

Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 24, 2026

Day 72

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 31st Legislature
Second Session

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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
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Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Campbell, Kyle, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
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Party standings:
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 24, 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.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, sitting in my gallery today is my neighbour here in Edmonton and former town councillor of Jasper, Bert Journault. He graduated from Lakeland College with a diploma in agribusiness before pursuing French studies at the Université Sainte-Anne. Bert is also a proud host of SunDog tours and has the good fortune or misfortune, as I said, of being my neighbour. Bert, please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

School groups today.

Ms Hoffman: I am delighted to introduce a group of bussin – or was it baller? – students. I can't remember which. I suspect that there are future pages, political staff, Sergeants-at-Arms, MLAs all in this group. Please, colleagues, go macaroni; I mean, pickles; I mean, wild and crazy for the grade 6 students from Westglen school.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly my friend Renley Royle from Westglen school. Renley, it's wonderful to have you here today and see democracy in action. I ask all members to extend the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly to Renley.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a group of residents here from St. Andrew's Centre. They are Isabelle, Karen, Jim, Terry, Sylvia, David, Pamela, Esther, Linda, Russ, and Bernadette. If you're able to, please rise. And, colleagues, please join me in sharing the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly to these constituents.

The Speaker: The Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce several staff and residents from Recovery Acres Society. Through their treatment programs, recovery support, sober living services they help Albertans build healthier, more stable futures. Their dedication to compassion, to community, and lasting recovery is saving lives of individuals and families across our province. I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Harpreet Kaur and Sham Pathak, two Calgary entrepreneurs and Top 40 Under 40 Canada recipients who are transforming health care through innovation and service with Seva Medical Clinic, Doc247, and CAN Pathways. They are expanding care options and strengthening Alberta's health care system. I ask that they rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Zhayra Cram. Zhayra has a background in retail and hospitality, and she loves her community and is heavily involved. She's also heavily involved in her church and also serves the homeless community as well. I will ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-South.

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am thrilled to introduce members of the University of Alberta Medical Students Association. These young, bright, and thoughtful future doctors give us hope for the future of our province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly distinguished guests seated in the gallery: Cecile Bukmeier, expert and trainer with WorldSkills, joined by her partner, Justin Lockhart; and Ken Heather, WorldSkills expert, joined by his wife, Brandi Heather. They recently returned from the WorldSkills competition in Shanghai, where they did us proud as part of Team Alberta. Thank you for your work supporting skilled trades and the young people. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

Mr. Wright: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you Christian Vulpe, executive director of the Canadian Massage Therapy Council for Accreditation. Through his work he's helped advance national standards on massage therapy, education, and strengthening the profession across Canada. Christian, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Rick Filipović, executive director of Elevated Abilities, a Calgary-based government partner and provider of FSCD supports for children and youth with disabilities. I'd ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Education Policies

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of parents, students, and educators in Alberta who are deeply concerned about where this government is taking public education. The new 2028 graduation requirements and Bill 35 are being sold as student choice and parental accountability. Let's look at what's underneath.

First, graduation. Core credits drop from 56 to 47. A student can graduate with only one grade 12 course in either English or social studies and without completing both grade 11 math and science, yet our universities and colleges still require those courses. A 16-year-

old should not be forced to close doors on their future before they even know who they want to be. Families across Alberta will pay for those closed doors later, out of pocket, in upgrading. This government is slashing core academic requirements and making it easier for students to skip mathematics, science, and English. It's a strategy to strip away their analytical skills because people who think critically spot propaganda and question authority. This UCP government wants to get rid of critical thinkers in Alberta.

Second, this government is making physical education mandatory through grade 12 without one new dollar for gyms, equipment, or teachers.

Third, Bill 35. Our classrooms are overcrowded, and this entitled government's answer is more ministerial control. It sets province-wide report card standards by ministerial order and requires the minister's sign-off before a school board can even name a school.

Real choice in education doesn't come from lowering the bar or micromanaging locally elected boards. It comes from properly funding public schools so every student can succeed, whether they choose a trade or a university degree. In the next election, instead of electing a UCP government with plans to cheat and entitle themselves, Albertans have a better option, and that is the Alberta NDP.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it hasn't been a big problem, but usually we're pretty quiet during introductions and during Members' Statements, so let's maintain that tradition, please.

