed, part of all of our insurance that we have for fire, for property, and so forth is predicated on what degree of access you have to firefighting services, right? The further away you are, you know, the adjusters will take that into account. So not only do volunteer firefighters help to save property and physical peril, but they also literally help us with valuing our insurance by being in proximity to where we live or where our properties or our farms or acreages are. These things all add up together.

As other members have mentioned, we owe a debt to volunteer firefighters, and we need to ensure that we're investing in the infrastructure that these volunteer fire departments use. I mean, this is another issue that I think bears some reflection here in the Legislature. I know that when I go to RMA, people talk about how their volunteer firefighting equipment is becoming antiquated or outdated or being used up, and, you know, we need to make sure that we're funding through transfers with municipalities, and rural municipalities in particular, from the provincial government that is adequately serving their needs generally, to run their municipal districts, but also in particular with their fires.

As we think and look and direct our tribute to our volunteer firefighters, we need to know that they have available to them the equipment that they need, updated, and the provincial share of funds that can help to pay for those things. We know that municipalities across the province have been shortchanged by this provincial government, and we need to make sure that these volunteer firefighters are not shortchanged with the equipment and the safety of firefighting equipment that they use.

As mentioned by other members, increasingly firefighters in general, including volunteer firefighters, are expected or, you know, make more calls out to nontraditional emergencies. You know, car accidents and so forth, and medical emergencies of all kinds. Again, to make sure that we're not just giving a tax credit to these fine women and men who do this work but also making sure

that they have the training and the proximity to medical services that they need in our rural areas to do the jobs that they're being called to in emergencies.

Again, unfortunately, the access to urgent care – hospitals and so forth – in rural areas has been found wanting over the last number of years, and it's not getting any better. So if we want to support our volunteer firefighters who are increasingly being called to medical emergencies, then I think, you know, logically and morally we need to make sure that there are the medical facilities that they can access. Once they go to an emergency, where do they take the patients, and is it a timely trip from that place where they need to go? Again, I think that these things are being found wanting.

That is part of this whole thing. I think that this Bill 213 is a good way to direct funds to people who have been doing the job. I just want to make sure that they have the other resources to do the job as well. As far as I can tell, if it's a $3,000 tax credit for volunteer firefighters – I don't know. I know that it doesn't draw a parallel line. The federal tax credit saves people about $900, so we could expect that maybe the provincial one would give half of that. You know, it's at least, I think, a token, a tribute to the people who are doing this work, but let's not exaggerate that it's a fortune. It's perhaps $300, $400, $500 that they will get as an actual savings from this bill.

3:50

We're glad to support it. I think it's a good thing to do. Let's just make sure that we continue to support emergency workers in all corners of this province by making sure that they have the equipment that they need, that they have ancillary services that they need, especially medical services, and that they're being acknowledged not just with a tax break but by being given the things that they need to do the job, to keep our families safe in all corners of this province.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Johnson: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is such a delight and such a pleasure to stand today and speak in support of Bill 213. I want to thank my friend and the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing this really important bill forward. You see, this bill will create two new provincial tax credits, one for volunteer firefighters and one for search and rescue volunteers who give at least 200 hours of service per year. It is practical, fair, and long overdue, and it's a way to thank the people who show up to help our communities and fellow Albertans when they need it most.

Madam Speaker, Lacombe-Ponoka is the constituency I represent. It's a part of Alberta that is made up of farms, acreages, and small towns where, when someone is in trouble, help can often come from the people closest to them. Think about the neighbour who was a mechanic by trade and sets aside everything when that call comes in, turning into a firefighter. I think we sometimes forget how much of Alberta runs on this kind of service. In many smaller and rural communities volunteers make up the fire department. They are not a full-time crew. They have regular jobs, families, and busy lives, and they have decided that if their community needs help, they will be the ones to give it.

These volunteers don't just respond to fires. When we think of a volunteer firefighter, we picture a truck and a hose, but the reality is actually much broader. Volunteer firefighters are often the first people on the scene of a collision. They support wildfire response when the smoke rolls in. They help when someone has a medical emergency and every minute counts. Alongside them our search and rescue volunteers head out into the bush, the backcountry, and the river valleys to find people who are lost or missing. They do it on their own time, and they do it for free.

Madam Speaker, that word "free" matters because volunteering is not free for the people doing it. It costs them time with their families, evenings and weekends that they will never get back. It costs them sleep when a call comes in overnight. It costs them time at work when they step away from their jobs to respond. And sometimes it costs them far more than that because they carry the weight of what they see on those calls long after the emergency is over. That's why I think it's important for Albertans to understand exactly what this bill will do.

Bill 213 creates two new provincial nonrefundable tax credits. One is for volunteer firefighters, the other is for search and rescue volunteers. To qualify, a person must complete, as we've heard so many times this afternoon, at least 200 hours of eligible service in one year. That includes responding to and being on call for emergencies, attending department or team meetings, and taking the required training. If someone splits their time between firefighting and search and rescue, those hours can be combined to reach 200 hours. They can claim one credit or the other, not both. This is a targeted measure aimed squarely at the people who are putting in the work. The credit can lower the provincial income tax a volunteer owes by up to $3,000, meaning money back in the pockets of those who serve our communities so honourably.

I would also point out that this is not a leap into the unknown as a similar $6,000 tax credit already exists federally, and provinces across the country, including British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Quebec, also have their own provincial tax credits. Albertans have always led the country in generosity and community spirit, and it is only right that Alberta stands with the provinces that are honouring their volunteers in this way.

Madam Speaker, there's a larger reason this matters. Municipalities and rural organizations across Alberta have raised concerns about the challenges of recruiting and keeping volunteer firefighters. Modern firefighting requires a high standard of training that is heavy and demanding, and volunteers put in many of those hours on their own time without pay. Many also work jobs outside the community during the day, which can leave local departments short on weekday calls. Add in family obligations and the toll of what responders see, and it's easy to understand why some walk away. Every volunteer who walks away is a gap in coverage, and in a smaller community a gap in coverage can mean a longer wait time for help when it matters most. That's why this bill is such an important step forward. It tells a young person who is thinking about joining their local fire department and a long-time volunteer who is wondering if they can keep up with everything that Alberta values this work.

Now, Madam Speaker, we know that nobody volunteers just for a tax credit; people do it because they care. But when a community asks so much of so few, it's only right that we find ways to show that we appreciate it. I think the average Albertan would see it the same way. When something goes wrong, they do not stop to ask whether the person running the emergency is paid; they're just grateful that someone showed up. This bill allows us to turn that gratitude into something concrete.

Now, I know members will look closely at the details, and that is as it should be. The bill comes into force on proclamation, which gives government the flexibility to bring it in when Alberta's fiscal situation allows, and that is a responsible approach, Madam Speaker. It ensures that this commitment is made thoughtfully in step with the province's finances. It sets the direction and puts the principle into law so that, when the time is right, our volunteers can count on this support.

This is how this government has always approached the people of this province. We believe in supporting the folks who hold our communities together. We believe in respecting the contribution of volunteers who give so much and ask for so little, and we believe that those who put their lives on the line for their neighbours deserve to know that we are paying that back. Madam Speaker, Bill 213 is about saying thank you to the people who answer the call. It supports the volunteers our communities depend on. It helps our fire halls and search and rescue teams recruit and retain the people that they need, and it reflects the very best of what Albertans are, neighbours who show up for one another.

For these reasons, I am so proud to support Bill 213, and I urge all members of this Assembly to do the same. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Member Ellingson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 213, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Emergency Services Volunteer Tax Credits) Amendment Act, 2026, although somebody did tell me earlier that we have to work on the names of our bills to make them a little bit more approachable and attractive to people.

We've heard a lot in this House already about the goodness of this bill, that it is about saying thank you to those who volunteer. And I have to say, Madam Speaker, that it's a pleasant kind of, like, switch-up that I get to stand up and speak positively to a bill that came forward from the government.

I want to talk a little bit not so much about the numbers; I want to talk a little bit more about the sense of volunteerism and how we're saying thank you. Alberta is kind of playing catch-up here. The feds did it. Several other provinces did it. I'm really glad to see that Alberta is now, you know, catching up and saying thank you to these volunteers.

4:00

I'm going to talk a little bit about: there's a threshold of 200 hours a year for this tax credit. So a quick googling, you know, because I know that Albertans give, Albertans volunteer – we're known, I think, for actually volunteering maybe a little bit more than the citizens of other provinces. It looks like Albertans typically volunteer about three and a half hours a week. This threshold of 200 hours is kind of matching what other people volunteer, their three and a half hours a week. But just stop and think for a moment. Other people are volunteering three and a half hours a week. They're coaching their girls' soccer teams, or they are volunteering for a community cleanup in their neighbourhood, or maybe they're going to a seniors' facility and playing cards with the people who are residents in that seniors' facility.

Now we're talking about citizens who step up for that three and a half hours or four hours a week to save people's lives. We're talking about people who voluntarily show up and go into a burning house to save people. We're talking about people who voluntarily show up and will be dispatched to fight a wildland fire. We're talking about an occupation that even people who are paid to do that occupation are reticent to do that occupation because of the dangers of that occupation, and now we're talking about people who volunteer to do that work. This credit is a small thank you for what they really do for our community, for letting people feel safe. The volunteers that we're talking about let everybody else in the community feel safe in their community, that somebody is there to step up when something completely out of control and unanticipated happens.

I was asked a little earlier about whether or not – you know, somebody on my side asked: hey, are you going to talk about where you grew up? Absolutely, I am. As everybody in this House is now very well familiar, I did grow up in Valleyview, Alberta, in the MD of Greenview. I went to high school with the member that represents Central Peace-Notley, and I will happily admit that he was a much better trumpet player than I was in high school. But I want to say that when I was in Valleyview – we grew up on a farm about 32 kilometres south of town. When I was a kid – we had not been there very long. Maybe I was, like, 11 or 12. I don't remember when it was. We'd been there for a few years. People probably know that in rural Alberta you get to know the people who live across the road from you pretty well. All the other kids that get on the bus with you: you get to know them pretty well.

So I guess I'm going to use this moment to – you know, like, I was young, and I don't remember who it was. But when I was young, the neighbours across the street, the Kohlmans, lived in a trailer, and one day we woke up and we saw flames leaping from their trailer. We, of course, booted it down the road to see that they were safe, they had made it out of their home. There were volunteer firefighters that then navigated those country roads, 32 kilometres from town, to show up and make sure that the Kohlmans were okay. They showed up to see whether or not they could save their home, and that matters a lot. In a small rural community where everybody knows everybody, it matters a lot, and I am so very thankful that those volunteer firefighters were there to respond, to make sure that our neighbours were okay. They probably won't see this. I'm sorry I don't remember their names, but thank you, and for those in Valleyview who are doing this role today, this bill is a thank you.

I also want to talk a little bit about my other personal kind of relationship to this, somebody who lives in another country. My dear friend Sue Wills lives in the town of Blackheath, about an hour and a half from Sydney. People are probably aware that there are, you know, a lot of wildfires in Australia, and they have a pretty cool system in Australia of people stepping up and volunteering. Every town or village or cluster of homes has a group of volunteer firefighters.

In the rural areas of Australia, as an example, my friend Sue has two giant rainwater catchment tanks in her backyard, as many people do, so that when the volunteer firefighters show up, they have a tank that they can tap into to access water to try and put the fire out. My friend Sue is a volunteer firefighter in the village of Blackheath. I love hearing her stories. She loves that role, she loves the sense of community, she loves the people that she volunteers with, but she also invests an incredible amount of time.

Again, as we heard from the member opposite, this three and a half and four hours a week: you don't know when it's going to be. But you actually, routinely, predictably volunteer evenings and weekends for training, volunteer evenings and weekends to make sure that the equipment is ready to go when you need it. It's not at 2 o'clock in the afternoon on a Saturday when all the kids are out doing something else, and the family is doing their thing. It's in the evening when your family is at home, and you could be hanging out with your kids after school, but you're there, like, doing your routine maintenance to a fire truck or doing routine training so you can do your job.

I also want us to consider the people who are doing this work, the effect on their mental health. This tax credit doesn't necessarily make a dent in the mental health challenges that people in that role may be facing. I think for me, too, this bill is the start of what we could be doing to support people in roles like this. We can be asking the question: do we have the mental health services province-wide to help people like volunteer firefighters? We should be thinking

about whether or not – as my colleague was saying, have we invested? Do we provide municipalities with the funds that they need to make sure that their volunteer forces and equipment are up to date? And maybe even: do we have any, you know, resources to help municipalities recruit, talk to kids in school about what the opportunities might be for volunteering as a firefighter and contributing to their community?

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. This is a thank you, but maybe this is also just the start of what we do to say thank you to these volunteers who mean so much to our community.

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

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak in support of Bill 213, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Emergency Services Volunteer Tax Credits) Amendment Act, 2026. I just want to start by thanking my colleague the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing this bill forward. It is an excellent bill and just really hits home, I think, for all of our volunteer emergency service personnel. I think this is significant for everyone right across the province. Thank you for bringing it forward.

Along with many other people across this Chamber we've had some opportunity to see this in action, and I can think of a couple of circumstances. One, I did work at a small college for a few years, and we had a partnership with our rural small fire detachment there. They did a great job. Students were able to participate, get training, and use some of that training for credits. Several of them ended up taking a career in firefighting as well. A few of them actually worked for Calgary fire service, so congratulations to those. It all started because they were interested in a volunteer fire department. They got ingrained in the community. They were able to see their skills flourish and take that next step and find out if that's the career path that they wanted.

4:10

I also think of a couple of times – I did grow up in southern Alberta – when I was growing up that there was a significant wildfire that went and swept several thousand acres across southern Alberta. This was, you know, in the early 2000s. Many volunteer firefighters came out, many people came out to support that fire and begin to help put it out.

So I just want to thank all the volunteer fire departments over the years and the firefighters. It is significant what they do. I do know and even just hearing from friends who are currently in this that they're responding to all sorts of different circumstances, from hunters not coming home on time to potentially a pickup that has rolled in a ditch to many other circumstances away from main centres.

The people who answer the call across our province are not on salary and they're not on a shift. They are volunteering their time. They're our neighbours, and they're people that are wanting to give back to the community. They're young mechanics. They're people who are school teachers. They're various people, young moms as well, who are wanting to give back, be able to train on the weekends, train during the week, and be able to go and do this. Through several conversations as well with search and rescue they're also doing a great job serving the communities.

We know that they instantaneously respond. They drop everything that they're doing. They've been able to work out conversations with their employers. So I do want to thank the employers as well for giving that flexibility. It's not insignificant to be able to let somebody go in the middle of the day to go and respond to an emergency call.

I do want to just recognize how important volunteer emergency services are in protecting, really, what matters most, our families and our communities. This is a great tax credit of up to $3,000 to recognize this life-saving service that Albertans really have come to rely upon across rural Alberta. I do want to just explain a little bit about this bill. It is important. I just want to talk about how this really affects rural and northern communities right across the province. While it does create a nonrefundable provincial tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers, it would reduce their provincial tax income, capped at $3,000.

One of the things that I really like about this bill is that it's fair and it is clear. They would need proof of their volunteering as well. They would have to have completed at least 200 hours of eligible volunteer firefighting or search and rescue service in that year in order to qualify. Madam Speaker, 200 hours is significant. It is a commitment to this. This isn't an ad hoc decision. It is a commitment and a decision that they're making. This works out to about four hours a week every single week of the year. It means often many nights. It means various certifications. It means equipment checks and also being engaged in the community as well and being able to respond to calls throughout all types of hours and all kinds of weather. This isn't a handout. It is recognizing people who have earned this opportunity and are committed to their communities. They're often some of the very first on the scene, and we want to thank them for that. They're responding to various communities across our province.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Now, this also does often cost them something, Mr. Speaker. Not just gas back and forth to the hall but often many times shifts missed at work and hours they could have spent earning other income. So we want to thank them for volunteering. There's also time with kids, spouses, parents. Many volunteer firefighters also run small businesses or farms, where an afternoon away from the shop or field does have a cost. They don't complain about it. They go and do it because they want to serve their communities, and we do want to thank them for that. We can acknowledge that here, the significance of that, through this bill, and we're going to do something about it. Once again, I want to thank my colleague from Leduc-Beaumont for thinking of this and doing something significant about it.

I just want to talk about emergency response. Firefighters and paid on-call firefighters are the backbone of our emergency response in rural. It is our rural emergency responders that are doing that. Across rural Alberta, for context, many small communities cannot afford full-time departments. Albertans in those communities are still being protected by quality service wherever they live. Volunteers have closed that gap. They're doing substantive work. I think this is also going to help in that conversation and closing that gap by recruiting volunteers. We've heard that there can sometimes be challenges on recruiting volunteer firefighters, and I think this is going to help in that. People are busy, as we've said. Families are doing many other things, too, and this is going to go, hopefully, a long way in helping them in that conversation.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe that this tax credit does send a clear message to anyone thinking about joining a volunteer fire department as well or a search and rescue team. We see you. Your Alberta government sees you. We value you, and Albertans have your back in this. It sends a clear message to the people of these departments, the people who've served as well for multiple years, often decades, encouraging them to please stay and please continue

giving back to your community. Your community also needs your experience in this.

I also see this as a responsible measure, Mr. Speaker. It is targeted, and it's going towards people who are making a substantive difference in times of need. I just want to thank everybody for that. On this side of the aisle I do see this, as this government and our Member for Leduc-Beaumont also, just believing in a core value on the conservative side that Albertans should be able to keep more of what they earn as well. On this side we also see them being strong communities and building upon that. This is giving people an opportunity for neighbours to look after neighbours, and we believe that those people should be recognized. Bill 213 brings those principles together in a beautiful way, and it's just incredible.