Next up we have the hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

Bill 44

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy, and with that right comes an equally important responsibility: ensuring Albertans can have confidence that their personal information is protected. That is why our government has introduced Bill 44 to establish stronger, lasting safeguards for the personal information contained in Alberta's list of electors.

Under these proposed changes political parties, MLAs, and candidates would be required to meet new requirements before accessing the voter list, significantly strengthening the consequences for anyone that misuses this information. Those who misuse a list of electors or fail to protect the personal information it contains could face fines up to $1 million and up to two years in jail or both. More importantly, Bill 44 would give the Election Commissioner the authority to require political parties to notify Albertans if their personal information has been compromised. Mr. Speaker, these protections matter because Albertans should never have to question whether their personal information they provide as part of our democratic process will be treated responsibly.

1:40

While our government is taking action to protect that information, the NDP has taken a very different approach. The NDP claims to care about Albertans' privacy, yet just last month they went to court to challenge measures designed to protect Alberta's personal information. Thankfully, they lost. While the NDP continues trying to score political points, our government will remain focused on what matters: strengthening protections for Albertans' personal information and ensuring there are serious consequences when that information is misused. The list of electors serves our democracy, but access to that information also carries a significant responsibility to safeguard it. Albertans deserve to know that there are strong rules governing their voter information, meaningful consequences when those rules are broken, and accountability when their information is compromised. Mr. Speaker, protecting voter information is about more than protecting data; it's protecting Albertans' confidence in our elections.

Continuing Care Funding Model

Ms Sigurdson: Back in 2019 the UCP said they would update the funding model for continuing care. We are now late into 2026, and we still do not have an updated model. We have the entitled UCP taking trips to London and even distillery tours but no updated funding model for seniors who built this province.

What are the consequences of this delay? Operators, those providing the services to residents of continuing care, have clearly articulated that residents in their facilities are arriving in a more fragile state than previously. Seniors are older and have more complex health issues when they enter as residents, yet the funding model does not recognize this. This means operators, especially operators in rural Alberta, are running deficits in order to serve residents properly. Nonprofit operators are vulnerable because they have fewer levers to pull than private operators. They're mission driven and must pay proper wages to their staff. Privates are focused on profit and thus cut services and staff to fulfill on their bottom line. The UCP have made it easier for private operators to do this as they have completely removed the minimum daily standards of care from legislation.

The consequences for residents are even more disturbing. Founded complaints from the most recent report of the Protection for Persons in Care indicated that under the UCP's watch these complaints tripled. This means that vulnerable residents are not being supported in a timely manner regarding personal hygiene, sometimes waiting hours in their own feces. This means vulnerable residents are not living in clean conditions. For example, issues include unresolved odours, rodent droppings, and mould in commercial kitchens. This means vulnerable residents are not supported to engage in social and physical activities.

When will the funding model be updated? Vulnerable seniors are waiting.

Pacific Link Pipeline

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, for years Albertans were told that another major pipeline was impossible. We were told to stop talking about it. We were told that Alberta should settle for less, and every time someone suggested getting our energy to new markets, the same voices showed up to say that it could not be done. The federal government's decision to designate Pacific link as a project of national interest is a huge win for Alberta's workers, Alberta families, and Alberta's future.

This is not a study. This is not a discussion paper. It is not another announcement about maybe doing something someday. It is a real project that can move forward and create real results. This pipeline will move up to 1 million barrels of oil per day to the west coast, creating thousands upon thousands of jobs, opening up new markets, and generating billions in economic activity. It means opportunity. It means investment. It means long-term prosperity for communities across this province.

Mr. Speaker, while our government has been fighting to expand market access and get Alberta's resources to customers around the world, the opposition has spent years attacking the very industry that pays the bills. They called projects like this unrealistic. They've treated pipelines like a political liability rather than an economic reality. Time and time again they talked down Alberta's energy sector and the hard-working people who power it, and now that progress is finally being made, Albertans can see who is focused on solutions and who is focused on excuses.