I also just want to spend a moment thanking the volunteer firefighters and search and rescue people right across Grande Prairie, across the Peace region, across Alberta for the many things that you have missed: your birthday parties, your family outings, various work, and for the many nights that you have spent helping Albertans out and often people from other parts of the country as well. Thank you very much for your dedication to this and for being willing to be committed to this, too. This is a way that we can give back to you. And just a big shout-out to the families who have supported them volunteering. Thank you so very much for staying up late, for supporting this work, and making a substantive difference in your communities. On this side of the House we thank you for that. It is substantive, and it doesn't go unnoticed. It does go noticed, so we want to thank each one of you for that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also just say that I do recognize that men and women don't do this for recognition. They do it because they love their communities, and I think that's important. They don't ask for the recognition, but this is a way for our government and the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, who had this fantastic idea, to be able to wrap this into a way to say thank you to our communities and thank you to our volunteer first responders.

In wrapping up, Bill 213 is straightforward. It creates a provincial tax credit up to $3,000 for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers who give at least 200 hours of service a year, and it recognizes the people who are first on the scene in collisions, for fires, wildfires, and searches, and I do believe it also supports recruitment and retention in these communities that depend on our volunteers in a huge way. I also believe it reflects some of our values of hard work, our service, and looking out for each other across our communities. Across rural Alberta when Albertans are having hard, challenging days, these volunteers are showing up. They're showing up with support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Cyr: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today to support Bill 213, and I want to thank the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing it forward. I will say that when it comes to bipartisan support, this is remarkable, to see the House come together and put all of their weight behind one bill like this.

I also would like to thank the volunteer firefighters who leave their families behind with uncertainty about the situation that they're going into and whether or not they'll come back. Whether it's a wildfire or a highway accident or searching for a missing person, the call never comes at a convenient time. They are heroes because they don't ask what's in it for them; they go when their neighbours need them. Mr. Speaker, that is what community in rural Alberta is all about, and I am proud to be a member of the United Conservative government that understands that.

4:20

If passed, Bill 213 creates a nonrefundable provincial tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers calculated as about a $3,000 tax credit. To qualify, a person must be able to show that they've served as a volunteer firefighter or a search and rescue volunteer during the year, and they must have completed at least 200 hours of eligible service in that year. Let's stop and think about it. Two hundred hours is five full weeks. Two hundred hours is a long time, Mr. Speaker, and in my riding that comes out of farm and workplace time and also that invaluable time that you lose with your children and grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, in large rural ridings with lakes, farmland, forests, First Nations, Métis communities fires are not an abstraction; they're a reality. I'd like to consider my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. In April of 2024 a wildfire burning on the Cold Lake First Nations led the MD of Bonnyville to declare a state of local emergency and issue an evacuation alert. In the earlier spring the fire of Cold Lake First Nations forced an evacuation of 40 homes after it was deemed out of control for several hours. It happened because trained people showed up, many of them volunteers. None of us in this House need to be reminded of the other tragic fires in the province.

In 2011 a fire swept through Lesser Slave Lake, and the residents returned to find a third of their homes and businesses destroyed. Mr. Speaker, this is very important for me as I was born and raised in Lesser Slave Lake, and my home that I was living in in my youth was one of the homes that had burned down. Very impactful, seeing the devastation of a fire rolling through. At that time I was a practising accountant. We had two offices, one in Lesser Slave Lake and one in Cold Lake. And I'll tell you that, having gone through this with the local families that saw the devastation that was brought by fire, it brought a gloom – a real gloom – over the community for years.

People think that once the fire has gone through and the construction starts, the community will slowly come back and it'll be happy again. But what I'll say from my experience with Slave Lake is that it didn't happen right away. It was fighting for insurance, dealing with contractors rebuilding your house, trying to decide what you needed to do to protect from the next fire. And you know what? When it comes down to it, it's something that we need to always be looking to avoid, and that is what our firefighters do for us. They protect our homes. They protect our belongings. They protect our memories. They protect our families.

Moving on – that was 2011 – in 2016 the wildfire in Fort McMurray destroyed a large portion of the city and forced tens of thousands of people from their home. What many don't know is that Cold Lake was an evacuation centre in that fire, and seeing the people brought into our rec centre – it was full – trying to work through what Red Cross was trying to deliver: all of the daily living conditions that you would hope that another person would want for us, working through with the government at the time.

In an emergency situation you would hope, Mr. Speaker, that your government is working together with opposition. At that time I was sitting in opposition in Wildrose, and we were lockstep – lockstep – with the NDP at the time because we didn't want to create panic. We wanted to give our firefighters on the front lines every opportunity and show them that we supported the government no matter how many differences we've got in policy because in the end our citizens need to be put forward as, first and foremost, something that is the priority of the province.

Then in 2023, Mr. Speaker, Alberta declared a provincial emergency amid a record early season outbreak, and in 2024 a fire swept through the town of Jasper, destroying roughly a third of its

structures. It is difficult to see people dealing with fires. Knowing that we have firefighters that are rushing – rushing – to these catastrophes waiting to happen but getting in front of them and preventing this loss of our homes or our livelihoods is something that we all can thank our firefighting community for. Whether it's Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, High Level, Jasper, Cold Lake: in every one of those emergencies firefighters, many of them volunteers, showed an immense courage and ran towards something that everyone else was running away from.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about what the United Conservative Party has done in reality. In Budget 2026 we've provided $169 million for wildfire efforts, up $9 million from last year compared to $155 million in 2024. The province has hired more than 550 seasonal firefighters and expanded aerial response capabilities. In March Alberta signed a $400 million contract with De Havilland Canada for five new made-in-Alberta water bombers. Made in Alberta by Albertans to protect Albertans: that's just remarkable. It just shows that as a government we can work together to see that our firefighters are given that opportunity to have the tools to fight these fires.

We also understand that the first line of defence in a rural community isn't just a provincial flying crew in and out; it's the local fire departments. They're the ones that are on the front lines making sure that they've got the co-ordinated effort with our province to ensure they save our lives and our livelihoods. That's why this government has invested $7 million in 2025 to create six new wildland-urban interface teams made up of specially trained municipal firefighters and why we introduced a new mutual aid incentive pilot in the wildfire season to help neighbouring municipalities share equipment and people when the fire hits. We continue to invest in FireSmart initiatives and community fireguard projects to reduce the risk before the fire even starts.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that when it comes to this tax credit, I understand that the federal government has made this commitment a long time ago. It's heartwarming to see that our government is stepping up right now. I remember sitting with firefighters about three and a half years ago and saying: what would make your lives better? I'll tell you that the Fire Fighters Association is something that has started at this advocacy. My good friend from Leduc-Beaumont: he's the one that brought this to a reality. We need to celebrate when our firefighters can depend on the provincial government, and you know what? It took advocacy, but it actually is something that we can see move forward for them.

In my past I was an accountant, and I'll tell you that when it comes down to these tax credits, this is something that conservatives believe, leaving money in people's pockets. What better pockets to leave it in than our firefighters'? I'm telling you, Mr. Speaker, that I have a deep respect for each and every firefighter within my constituency and throughout Alberta.

Now, when it comes to the fire chiefs when they asked for recognition for the volunteers who hold their departments together, we listened, and we're taking action. Mr. Speaker, calls are always complex; training is always required; wildfire seasons are always there. So are we for you, sir.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any others wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I will call on the Member for Leduc-Beaumont to close debate.

Mr. Lunty: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a privilege to rise and close debate on Bill 213, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Emergency Services Volunteer Tax Credits) Amendment Act, 2026. I think the Member for Calgary-Foothills might be onto something in the naming of these bills.

As expected, Mr. Speaker, you know, I heard a lot of personal stories from my colleagues from across Alberta and, in fact, across the world. I wrote a few down. We talked about Gainford. We talked about experiences from Saskatchewan, Slave Lake, Livingstone-Macleod, Australia. Again, I wasn't surprised to hear the stories of volunteer firefighters from across Alberta, but I do think hearing everyone's personal experience and even some experiences of personal service from the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti really drives home how important this bill is. I think we can all agree that our volunteer firefighters and search and rescue personnel deserve a huge debt of gratitude, and we saw a few of them in the gallery today.

4:30

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank everyone for the debate and the support on this important piece of legislation and would like to close debate. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 213 read a second time]

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

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To all members of the Assembly: it was nice to be able to vote unanimously on the last bill, and let's hope we can do it again on this one. I have come up with a title that I think speaks directly to the intent of the bill, and it's the protecting public health care amendment act. This really is about amending the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act to do what I think we all owe, a very honest vote to the people of Alberta. The question that this bill asks is: should access to your family doctor or medically necessary care depend on the urgency of your medical need or how much you're willing to pay? That's simply what the question is when we look at this bill.

It's a very succinct bill. I want to thank the table officers for helping me draft this and to find some very clear sections that we can use. Really, it's to remove the ambiguity that has been created under previous pieces of legislation, the opportunity for physicians to straddle both sides of the billing system, and gives much more clarity to patients on what they will be expected to pay or not pay for.

The real principle that I want to say in this bill and one of the reasons why I was drawn towards serving at the provincial level is because I, and I think all members on this side of the House, believe that public health care is one of the most fundamental things that should be a human right to all citizens, all living beings, that when you're sick or injured or when somebody you love is sick or injured, you shouldn't have to worry about how you're going to pay the bill, just like when your house is on fire, you shouldn't have to worry about how you're going to pay to have that fire put out. There are things that are more important than how much money you have in your pocket, and I would say the health and well-being of Albertans should be top of that list.

Right now, under the system that the UCP has created, there is a toggle back and forth place between a public pen and a private invoice for those who are going to doctors' offices. We really want to close that loophole, ensuring that there's a clear line between the insured services and the uninsured services, really making clear that we aren't creating a two-tiered, Americanized system, that this is actually making very clear that you can't charge for things that are medically necessary.

That you can't reclassify insured health services as nonplan services is one of the very early edits that we make in this legislation, which basically says that anything that's medically necessary needs to be covered so there can't be any creative rebranding or bundling so that when you go for a doctor's visit, you get some kind of a visit that has administrative fees tied to it.

I think we all know that that's happened with the deregulation of our electricity costs. When you pay those bills, it's not – I know that when I look at my bill, it's not always the actual unit cost for the energy that you're using. It's the tie-in bundle pieces that you're paying so much more for.

This is a risk with our health care system as well. The Conservative government of the day deregulated the electricity market, and that created a bunch of area for add-ins for these individual user fees. We are, through this legislation, making sure that doesn't happen to our health care. It makes really clear that when you're accessing uninsured services, that needs to be notified. And there are things that should be uninsured. If you want to have, you know, cosmetic work done, that shouldn't be covered under medically necessary coverage. We don't expect somebody to be able to have rhinoplasty and the taxpayer to pay for it, but we do expect that if you need to access a family doctor, nobody should ever have to pay for that.

Then the last piece that we do is that we make really clear when this law comes into force. Rather than saying "upon proclamation" and having that date open ended, we want it to align with the fiscal year, so giving the public service and physicians alike the time between now and April 1 to be able to ensure that their practice is aligned with the intent and what would become law should this bill pass. There are things that are uninsured, and that is for good reason.

I do want to touch on a few other things. There are nearly a million Albertans right now who don't have access to a family doctor. That is probably what I hear about more often than: hey, I'd like to be able to pay to get to the front of the line faster. Very few people tell me they want to pay. Many people tell me they want government to focus on increasing access.

In fact, I just met with some folks from the region where I grew up, Big Lakes county, talking about how we did open a new hospital in High Prairie when the NDP was in government. I was really proud to take that project and help it over the finish line. Of course, it started before me. I want to recognize Pearl Calahasen for the work she did around that project in past years.

When we opened it, there were three things that I really wanted to make sure we could move forward on quickly. We opened it in I want to guess 2011 or 2012. Number one is that we wanted to bring the ability to have babies born back in High Prairie, back to that area. Slave Lake has had many issues with not being able to have babies delivered in that region. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I know that you face this in the north. Often you hope that you have a long delivery because you want to make sure that you can get to a hospital that might actually have a doctor there to be able to help you. The biggest reason why it isn't safe for people to give birth in High Prairie now is because there isn't an anaesthetist available if you need to have a C-section or something happens that seriously requires you to have other medical interventions. That's the case in many hospitals across northern Alberta in particular but in rural and remote communities generally.

I want to say that the very simple line can be drawn between what's happening around private surgical centres and their ability to offer great compensation at a 9 to 5 and low-risk procedures at a high volume. The competition for that, of course, is rural hospitals, where you have higher risk, lower frequency, and you're a jack of all trades. I will say that I think for a lot of people that is much more interesting. Of course, it isn't as lucrative as the systems that have been created under the current government around private surgical centres. Those are in direct competition right now, Mr. Speaker.

This doesn't get rid of that piece. It makes it very clear that nobody who's accessing medically necessary care will ever have to pay for it. But this attempt to continue to chip away at public health care and Americanize it day after day after day through various pieces of legislation brought forward by members opposite has been very problematic for health care in general and specifically for health care of those in Alberta who don't have access to a family doctor and those who can't access medically necessary services close to home, which I would say is the right place the vast majority of the time if you actually have the right providers to provide those services.

We want to make sure that there aren't two lines that one doctor controls, one line for those who aren't paying and one line for those who are. It, of course, would put physicians in a very awkward position to even have this move forward as it is right now under the current legislation. This is really about honouring what I've heard at representatives forums and from many stakeholders. I will say that I was really proud last week to have worker representatives from various labour groups within public health care stand with me, including the AUPE, CUPE, the United Nurses of Alberta, and other representatives. There was a physician there. There was somebody from Friends of Medicare. They're all in validation of this bill, to really make clear which side of the fence we're standing on when it comes to universal access to public health care and whether we still believe in the Canada Health Act in this province or not. That's fundamentally what this question is.

Dual practice opens the door to user fees or membership fees. We've already seen a number of clinics issue letters to their current patients saying that if they want to stay with that doctor, they need to sign up for a membership fee or annual registration to be able to still have access. That, of course, doesn't align with the tenets of the Canada Health Act. I think that by passing this bill, we will make clear to the federal government as well that we will honour the Canada Health Act. We've already seen the federal Health minister and other representatives at the federal level say that they are concerned that the current structure in Alberta is potentially in breach of the Canada Health Act, and of course that puts billions of dollars at risk through the Canada health transfers if we do not honour that federal legislation, which is the basis of us receiving funds to be able to deliver public health care in the province of Alberta.

4:40

We know that when you look at the United States or any other jurisdiction that has experimented with this – it wasn't that long ago, actually, that Stephen Duckett – members might remember he was famous in Alberta for eating a cookie when asked some questions about the health care system. He's back in Australia, one of the areas that one of the current health ministers has talked about wanting to emulate some of these initiatives on, and warns that the attempts that are being done here in Alberta to create two different lists and to have people straddle both sides of the billing will not improve access. It doesn't increase the number of doctors. It just means that doctors are torn between two systems, one where they make more money and one where they make less money. Medical needs should be what determines our access to front-line care, not how much money you have in your pocket or how much room you have in your insurance or on your credit card.

I urge all members to vote in support of Bill 214.

The Acting Speaker: I will recognize the Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to speak to this bill. It really is a bill that would end the idea of dual practice, which we know is one more step towards destroying our health care system in Alberta and making it more American, making wait-lists longer, making people pay more for their health care, and making it a pretty distasteful place to live.

We don't need to tell Albertans that over the last seven years the UCP government have broken our health care system. Albertans already see and experience every day that it takes longer to see a doctor. They wait longer in the emergency department. They might not even get an ambulance, and they may not get surgery. There's been more money put into the system but not based on population, and it's not going to care. The money that's been going into the system has been to break it and to go to profits of corporations through an increase in administration.

The UCP's answer has been more and more privatization, building this American-style, two-tier system where people with money get access, but there are only so many doctors. Instead of saying, "Who needs this the most?" or, better yet, making things work so that all the people who need it can get the service, they're just letting people pay for it. At the same time, we've seen surgery wait times explode. Emergency rooms are stretched beyond their capacity. Indigenous people continue to face worse health outcomes – we're talking 18 to 19 years shorter lifespan – and Albertans cannot count on an ambulance even being available.

We've been consulting over the last two and a half years, broadly talking at solutions so we wouldn't need to even think of such a thing as offering services to those who can pay, but how do we fix this health care system? We've been talking to the public, to patients. We've been talking to experts. We've been talking to health care providers at every level. We've been talking to the opposition and sharing lots of ideas as to what could be done to improve the system.

What are those things? Just running through them, well, we need to cut emergency department wait times, and one of the ways we need to do that is to make sure that people can get access to care before they ever need to go to an emergency department. We want to implement proper preventive care and rebuild our public health care system, which has been totally destroyed by this government. We want everyone to have access to immunizations so that they don't get sick in the first place. When people go to an emergency department, we don't want it to turn into a system where they can choose the hospital where you pay or the one where you wait. We want to make it so that wherever you are, if you need to be hospitalized, you're going to get hospitalized rather than spending two days sitting in the emergency department, followed by another week in a hallway or a storage room.

We know that we need more hospital capacity, and spending money like this government is on planning to build more beds when there could have been a south Edmonton hospital already opening this coming year – we're going to act and we're going to get people the things that they need. We're going to free up the beds that are there because people have nowhere else to go. They have complex needs. We're going to expand capacity. We're going to improve the access outside of hospitals. We don't need dual practice; we need service to people so that if a person is in hospital and could benefit from a hospital-at-home situation, that is something that can be done quickly. We have very good programs that are running, but they're just small programs, and they have not been scaled up as they need to be. We're going to invest in public health prevention, early intervention, better management of chronic disease, mental health supports and addictions.

When it comes to infrastructure, we're going to invest in public infrastructure rather than paying money to a facility where we're actually also covering the cost of the building when we have empty ORs everywhere across this province, including in my riding in Foothills hospital, where there are five ORs brand new, never opened yet. Why is that sitting there? Yes. Never opened. They're there. We've got extra ORs at the South Health Campus in Calgary never opened, built out. We have 60 beds at the new cancer centre that have never been opened. There are beds, there are monitors, but they have not been funded and staffed.

There are ways that we could manage this. There are ways that this could be done without bringing in dual practice, which is just a way to privatize the system. We will ensure appropriate emergency room coverage and readiness for periods of high demand. We will guarantee access to ambulances when people need it.