Unlike the opposition, who wants to use our energy industry as a political weapon in disputes with the United States, we are focused on

something much simpler: getting results, getting projects built, creating jobs, bringing investment to Alberta, supporting the workers who keep our economy strong. A stronger energy sector means stronger schools, stronger hospitals, stronger communities, and a stronger Alberta. This is a major victory. This is what leadership looks like, and this is proof that when Alberta stands up for itself, good things happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Electoral Boundaries

Member Campbell: The UCP government wants to force through Bill 40 to cheat in the next election. This bill would implement new riding maps designed to protect vulnerable ministers from their own voters. Now they're going to use time allocation to limit debate, silencing the outrage of Albertans. In under three months since being elected as an MLA, the UCP have used time allocation twice to ram through their gerrymandering, a disturbingly common override of Albertans' rights to equal representation.

The voters of Calgary-Shaw sent me here to stand up for them and send a message that they've had enough of the UCP. The Calgary-Shaw by-election should have been seen as a sign that we've had enough of silencing debate, ignoring Albertans, and dismantling democracy. UCP ministers are panicking that their constituents have grown weary of the nonstop barrage of embarrassing national headlines. Albertans expect better from their provincial government.

The UCP could listen to Albertans. They could deliver on affordability during a cost-of-living crisis. They could build schools in growing communities like Legacy or Belmont instead of endless announcements and reannouncements. They could strengthen our public health care system instead of finding ways for their friends and insiders to profit off Albertans who need medical care.

Instead of listening, the UCP are hiding behind their unprecedented and unconstitutional gerrymandered map. They're trying to pick and choose their own voters when it's the voters who should be picking their politicians. By ramming this map through, the UCP are telling voters that their choices and their voices don't matter, that they're entitled to being in government.

But Albertans are smarter than that, Mr. Speaker, and they aren't convinced by these sham maps. Just like the voters in Calgary-Shaw made their choice, so will Alberta, and it won't be for another term of this corrupt, cheating UCP government.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call a point of order.

The Speaker: Okay. A point of order is noted at 1:47.

Guru Nanak Gurpurab

Mr. Gurtej Brar: In 1521 a cruel invader, Babur, storms village Saidpur in Punjab. Men, women, children: all thrown into jail. All of them were forced to labour hard. The name Babur sent shivers down people's spines, except for one saint: fearless, unshakable spirit, glowing face with peace. When everyone collapsed with sheer exhaustion, he kept grinding grains, singing God's praise. Nanak. Guru Nanak Dev Ji was his name, the first Sikh guru. Astonished by Guru Nanak's fearlessness, Babur came to the prison. One look of Guru Ji and the invader became a follower. He offered Guru Ji freedom. Guru Ji refused. He said: either you free everyone, or I will not leave. Babur, stunned by Guru Ji's courage, opened the gates for everyone.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji did not mince words when calling cruel rulers butchers. He did not just preach equality; he stood up for human rights. Today we celebrate Guru Ji's 557th birth anniversary. Let us walk together on the path Guru Ji showed us, not as Brown, Black, or White but as humans. We will be able to protect humanity from the dark cloud of injustice, storms of division, and tornadoes of hatred. Let us stand up for the weakest among us and build a fairer, freer society where no one is left behind. Happy Gurpurab, everyone.

Notices of Motions

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I wish to provide notice to the Assembly that, in accordance with Standing Order 34(6)(c), no response will be provided to Written Question 11.

Oral Question Period

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

Bill 45

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A leaked cabinet briefing on the Premier's natural gas nationalization scheme estimates that Alberta families and industry will see higher bills for both gas and electricity, $300 a year for natural gas in some instances and electricity prices could increase by a third. The Premier consistently denies that we're in a cost-of-living crisis because people can always go to Costco for gas and buy no name groceries. How is this scheme going to help families struggling to get by?

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. Premier of Alberta.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The very best thing to support families is ensuring that they have high-paying, good jobs, and in order to make that happen, we're going to not only build a pipeline to the west coast called the prairie link, but we also need to expand the amount of oil sands production to do so as well. We've been hearing from many people, dozens of companies, that have had a difficult time receiving gas. We'd love to work with TC Energy to make sure that the gas gets to the right place, but if not, we've got to make sure that we're working with other alternatives to ensure that we can do that so we can continue to grow the economy and continue to attract jobs.

Mr. Nenshi: There are, of course, no job guarantees. Oil and gas is at record levels of production, but we have fewer jobs than we did in 2014. The Premier, on the other hand, and her entitled government are living an extravagant taxpayer-funded life: chauffeured limo drives, private jets, carpets that cost more than the average person's house. It's no wonder that they never think about the impact on real people.

This legislation doesn't mention higher prices, consumers, or families. What mechanisms will the Premier put in place to ensure consumers are protected from the increase in gas and electricity prices she's pushing for?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we want to produce 3 million barrels a day in additional oil sands, then we need to be able to do 300,000 barrels per day of additional natural gas liquids for every million barrels. That's a million additional barrels of natural gas liquids. We need to produce that. We're going to have 18 bcf of gas, so we need to make sure that we have the gas going to the right place, make sure it's used here for the uses that we have here to keep consumer prices low, to ensure the couple dozen companies that need it get it, and then to export the rest to our friends and neighbours in the Pacific.

Mr. Nenshi: The vast, vast, vast majority of Albertans will not see jobs from this work, but every single Albertan will see an increase

in their energy costs. In the 1970s energy crisis President Carter said: turn down the thermostat and put on a sweater. In the UCP affordability crisis the Premier tells poor people to get a Costco membership to save a few cents on gas and to shop for no name groceries. Does the Premier realize it's this government's own actions that are driving up costs for everyday people, and what's her plan to address it?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, a little lesson in supply and demand. When you increase the amount of supply and you have an amount of demand that is lower, you're going to end up with lower prices. That's the reason why we're going to make sure that we have the ability to use the gas here first, and if there is the additional ability for us to export it internationally, we're going to do it. Our entire conversation around natural gas is getting it to the places that it is needed in Alberta, making sure we're doing it efficiently, making sure that we're doing it with the high-producing fields so that we can keep gas prices low for everyone.

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

Mr. Nenshi: But the Premier has consistently said that she wants natural gas prices to go up, and the demand, of course, is coming from AI data centres and these other schemes of this government.

Hospital Emergency Room Wait Times

Mr. Nenshi: Also, the Premier's record on health care has been abysmal. It's now 1,496 days since she promised to fix health care in 90 days, and a recent study from her friends at the right-wing Montreal Economic Institute showed that the time to see a doctor in emergency rooms across Alberta has increased by 36 per cent in just one year. Why has the Premier allowed this situation to prevail?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Prior to COVID we had 295,000 surgeries that were being done. During COVID that got disrupted, but we were very quickly able to return to those levels, and now last year we had 332,000 surgeries. We also have a thousand doctors and nurse practitioners accepting new patients. Eighty-seven per cent of patients are connected to a primary care practitioner. We've got 750 new beds for mental health and addiction, and we now have triage liaison teams that are helping to improve the experience people have going into hospital.

Mr. Nenshi: It may surprise the Premier to know that even in her broken health care system surgeries usually don't happen in the emergency room.

Let's take a longer view. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information since the New Democrats left power in 2019, wait times to be admitted to a hospital from the ER have increased by over 40 per cent. Someone close to me waited 24 hours in the ER before being admitted last week. This government hasn't built a single urgent care bed in seven years. Why does the government have no plan to address emergency rooms?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Institute for Health Information compares how we do compared to other provinces. What they have found is that Alberta's average length of stay for admitted patients was four and a half hours less than the rest of the country on average. For less urgent patients who were discharged early, the average length of a stay was just over six hours versus 7.8 nationally, meaning Albertans are getting to go home an hour earlier. Same thing for median length of stay for admitted patients. We're moving things in the right direction. We had 600,000 new people come to Alberta. I think the system is doing an incredible job being able to keep up.