We know that one of the biggest issues in emergency care is that the paramedics are burnt out, that we don't have enough of them. They don't get to go home at the end of their shift. They're not getting their vacation covered. They witness very traumatic things, and then they go right back out there on the road. It is a really, really hard job, and they're burnt out. What does that mean? You can't get an ambulance because there aren't enough staff to staff these.

We know there are ways. They've been recommended by paramedics. They've been recommended in a report now almost five years old done by this government where there are issues that could be dealt with to help the work-life balance and support paramedics. Those have not been brought in yet. The focus has been on other issues whereas if we would focus on our workforce, we would do better.

We will do that. We will focus on the workforce in the health system that crosses all these pillars that are areas of importance, but to separate them into separate ministries is insane because patients cross all of them. Staff often cross all of them. Dividing it up into separate ministries doesn't make any sense for the flow of health care, which needs to have a co-ordinated system in order to reduce delays and to move even budget dollars around in an appropriate way rather than saying: okay; we're going to just move all of lab services into primary care or something like that, which doesn't solve any problems.

4:50

We're also going to work on wait times. There are a few ways that we can do that. One is by developing centralized referral systems. I don't mean centralized for the entire province; centralized for a referral area. The system has to be codeveloped by primary care and specialty care together so that it meets the needs of the referring physicians and it solves the problems for the specialists, and the patients need to be at the table so we're meeting the needs of the patients.

People need to know where they are on a wait-list. If a person goes to an emergency department while they're waiting, we need to know they're referred and where they are on the wait-list. And the family doctor needs to know how things are moving on and where they can upgrade things. This leaves lots of room for choice. If you're looking for an Airbnb, you can tick all kinds of boxes and get all the choices you want. You can do that in a referral system as well so that you can see someone who speaks the language you want, is in the sector of the city or in a community where you want, but these things have to be built collaboratively, and it has to be a system for referrals in that specialty.

When I led the division of neurology for Calgary, I worked with the primary care networks of Calgary because they came together. We came together, and we took a wait-list from 21 months to four and a half months.

The Acting Speaker: If I could, I'd ask the Member for Edmonton-Glenora just to confirm that she means to move second reading of Bill 214.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I do move second reading.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.
The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to revert to Notices of Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Notices of Motions
(reversion)

The Acting Speaker: Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise again to give oral notice of Bill 41, Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2) sponsored by the hon. President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance.

The Acting Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to call it 5 p.m. and proceed to Motions Other than Government Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Overtime

514. Ms Wright moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly
(a) recognize that
(i) Albertan workers, including oil and gas workers, construction workers, tradespeople, and workers in the service and hospitality industries, often work long shifts and extended overtime hours in excess of the standard 44-hour work week, and
(ii) many of these workers are employees subject to banked overtime agreements, which currently allow their overtime hours to be paid out at regular wage rates instead of overtime rates,
(b) acknowledge that all employees who work overtime hours are entitled to overtime rates of pay, and
(c) urge the government to take all necessary steps, including the introduction of legislation, to prohibit banked overtime arrangements from paying out employees less than 1.5 times the regular wage rate for overtime hours

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion 514 is about fairness. It's about doing what's right. It asks simply that this Assembly recognize that many Albertans work long shifts and extended hours that result in overtime beyond that standard 44-hour work week. It asks that this Assembly also recognize that many of those folks who are working those overtime hours are subject to banked overtime agreements, which are paid out at regular rates rather than that standard overtime rate of time and a half. It asks that this Legislature acknowledge that all the employees are entitled to overtime rates of pay

Finally, it urges the government to take all necessary steps, including the introduction of legislation, to prohibit banked overtime arrangements from paying out employees less than time and a half rather than the regular wage rate for overtime hours, which is what occurs presently. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, this motion is about putting workers at the centre, making their lives better, and paying them fairly. None of this should be difficult for all members of this House to agree with.

However, this motion, Mr. Speaker, comes before this House at a time when there continues to be an affordability crisis. This is a UCP government that's content to leave the minimum wage exactly where it was far too many years ago with an additional clause that denies younger workers even that amount. This is a government that persists also in missing the point of a minimum wage, that a minimum wage should be the foundation, a foundation that Albertans can count on, particularly during a time when it is so hard to make ends meet.

We are in a time of increasing inflation, a time of increased unemployment, but this is a UCP government that waited and waited and waited to deal with any sort of that increasing price of gas. This is a UCP government that seems unable to help Albertans with the increasing cost of utilities. This is a government that provides little detail in terms of what exactly will happen to everyone's car insurance in 2027, but when asked, we find out that we are at the very least supposed to be expecting somewhere around a 7 per cent increase. This is a government that refuses to deal in any tangible way with shrinkflation, a government that's content with providing education funding that ranks in the bottom of all of our country's governments, Mr. Speaker, rather than at the top.

This is a government that paves the way for for-profit, American-style health care where indeed the amount of credit you have available will very likely determine how fast you can receive that test or that surgery. This is a government that seems far too content to make things fair for their friends and colleagues but is not so fussed when it's about fairness to working Albertans, fairness that can make a real difference to those Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

This motion is about making right something that was changed around six years ago. It's about making sure that when workers work overtime, whether they choose a payout or banked time, they are paid that standard time and a half, that agreement that speaks to the value of the work they do. It's about Alberta finally not being an outlier where paying workers fairly for the work they do is concerned. It's about making sure that the folks who are actually at the heart of Alberta's economy get a fair shake through each and every sector because every sector, Mr. Speaker, deals with workers who work overtime.

It's the energy, oil and gas, construction, and trade sectors, but it's also retail, Mr. Speaker. It's custodians and educational assistants who work in schools. It's the folks who do residential repairs. It's people in manufacturing and folks in tourism. It's health care. It's LPNs and health care aides. It's seasonal workers that help us out in wildfire season. It's the home-care providers who work with seniors in their homes, and it's many more. All of them deserve the same consideration. Simply put, they deserve to be paid fairly for each and every dollar that they've earned. They deserve what is, quite frankly, a straightforward fix. They deserve this recognition, they deserve this acknowledgement, and they deserve this change.

To understand some of the context, it's probably important to go back a few years. I'm going to intertwine a wee bit of a history

lesson. Way back in 2019, Mr. Speaker, the UCP government introduced a bill called Bill 2, a bill which rolled back employment standards and protections that had been established for workers under the earlier NDP government. At the time Bill 2's changes to overtime, overtime that was banked, represented one of the most significant rollbacks of minimum employment standards. That's because the legislation, which was eventually passed, reduced compensation for workers who perform overtime, most particularly for those workers who rely on those minimum employment standards for their protection while they are at work. I think it's important to remember what those standards are intended to do. Employment standards are minimum standards. They are not necessarily, however, the conditions that each and every worker experiences. We know that there are many fabulous employers who provide benefits and compensation above those minimal requirements.

5:00

Now, I should note at this point, though, that many unionized workplaces have these protections and collective agreements that already allow for banked overtime, if it's agreed upon, to be paid at that time and a half rate. This is about those people that don't have those collective agreement provisions. The minimum standard matters, Mr. Speaker, because that's what provides protection to those who are often the most vulnerable, those who don't have that stronger bargaining power or a collective agreement or additional protections at their work. The standard matters because it sets the bar. It sets an example. It's important for a province such as ours that minimum doesn't equate to lowest. Yet the current employment standards that deal with banked overtime do indeed, unfortunately, mean the lowest, and that is what this motion seeks to change.

Mr. Speaker, overtime is different than regular work. This was true in 2015 and 2019 and certainly is true today in 2026. Overtime is additional labour, and it's a very regular thing. We all know folks who work in oil and gas who regularly do a number of overtime hours each and every week. We know folks that they're – we know educational assistants that will often do overtime every week. We certainly know folks in retail, folks who work in restaurants that do overtime. I would imagine that many of us know folks in health care that do overtime on a regular basis, largely in health care, unfortunately, because they're working short all the time. Regardless of the situation, these overtime hours represent extra time, extra effort, and time spent away from family, and all of those hours, all of that work deserves premium compensation precisely because it requires workers to sacrifice that time.

In jobs that require great physicality, like many of those jobs in oil and gas, the recognition of the toll it takes on a person's body is equally important. That is one of the reasons why overtime has traditionally become compensated at a premium rate. It also demonstrates the value that governments place on that labour and on the work that folks do. When a government such as this one makes a decision to roll back protections and standards, that says something, too, Mr. Speaker. Not only are the current banked overtime rules under which all employers and employees are working; they also keep Alberta out of step with the rest of Canada.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Indeed, we are even out of step with the United States, where time and a half is the gold standard. Even in the United States, Mr. Speaker, that Fair Labour Standards Act mandates 40 hours, not 44, but beyond that it is clear that covered nonexempt workers will be paid not less than time and one half the employee's regular rate for any time worked above and beyond their regular hours. It's been that way in the United States since 1938.

That time and a half, that 1.5 times the usual rate, is meant to compensate folks for their labour, an acknowledgement of what it means to go above and beyond. It's an acknowledgement that workers are at the heart of any country's, any province's economy. Right now we have a minimum wage that's the lowest in Canada. Right now those workers who bank their overtime are being paid less. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, that's just unfair.

On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we are serious about supporting workers. We are serious about making life better for all Albertans. We know and understand that Alberta's workers deserve more than they are seeing from this UCP government. Support for this motion would tell workers across the province that the work they do is valued, not just for those first few hours but for . . .