Mr. Nenshi: The Montreal Economic Institute says that Alberta has deteriorated more than any other province, and there's not a single Albertan who's experienced an emergency room who would say that things have moved in the right direction under this Premier. She's announced six triage physician locations only 10 months late. We've heard that at least one TLP has left the program. Dr. Del Castilho, a triage liaison physician whose full-time job is in management for Acute Care Alberta, says that this program is just a small part of fixing emergency rooms. So given that these physicians are nearly a year late, why has the government done nothing substantive to help emergency rooms?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been investing in all aspects of the system. We now have 9,000 acute-care beds, and our Minister of Infrastructure is doing a site-by-site review so that we can see if there are additional spaces that have been used for storage or administrative offices that can be returned to acute-care capacity. In addition, we're expanding out six major hospital projects for more than 1,000 beds. We've got towers as well that we're building for the Grey Nuns, the Misericordia, and south campus. As well, nine new urgent care centres. It's all under way.

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

Mr. Nenshi: While the Premier reads cherry-picked numbers from her prewritten notes, Albertans find it harder and harder to access the health care system.

Electoral Boundaries Committee Review

Mr. Nenshi: Now, it's clear that the Premier . . . [interjections] It's clear that the Premier actually believes . . .

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Give the hon. Leader of the Opposition another 10 seconds.

Carry on.

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you. It's clear that the Premier actually believes that she has the power to draw the electoral maps. She casually referred to the, quote, maps drawn by Notley, unquote, not realizing that was, in fact, illegal. More troubling, one of her ministers has been blabbing all over town that cabinet itself drew the lines on the maps. Can the Premier confirm today that her minister was telling the truth, that cabinet did in fact discuss and have input on the maps?

Ms Smith: I can absolutely confirm that under no time did we as a cabinet discuss the maps; under no time did we as a caucus discuss the maps. We know that this is a decision to be made by every member in this Legislature. The member opposite may have seen the maps before anybody else, but I sure didn't. Then when the maps came forward, we had an opportunity to be able to debate them. Of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the intention was to restore the two seats that had been recommended by the members opposite when they were giving their submissions to the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and that's what the independent commission did.

Mr. Nenshi: Why, then, would the minister be talking about his own input? Why, then, would another minister have told my member, "Why

are you so mad I saved your seat for you?"? Now, one of the most intriguing things about this report is when the authors write that the "northeast . . . challenge reached the panel late." Given that the panel didn't do any public hearings or consultations and was receiving no information by mandate and the so-called northeast challenge refers to gerrymandering the Minister of Justice's own riding, who sent this late information to the panel, and why was the government trying . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: I don't know, Mr. Speaker. The Justice minister's riding changed more than anybody else's. If you look at the independent data analysis, it's actually slightly worse for him than he would have been in the last election, just like when you look at the entire map. If they were to have run the last election with the same results, they would have won three more seats; the UCP would have only won one more. This was all about restoring the two rural seats, maintaining the representation in Calgary and Edmonton, and that was what the Electoral Boundaries Commission did. That's what we're debating in the Legislature. [interjections]

The Speaker: Your leader wants to ask a question.
Go ahead, sir.

2:00

Mr. Nenshi: The Premier tells on herself again, that her analysis is all about who would win or who would lose, not what's fair for voters. The Premier also seems to have forgotten that in the final round of consultations of the previous panel, somebody forgot to take the government document identifier off one of the supposedly independent maps. She seems to have forgotten that her own staffer, Happy Mann, shared copies of the draft maps before the panel even started. How can Albertans possibly believe that this process was in any way independent when the government is so bad at hiding its own tracks?

Ms Smith: I have no idea what the member opposite is talking about. His whole argument seems to be obsessed with who would win and who would lose. I'm pointing out that the initial boundary commission report gave two seats to Calgary, two seats to Edmonton but sacrificed two seats in rural. The members opposite clearly advocated successfully to have Justice Miller suggest that those two seats be restored without impacting Calgary or Edmonton. They have been restored. The four new seats: they would win three, we would win one. There is no issue here, Mr. Speaker. We are fair to urban voters. We are fair to rural voters. That's what the whole purpose of the exercise was.

Electoral Boundaries Commission Report

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, Albertans know that Bill 40 presents a set of maps that are gerrymandered. A letter signed by 63 experts says,

> every Albertan should have confidence that electoral boundaries reflect the needs of communities and the principle of effective representation.
>
> Adopting the boundaries recommended by the Majority Report ... [from the] Commission would affirm those commitments. We urge the Government of Alberta to do so.

Will the UCP drop Bill 40 and adopt the boundaries from the actually independent commission that publicly consulted with Albertans and put forward a great map?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. Now, we all know that Justice Miller recommended increasing the number of electoral divisions in this province by two to 91 seats to restore the two rural seats that had been removed. That was the majority recommendation in the Electoral Boundaries Commission report. This Legislature acted on the recommendations, adopted legislation that would give two additional seats for this province. An independent panel then reviewed it, with two members appointed by the NDP, two members appointed by government. We have the report in front of us today.

Ms Gray: Justice Miller endorsed and recommended the majority maps. It's not just academics calling out the sham process. A letter to the *Edmonton Journal* says, quote, We have seen what happens when governments choose to ignore the voices of its citizens in a blatant attempt to retain their political power. End quote. And in the *Western Standard*, UCP supporter Cory Morgan writes, "This sort of gerrymandering undercuts the principles of democratic representation." Will the UCP do the right thing? Time to stop time allocating and limiting debate and adopt the majority report.

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, part of the job of this Assembly is to look at the recommendations, not just the ones that the members opposite like but the entirety of the report. That report was very specific. Ninety-one seats were required for the commission to do its job properly. Alberta's population continues to grow, it continues to shift. People have become more connected than ever here in this province to major urban centres. That's why the majority of the Electoral Boundaries Commission report believes they would have been able to provide Albertans with more effective representation if there were two more electoral divisions. That's what they recommended. That's what this Legislature adopted, and that's the map that we have here today.

Ms Gray: The majority of the panel, including Justice Miller, recommended majority maps that should have been adopted. Cheating to choose their own voters should be beneath this government. They don't want to have a debate about this. They don't want to have a debate about the future of health care. They don't have plans to make life more affordable for everyday Albertans. They are not focused on improving things in our classrooms. They're distracted by flagpoles in front of schools, booze cruises around Kentucky. Why is the UCP government so distracted by their own entitlements that they refuse to deliver on the priorities for Albertans?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, despite how many times the members opposite repeat it, it doesn't make it true. The majority commission report recommended 91 seats for this province. That is the recommendation that was adopted by this Assembly. That's what the advisory panel contemplated. That is what we are looking at and debating currently today. We're not going to disregard the recommendations of the report where it was important for them to have 91 seats in order to distribute the boundaries properly. That's what happened, and that's what we're looking at today.

Information and Privacy Commissioner Appointment

Mr. Shepherd: In a standing committee yesterday UCP MLAs voted to fire Information and Privacy Commissioner Diane McLeod simply because she did her job and put Albertans' interests first. Ms. McLeod investigated 27 government departments, found they were systematically breaking the law in denying access to information, and challenged multiple government bills that attacked Albertans' right to privacy and to know what their government was doing. So will the Premier simply admit that her policy isn't to hire people on merit but on the willingness to shut up and do what they're told.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to take a moment to thank the Information and Privacy Commissioner for her years of service, working for the privacy of Albertans, but the reality is that these are fixed-term appointments, and starting the recruitment process early allows time for the committee to look at the best candidates. There is no reason for alarm here. The privacy commissioner had a fixed term. That term is coming to an end, and the committee is looking for a replacement. That's really all there is to see. There's nothing to see here despite what the members opposite are saying.

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that where there's smoke there's fire because this isn't the first time it's happened. The UCP also fired the Elections Commissioner and just recently the former Auditor General. Given that that Auditor General found that this government wasted more than $100 million on their failed scheme to privatize lab services and given he was in the midst of investigating the corrupt-care scandal, shady contracts involving UCP ministers and staff rising as high as the Premier's office and given when he asked for a short extension to finish that work, he was denied and shown the door, will the Premier just admit that she's so entitled she fires anyone who dares to question or criticize her government?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, that rhetoric and that language serves nobody. The reality is that these legislative offices have fixed-term appointments. Those terms ultimately come to an end. Once those terms near an end, the standing committee sets up the recruitment process to replace those individuals, but those individuals are also welcome to apply as well. These are fixed-term contracts. When they come near expiry, the committee is tasked with finding a replacement. That's exactly what's happening here. There really is nothing to see here despite the rhetoric that's coming from the NDP.