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

Member Batten: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to join debate on Motion 514, which was brought forward by our shadow minister for labour, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. It does not surprise me that we have a bill that is all about – oh, sorry. We have a motion – pardon me – that is . . . [interjection] Motion 514, yeah. It's all about labour, and it's about workers. Of course, from our shadow minister that just makes sense.

Now, how I see Motion 514 is that this is an opportunity for the UCP government to, basically, fix some of the attack that they've made on Alberta workers. How they could fix that error – as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview had mentioned, back in 2019 there was a bill that came in, Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, which is actually kind of a funny title for that bill. As previously mentioned, this basically switched overtime rules, among other things it did, where if you were immediately paid out or within that pay period, you get your 1.5 times, which is what you normally get for overtime, but then the massive change was that if you banked it, you would only get it at 1x.

I was not privileged to be a member in the House in 2019, so I'm not quite sure as to the whole context on this bill, but it was in direct response to what the previous government had put in solidifying or fortifying workers' rights in Alberta. I bring that up specifically because, Mr. Speaker, the other provinces in Canada do not penalize their workers like this, so for Alberta to do it just seems contrary to what we should be doing. I'm really hopeful that this motion is moved forward today because this is an opportunity to fix a massive error.

I want to be clear on what overtime is. If you think about your employment agreement with your employer – we have employees and employers – you agree to work a certain amount of hours. When you work more than that, be it because maybe you're a health care worker and you have to because it's a mandated situation – we don't have enough staff; therefore, you have to stay for overtime. Maybe it's, you know, that you're working in oil and gas, and overtime is just a reality of life. Those are additional hours which require additional compensation for the employee to work those hours for the employer.

Now, what I find upsetting or concerning, I guess, is that the UCP has decided to insert themselves and deem that overtime hours banked were worth less money than those that were being paid out immediately. That doesn't make any sense whatsoever to me, Mr. Speaker. If we think about the situation in Alberta right now, we do have a workforce crisis. We need skilled workers, we need experienced workers, and we need Albertans to know that their work and their contributions are valued and respected.

The unemployment rates just came out, and Alberta sits at 6.4 per cent, much higher than the average across Canada. Youth unemployment: 15.4 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Like, yay, we're winning. That is horrific, and this government, instead of actually

putting forward the Alberta advantage, instead of actually encouraging workers to choose Alberta, to stay here, what they're doing instead is throwing things in like – oh, I don't know – a referendum on separatism. Instead of focusing those tax dollars on supporting Alberta's workers, we had a giant referendum to answer a question – well, pardon me; 10 questions – that Albertans had already decided on, had already been very clear as proud Canadians.

Now, if we think about some other things that might be contributing to the high unemployment rate for youth and things that the UCP have done that seem completely contrary to me to what they should be doing – for instance, we saw the apprentice registration fee increased by almost five times. Take a youth. We're in high school. We're thinking about trades, but then we get signals from the government: "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's no longer $35. No, no, no. We're going to charge you $150 for you to move on." One hundred and fifty. Five times more. Actually, almost five times more.

Then, as we all recently heard, they've changed graduation requirements for high school students, mandating physical education, wellness, and financial literacy learning. Of course, those things are very important, but you know what would make those things even better? Math and science skills, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] Thank you. Oh, my goodness. The UCP has now decided that Alberta's youth don't actually need to have math and science after, well, grade 10. They get about half as much as they were required yesterday. It is actually mind blowing. If we are looking to set our youth up for success, this is the opposite thing to do.

5:10

We think about this motion. This motion is trying to fix an error that the UCP has made. It provides a very clear exit for them. Listen, we all make mistakes. This is an opportunity. We had a bill unanimously pass just hours ago now. We know that this room can do it. I'm confident that as we continue to engage in debate, it becomes more and more apparent how important this motion is.

If you think about it, just reflecting on the math and science piece, it reminds me of that whole: if you teach a man to fish, he'll fish for a lifetime; if you give him a fish, he'll eat for a day. That's what we're doing to our students. I don't know how that possibly addresses our youth unemployment. I don't know how that possibly encourages people to plant roots and grow in Alberta. I don't know how that's possibly respectful to Alberta's workers, but here we are.

Now, B.C., Saskatchewan, and Manitoba all have better overtime protection than we do. Again, speaking to the Alberta advantage, where the heck is it? Now, the UCP did create a fossil fuel day, though, while handcuffing our energy sector workers by restricting the banking of OT. Do you see how these things just don't really match, Mr. Speaker? Wasted millions of dollars on the referendum.

If we think about different sectors that tend to have overtime – forestry, mining, fishing, oil and gas sectors – an average of 3.8 hours of overtime a week. Construction: 3.6. Transportation and warehouse: 2.4. I can certainly speak as a former practising registered nurse. Health care workers: the 2025 report will tell you that about 8 per cent of all hours worked by front-line providers are overtime. I can tell you, based on my personal experience and on the units I worked, that that does not adequately capture it.

As the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview had mentioned, health care workers are routinely understaffed. Therefore, overtime is just a reality, unfortunately, of our current health care system. The UCP could do something about that. Voting for this motion is a lovely step forward on that. Quite honestly, what an incredible ask of an employer to ask an employee to work more than they've already agreed to. And it's an agreement. Then you will have 1.5 times for every hour that you work because you're working more than we agreed to. Just kidding. If you bank it, you don't get it. What is that?

The reality is that Albertans are falling behind. We have an affordability crisis. Wages have not kept up with inflation or with the tariffs. A yes vote for Motion 514 would show respect for Albertans, their work, and their value. A yes vote for Motion 514 gives Albertans hope that government members are reasonable and rational, that they can recognize errors in their ways and take steps to correct it.

Voting yes for Motion 514 is one step. The government must then bring in better legislation to secure this hope, to show respect, and to properly govern for Albertans. The government must stop creating worse outcomes for Albertans by discounting common-sense legislation like this one. The UCP needs to refocus themselves on governing for Albertans. Period. Voting for Motion 514 is a great first step, and I encourage all members to do so.

Member Gurinder Brar: "True north strong and free" is not just a line in our national anthem. It's a promise. A promise only means something if it is kept for everyone: a promise for a better future, a promise that no one's labour is less valuable, a promise that everyone – and I mean everyone – irrespective of colour of skin, ethnic background, or place of origin has a place in this true north.

Mr. Speaker, workers have earned their labour rights not just as a gift but through struggle. In the early 1900s coal miners in the Crowsnest Pass, Lethbridge, and Drumheller worked in some of the most dangerous conditions in the world. Alberta's coal fields had some of the highest workplace mortality rates on the planet. In 1914 the Hillcrest mine explosion killed 189 miners in a single day, the worst mining disaster in Canadian history, and out of that danger came solidarity. In 1912 miners and tradespeople met in Lethbridge and founded the Alberta Federation of Labour, joining with farmers to push for safer workplaces and fair wages, for ending child labour and establishing health and safety regulations and rules among their earliest priorities. In 1919 a general strike swept the country. Edmonton held a monthlong sympathy strike with Winnipeg, and 96 per cent of Alberta miners voted to join one big union. Every protection we take for granted today, from the eight-hour workday to overtime pay, was won by workers who stood together often at real cost to themselves. Those ordinary Albertans came together and together fought for their rights and built an extraordinary province that we all call home.

Minimum wage, workplace safety, and overtime are hard-fought rights, and under this UCP government these rights are under attack. In 2020 the UCP introduced Bill 47 and reduced protections for injured workers. In 2019 the UCP introduced a bill to lower the minimum wage for young workers, reducing their wage from $15 to $13 an hour. In 2019 the second thing that this UCP government did after forming government was to reduce the value of banked overtime, Bill 2 in 2019. Today, Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the highest youth unemployment rate. Alberta's unemployment rate went up 2 per cent very recently.

Alberta is facing the worst affordability crisis, and this generation is going through tough times. In tough times we need tough leadership, not harsh leadership. We need leadership with a pragmatic mindset that will address the most critical questions. Under this UCP government, we have a leadership that is plagued with their ideology. There are big questions marks hanging. The future of future generations is on the hook, and those questions are clear in front of us. How can we free Albertans from the chains of an affordability crisis? How can we strengthen the laws that freed the workers from the chains of poverty? How can we build a society that is strong,

where everyone has a roof on their head and enough for themselves and their families?

The first thing that we can do is to raise the minimum wage. A minimum wage that puts food on the table. A minimum wage that pays for the rent at the end of the month. A minimum wage that leaves some extra bucks in the bank and not the crumbs on the table.

The second thing we can do is to make life affordable for working people. Why can't this government make life affordable for people when they have the power to do it? This government can steal some ideas from the Alberta NDP's Alberta affordability agenda. They can increase competition in grocery markets, create grocery watchdogs, and end shrinkflation. They can make subscriptions easy to cancel. They can make it easy for people to buy their first home.

The third and the most important thing that we can do is to restore respect for workers. Respect is not just saying: thank you and here is your gift card. It means paying workers 1.5 times for overtime, and that's exactly what this motion does.