The Speaker: The member.

Mr. Shepherd: Given that Sam Mraiche took Albertans for $49 million for knock-off Tylenol he never delivered and the UCP still gave him more contracts worth millions and given that even after Bruce McAllister told a young man he should be beaten and posted racist rants on social media, he's still comfortably employed in the Premier's office and given that Rob Anderson straight up admitted that the UCP rigged the election map to level the playing field and he's still her chief of staff, will the Premier just admit that the only thing that gets you fired by the UCP is doing the right thing, standing up for Albertans against this government?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member opposite is desperate for a Facebook clip here, but again I will refer back to what we're talking about, and that was the question about the office of the Privacy Commissioner. [interjections] The Privacy Commissioner has a fixed-term contract. The standing committee that is responsible for the recruitment has begun the recruitment process after we approach the nearing of the end of that term. That is what happens. That's what a responsible government does. That's what responsible committees do. Again, the rhetoric is unhelpful, and it is misleading and false.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Oh, just hang on. A point of order is noted at 2:09.

Hon. member.

Bill 44

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, Albertans rightly expect that their personal information they provide as part of our democratic process is kept secure and used appropriately. Protecting that information is essential to maintaining confidence in our electoral system. Could the Minister of Justice explain to this Assembly why the government is strengthening protections for the personal information contained in Alberta's list of electors and why these changes are important for maintaining Alberta's trust in our elections?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Now, following the breach of the electors list last spring, we introduced temporary protections to remove the personal information from the list of electors, and we made it clear that permanent solutions would follow. The Leader of the Opposition challenged that temporary measure in court, and thankfully the NDP lost. Albertans need the confidence that their personal information is being protected. It's essential to the health of our democracy, and Bill 44 delivers on that commitment to protect the voter data for Albertans.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. Given that Albertans expect strong safeguards to be backed by real accountability, particularly when sensitive personal information is involved, and further given that Bill 44 proposes new requirements for accessing the list of electors and significantly stronger consequences for its misuse, can the minister explain what new safeguards Bill 44 would put in place and how they would help protect Albertans' personal voter information?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Amery: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Bill 44 includes plenty of protections to safeguard voter data. We've established new criteria for political parties and candidates to access the list. We're requiring parties and candidates to pay a security deposit, to post a bond to receive access. We're also bringing in stronger penalties. We're increasing the $100,000 fine to $1 million, and we're increasing imprisonment for up to two years so that this never happens again, and if it ever does, those people will be held accountable.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for that answer. Given that political parties and candidates play a legitimate role in encouraging participation and getting voters to the poll and further given that access to voter information carries an obligation to protect it, can the minister explain how Bill 44 balances safeguarding Albertans' personal information with ensuring eligible political parties and candidates can continue accessing the information they need to participate in our democratic process?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Parties will need to run candidates in at least 50 per cent of the ridings to access the entire list, but if they can't meet that threshold, we built in provisions into Bill 44. They can pay a security deposit and access the list for that specific electoral division. We're making new rules, but we're keeping them fair so that everybody has an opportunity to participate in the democratic process. We're also making sure that the safeguards that

are implemented in Bill 44 have the strongest penalties in the country for any breach of the valuable data of voters.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Grants in Place of Taxes

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, Alberta seniors deserve an affordable life, but this entitled UCP government puts their friends and corporations ahead of seniors. Yesterday they voted against our motion to collect more than $250 million in unpaid property taxes to municipalities that are owed from oil and gas companies while also cutting a grant off-setting property taxes for a seniors building in my riding. Why is the Minister of Municipal Affairs cutting the grant in place of taxes, forcing seniors to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars more when the government won't even collect $250 million from delinquent companies?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has accepted a report of over 17 different recommendations that we initiated through a process in PTAS working with the association of rural Alberta municipalities, making sure that we say that every single taxpayer, individual or corporate, needs to pay their taxes, which is why they've endorsed and supported this. We're working to implement all of them. We have most of them in action right now, and we'll continue to say that if you are using Alberta's municipal services, you must pay your fair share of taxes.