5:20

Mr. Speaker, members on the other side say that raising minimum wage will increase inflation. Alberta's minimum wage hasn't gone up since 2019. What since then has created inflation? It is this UCP government's failed policies.

The members on the other side also say that paying workers their fair share kills businesses. I am a small-business owner, and when I pay my workers a living wage, health benefits, it increases their productivity. It lowers turnover, it reduces training costs, and above all, it makes their lives better. I would never want a worker working at my business to stand in the food bank line on their way home. I do not want a worker at my business working hard to be able to afford medications when they feel sick. I don't want them to choose between their pills and their kids' food.

I have worked at Walmart, gas stations, car rental companies, and security jobs. I know what overtime can mean for a student working hard to pay their student loans. I know what it can mean for a single mother trying to pay rent at the end of the month. I know what it can mean for a senior working to collect some extra cash so that they can give some gifts to their grandkids at Christmas. These people are not less valuable just because their pockets are not as deep. They're not less human just because they're not billionaires, and they're not less hard-working just because their hard work pays less.

Look at the five fingers of your hand, Mr. Speaker. Not one of them is the same. Some are long, some are short, and the thumb is a bit apart. Each finger is different. Each has its own purpose. When do they become the strongest? They become the strongest when they become a fist, when they come together, and that's exactly true for our society. We come from different backgrounds. We do different jobs. We earn different wages. But we are not strong when we stand alone. We are strong when we come together, just like the fist.

Standing together means making sure that no one is left behind: not the worker struggling with rent payments, not the parent working extra hours to keep the roof on top of their kid's head, not the family struggling to put food on the table at the end of the shift. When the cost of living goes up, the value of hard work should also go up, not down. When a worker gives an extra hour of their life, that extra hour deserves extra pay. When we give them fair pay, we give them more power; power to be free from poverty, power to be free from homelessness, power to be free from affordability crisis.

Mr. Speaker, we can build a society that is strong and free only if we stay true to our values, and that's how we build the true north that is strong and free. The true north where working people have a strong public education system to free their kids from illiteracy. The true north where working people have a strong public health care system to free them from illness. And the true north where working people have strong labour laws to free them from poverty. Give working people dignity, respect, and prosperity. Let's join hands and build the true north strong and free.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the Assembly to speak about Motion 514. This motion will require employees with banked overtime agreements to receive at least one and a half hours of paid time off for each overtime hour worked. I am going to stand and oppose this, but I want to explain why. I want to explain why I'm going to oppose this motion because I think there's some context here that we need to pay attention to. This motion does argue that workers should get the same overtime benefit whether they are paid for it now or paid later and be able to take that paid time off later, and I think that's significant.

Let's sort of start off, Mr. Speaker, with what's in place here today because Albertans already have clear protections to make sure employees are compensated for overtime. Now, employees are entitled to overtime after eight hours a day or 44 hours a week, whichever is greater. Those who do not bank their overtime are generally entitled to overtime pay at one and a half times their regular wage. Sometimes, depending on the agreement, this is greater than that as well. Banked overtime works differently. It's a voluntary agreement that lets an employee take overtime later as paid time off hour for hour. That time must be taken within six months of the pay period during which it was earned. If it is not, it must be paid out at one and a half times the employee's regular wage.

There are protections already in place, Mr. Speaker. These rules are a minimum. They are not a maximum; they are a minimum. Employees and employers are able to agree to better terms if they choose. Once again, this is a baseline here in Alberta. The question before us is not whether Alberta workers are protected – they are protected here in Alberta – the question is: who should decide how overtime works in each workplace above that baseline? Our government believes employees and employers are best placed to make that call.

For many workers banking overtime is about more than just the money. It means they're able to take paid time off when it works best for them and their families. It could be a parent who wants to be home for a long weekend, a trades worker who wants a few extra days between rotations. Moving to one and a half hours of overtime could make scheduling much more difficult as well. When banked time becomes harder to offer, that flexibility starts to disappear.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have seen these types of rules before. In 2017 the NDP changed the rules so that every hour of overtime was banked at one and a half hours. In 2019 our government restored the hour-for-hour standard, just as we promised Albertans we would do, to reduce the burdens on employers and give both employees and employers more flexibility. Our government will continue to protect this choice for both employees and employers.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, this motion is about two very different ideas for helping working people. One idea is to keep piling costs on the small and medium businesses that hire them, and the other is to grow the economy so there are more jobs to go around and employees can choose what works best for them.

Mr. Speaker, last week I was able to dive into the NDP's plan on the economy for a few minutes, and I found it really interesting, a couple of things that they said. They said, "Alberta has fallen behind." Let me remind the Assembly that Alberta remains Canada's economic engine.

Over the past year Alberta added 41,000 jobs while the entire country added only 17,000. That sounds pretty amazing to me. We are the economic driver, and if that's falling behind, I'd hate to see what they call leading.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we can see their record. Currently Calgarians are living through water restrictions and repeated water main breaks, which are the response to and consequences of poor leading in the past. Calgarians can't even have showers. The NDP leader, who was the previous mayor of Calgary, now deflects blame and says that he can't remember the recommendations meant to fix their system. Albertans don't forget these types of things, and they especially remember what falling behind actually looks like.

So let's recap. In the NDP's first 14 months in government close to 85,000 jobs – let's repeat that; 85,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker. That's how many Albertans lost their jobs. By July 2016 unemployment hit 8.9 per cent. Our province faced plummeting oil prices and layoffs, which hurt families across Alberta. But instead of easing the pressure, the NDP raised the corporate income tax from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, sending investors the wrong message at the worst possible time. The NDP said that Alberta was closed for business, and to make matters worse they brought in a carbon tax that made fuel, heat, and groceries more costly. There are many other circumstances, but I want to continue. By the end of their term the province had roughly 26,000 fewer salaried jobs than when they started. Now, the members opposite like to blame it all on oil prices. Oil prices did not raise the corporate tax.

But, Mr. Speaker, it didn't stop there. The NDP ran a deficit every single year they were in government. They never once had a balanced budget. Not only this; Alberta's credit rating was downgraded again and again on their watch, which meant more of Alberta's money was going to interest payments instead of schools, hospitalities, and roads. Investors noticed, job creators noticed, and Albertans noticed.

5:30

Now the same members who gave us that record want to tell this Assembly how to manage overtime. Their answer to every problem is the same: another rule, another cost, another tax, and a promise that this time will be different. Mr. Speaker, we've seen that in the past. They want to bring in old legislation that did not work. It didn't work then, and it's not going to work now. They talk a lot about standing up for workers, but a worker who has been laid off does not care how good a policy sounds in a press release. They care whether there is a paycheque coming on Friday. Albertans gave the NDP four years to show what they could do. They got higher taxes. They got lost jobs and a mountain of debt. In 2019 Albertans made that verdict very clear, and in 2023 they made it clear again.

Mr. Speaker, our government chose a common-sense path which strengthened Albertans and our province. We lowered the corporate income tax to 8 per cent. We got rid of the NDP carbon tax. We've cut billions of dollars' worth of red tape and made it clear that Alberta is open for business. The road to building is just getting clearer for Albertans. Just last month the Alberta Court of Appeal once again found the federal Impact Assessment Act, the former Bill C-69 that Albertans know as the no-more-pipelines bill, to be unconstitutional, and this week the federal government confirmed it will not appeal. This is significant because this means that massive projects can go through.

The federal government has also listed Pacific link as a project of national interest, giving Albertans real hope in the future. That pipeline would move up to 1 million barrels of oil a day to the west coast and is expected to support up to 140,000 jobs during construction. Maybe we should repeat that, Mr. Speaker. It will support up to 140,000 jobs during construction.

Now, closer to home as well ATCO broke ground last month on the Yellowhead pipeline. That project will create about 2,000 construction jobs and help bring more than $20 billion in investment to the heartland. These are the exact same workers the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview specifically references in her motion: oil and gas workers, tradespeople, construction crews. Under the NDP they watched rigs sit idle. Under this government they're watching projects break ground.

It's not just the trades, Mr. Speaker. Doctors have chosen Alberta, too. Our province now has a record 14,661 physicians, an increase of 1,244 in just one year. That includes 431 more family doctors, the biggest one-year jump on record. Every part of the province saw growth, from Calgary and Edmonton to rural and northern communities.

People move to where the opportunity is. People come to Alberta for low taxes, good paycheques, and a government that trusts them to make their own choices, and they bring something with them. They bring entrepreneurship. They bring big ideas. They bring hard work ethics, who are willing to put that effort into action. In my constituency I often hear from employers and from people working on the ground. Nobody wants to go back to layoffs and higher taxes. They want to keep building. They see the opportunity, the framework that this government is creating.

I just want to speak about the opportunity. This is about families. It's about the families that are waking up early and being able to pack lunches for their kids. They want to go to work on time and at the end of the day be able to go to the soccer field or be able to go watch their kids play hockey. They aren't really asking government for much. They want to keep more of what they earned by lower taxes. They want good jobs for themselves and their kids. This is what we're talking about in that framework and which we have proven with the job growth. They want their kids to have a real shot at life, a life in the province that we all love.

They also want for their kids when they are able to go for that first job a local business to be able to say: yes, I'm going to hire them. That's what this government has also incentivized through the Alberta youth employment incentive. It helps employers hire and train young Albertans.

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

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise tonight and to speak to Motion 514 around banked overtime. You know, there are a lot of things that the member opposite said about the kind of Alberta that we want to build. We want to build an Alberta where families feel welcomed and people feel like they can go out and find a job and feel like they're supported by their government to live the best life they can. I agree with all of those things. I also think people who work overtime should be recognized for working overtime.

It's quite simple. This motion is really about recognizing that all employees who work overtime are entitled to overtime rates of pay and is asking this government to take all steps required to prohibit overtime arrangements from paying out employees less than 1.5 times regular wage rate for overtime. That's really important, I think, because overtime is overtime. It is additional hours worked beyond the standard agreement, beyond your standard work week. This is about fairness and recognizing that hard work beyond that standard work week is worthy of appropriate compensation. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Folks, I think we need to hear the hon. member that's recognized. If folks want other conversations, they need to keep it down or go to one of the places for those other conversations.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are facing an affordability crisis. We talk about it in this House every single day. Life is more expensive across the board: utility bills, grocery costs, fuel prices, just everything. By the way, did you know that gas in Canmore is still $1.699 when in the rest of the province it's $1.219? I just want to throw that out there, that actually affordability is quite regional and can be very different between communities.

There's a reason why we need to recognize people who work overtime and put in those additional hours. Those are hours that they're spending away from their families, away maybe even from the hometown that they live in, and that extra time deserves appropriate and fair compensation.

Life is getting more expensive, and we really need to find ways to deal with that. Here on this side of the House we've proposed a variety of ways to address affordability. There are basically two paths here. We can either bring costs down or we can help Albertans bring more of their paycheque home. Preferably, we take action on both of those things given the extent of the crisis that we're in right now.

On this side of the House we've introduced a variety of motions and private member's bills designed for Albertans to keep more money in their pockets. We addressed a private member's bill around addressing shrinkflation so Albertans know what they're buying is what they're buying. We addressed a private member's bill around getting rid of nuisance fees, increasing minimum wage. We've had a motion around grocery prices and reducing grocery prices. The UCP has rejected all of those actions. All of those were potential ways that we could have helped reduce costs and helped Albertans keep more money in their pockets, and at every single turn this government has rejected those.

The member opposite wants to talk about the NDP's record when we were in government for four years. This government has had 44 years. [interjections] It hasn't been good. I wouldn't applaud. It hasn't been good. Albertans are working harder and harder and struggling to make ends meet, and the members opposite think that's funny, Mr. Speaker. They think it's funny that every penny counts and that people are pinching pennies just to put food on the table for their families. Every action counts that we take and that we don't take.

Let's talk about this government's current record, what is happening right now, not what was happening seven years ago. Alberta has the second-highest unemployment in the country. We have the highest youth unemployment rate. Just last week I was debating a bill that's going to increase tuition costs for students. This government is not taking steps to address affordability.

This government wants to double down on oil and gas production – great – and they want to talk about it as if that's going to create jobs. They're not supporting the workers who do those jobs, Mr. Speaker. If they were, they'd support this motion because a lot of people who work in the oil and gas field are the ones who are impacted by this bill. They're the ones who are working overtime every week, and they should be compensated for that time.

You know, this summer I read a book, an animated novel called *Ducks* by Kate Beaton. It's a memoir about her working on the oil sands for two years. My husband has also spent time in the camps working up in the oil sands. I just want to take a moment to thank all of the people who are working in those camps. Their jobs are hard, Mr. Speaker, and they are being asked to sacrifice a lot to drive the Alberta economy.

5:40

This government wants to talk about how we're driving the Canadian economy and Alberta oil and gas is so important, but they don't want to support the workers who are out there doing the work, workers who are leaving their families at home, workers who are sacrificing relationships with their spouses, relationships with their kids, oftentimes sacrificing their own mental and physical health to drive this economy forward and live up in the camps in northern Alberta. The least we could do is make sure that their overtime is compensated at one and a half times per hour. It is the very least we can do.

Supporting workers is not the same as supporting businesses. We can support businesses all we want – that's great – but we need to support the people who are doing the work, the people who are on the ground actually working in these different facilities. That's what this motion is really about. Every action we take counts, and every action we don't take counts, too.

Alberta is calling, but why would people want to come here, Mr. Speaker, when our overtime legislation doesn't equate to other provinces? If you're in another province and you're considering moving somewhere, would you move to Alberta, where you don't get compensated equally for your overtime, or would you choose to move somewhere else? Alberta is calling. We talk about the Alberta advantage. What advantage? What advantage? We have the second-highest unemployment rate in the country, the highest youth unemployment rate. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, let's hear from the member who's recognized to speak right now.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just am trying to figure out what the Alberta advantage is when we don't compensate our workers fairly. We have the lowest minimum wage in the country. And we're talking about overtime. These are people who are actually working above and beyond what is currently described in their contract with their employer. It's just so astounding to me. It's, like, so hypocritical. It's like we're going to support jobs but not the people who do them. What does that even mean? The UCP lowered the number of overtime hours oil and gas workers can bank. They did that. They want to talk about supporting oil and gas development, but they don't want to support the people who do the work.

We actually have a plan to fight inflation by lowering grocery prices, lowering electricity bills, and increasing wages. All of those things will help people live better, happier, fuller lives, put food on the table, pay rent, and, hopefully, have a little less financial stress in their lives. In truth, Mr. Speaker, if you work overtime, you should be compensated for that, and that is exactly what this motion does. It's not about supporting businesses or not supporting businesses; it is about supporting the people who are doing the work on the ground every single day.

In 2019 the first UCP government passed a bill that repealed the NDP bill that made overtime for 1.5 times the work legal. They just decided to change that because they didn't like that it was an NDP bill, Mr. Speaker. The petty, partisan games that this government wants to play are such a waste of time in this House and so annoying. We're not impacted by 1.5 or one overtime in this House; Albertans are, people working, the ones we're supposed to be serving and making sure that their lives are easier. Playing partisan games with people's overtime is totally inappropriate, and we should just pass this motion so that we can actually support the people doing the work.

Per StatsCan Albertans employed in forestry, fishing, mining, and oil and gas sectors put in 3.8 overtime hours per week as of 2025. Construction workers are close behind at 3.6 overtime hours per week. They are working so hard literally building this province, driving our economy forward, and we can't even pay them time and a half? Come on. It's embarrassing, Mr. Speaker. It's embarrassing that other provinces aren't doing this, but we are. Why? Why are

we asking people to work in situations that are worse than other provinces and then coming in here and talking about how Alberta is so great and we protect workers?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's my pleasure to join debate on private member's Motion 514 by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if you've got to have a conversation, keep it low or go into one of the rooms that are provided for having a louder conversation.

Please go ahead.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, it's my pleasure to add my voice to the debate on Motion 514 brought forward by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I'm just looking at the Order Paper today, and it's listed in that Order Paper. I'm just going to read the section that I think sort of summarizes it all the most for the record. So 514(c) says "urge the government to take all necessary steps, including the introduction of legislation, to prohibit banked overtime arrangements from paying out employees less than 1.5 times the regular wage rate for overtime hours."

I'm very grateful that this was brought forward because I think it is a very important thing so that workers are supported in a fair way. We all know that Alberta is out of step with many other provinces and that this is kind of the standard, you know, in the U.S., many other jurisdictions, so it would be good if the UCP would, you know, sort of get up to speed on what is considered fair and just in regard to overtime hours, the accounting of them for workers.

Mr. Speaker, as I've talked about many times in this House, I'm a social worker. I worked as a social worker for 30 years before I ever was elected to this Chamber as the representative from Edmonton-Riverview. And one of the things that I certainly taught at university – I had a job teaching as a sessional instructor at the University of Calgary – was about antioppressive practice. Certainly, I worked from that model as a social worker in the front lines when I took on more management positions. I just think it's good for us all to understand what that means and that we as legislators, people who make policy, should have these kinds of principles to guide our work. So antioppressive policy development recognizes systemic inequalities and power imbalances, and we certainly know that labour legislation helps with the imbalances between the significant power of employers and the not very much power that workers often have.

It challenges discrimination based on race, gender, disability, age, religion, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, and it promotes participation of marginalized groups in decision-making. When you're looking at legislation, questions to ask are: who benefits from it? Like, what kind of legislation? Who will benefit from this motion, for example? When you're analyzing it to see what it's doing: who may be excluded from it? And what barriers exist for equity-seeking groups?

So if we do look at, well, this record, perhaps, of the UCP, and what this motion does actually, this motion will benefit workers. It will support them to get fair wages.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for five minutes for the sponsor of the motion other than government motion to close debate, I would invite that member, should they choose – I see that that's not happening.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 514 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:49 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Batten	Eggen	Goehring
Brar, Gurinder	Ellingson	Ip
Brar, Gurtej	Elmeligi	Metz
Deol	Ganley	Sigurdson, L.

6:00

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For – 12 Against – 44

[Motion Other than Government Motion 514 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, subject to Standing Order 4(2) we are now adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:02 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:
Editor
Alberta Hansard
3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St
EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7
Telephone: 780.427.1875
E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca

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