Ms Hoffman: Given it's clear that's unless you're an oil and gas company and given that the municipal taxes for St. Andrew's Centre equal roughly $300,000, the same amount of money that the government felt entitled to spend on a new red carpet for the Premier's office, and given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has ignored my August letter on this issue, will the minister restore the grant in place of taxes for St. Andrew's Centre today? Or is rolling out the Premier's red carpet a higher priority than keeping a cook, a handyman, and a security guard for these important seniors?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that we support municipalities all across the province with GIPOT totalling hundreds of millions of dollars, including right here in Edmonton. Of course, we need to make sure that when we're supporting those municipalities, we do it in a fair and equitable way that is predictable. We want to put all the different services on an equal playing field, which is why we continue to be consulting with the different communities that have affected GIPOT. We will continue to support municipalities, as we've heard from the city of Edmonton, with 100 per cent GIPOT support going forward.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the question was – oh, sorry.

The Speaker: I will recognize you.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the question was about GIPOT for St. Andrew's Centre, Minister, and given that the residents of St. Andrew's Centre took time out of their day to come to the Legislature only to hear these excuses from the minister and given that cutting this grant means staff layoffs or higher fees or probably both and given that I'm sure nothing could be more important to the minister than showing respect to our elders – they're right here, Minister – will you show them respect and agree to meet with them today?

Mr. Williams: I respect our elders, of course, and I'm happy to meet with anyone who wants to reach out to my office and have a conversation at any time at their convenience. I'm very happy to say that we will continue to support grants in place of taxes through the Municipal Government Act and continue to support the city of Edmonton along with all the work that they have done advocating to get us back to 100 per cent support for that program. Mr. Speaker, this is an important part of how we manage municipal support across the province, and we'll continue to do that here in the city of Edmonton along with every other stakeholder in the province.

Premier's Travel to Europe

Member Ellingson: The Finance minister is so distracted by his government's plans to cheat; he's not watching his colleagues waste taxpayer money. The government's travel policy requires expense claims to be necessary, economical, reasonable, and appropriate, but the Premier's entourage took a $2,300 chauffeured vehicle to one meeting 10 minutes from their hotel with the Premier in a private, separate car. Does the Finance minister believe that $2,300 for a 10-minute ride in London meets the policy requirements of necessary, economical, reasonable, and appropriate?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said yesterday, all rules have been followed completely. There recently was an audit of these expenses, and the Auditor General confirmed that they were. Unfortunately, when the NDP were in power, they failed those audits over and over and over. I can confirm that recently we did not.

Again, Mr. Speaker, as we discussed yesterday, I think the biggest issue is that the NDP are trying to distract from the fact that their leader, when he was mayor of Calgary, was briefed on a report that said that pipes are broken, and that member's constituents right now are rationing water and cannot even have more than a three-minute shower. Shame on him, and shame on his leader.

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 2:16. [interjections]

We're going to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Member Ellingson: Given that the Premier's office told the press that her entourage, quote, stayed outside central London to keep accommodation expenses down but given that Expedia says that their hotel is, quote, located in London city centre and given that they booked the chauffeur for 12 hours but only officially used it for one single ride, will the government just admit that wasting $2,300 for the Premier's entourage to take a 10-minute ride to one meeting is expensive, unnecessary, unreasonable, and inappropriate?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite clearly has never been to London because if he has, he'd know the downtown core is very large in a very broad term. I can tell you that while on this trip the Premier met with dignitaries and also met with . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. We're going to hear the answer.

You've got another 10 seconds, Government House Leader. Go ahead.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, the Premier met with a number of businesses to talk about the Alberta advantage, unlike the leader opposite, who

would rather spend time ignoring reports and, at the same time as ignoring those reports, accepting lavish gifts like $80,000 worth of gifts or $25,000 worth of theatre tickets. Who's living the high life now? The members opposite: we will take no lessons from them on how to promote the province of Alberta.

Member Ellingson: Given that the government travel policy requires all official transportation to be reasonable but the staff could have taken an Uber to their meeting and given that the policy requires travel to be economical but the Premier's office wasted $2,300 for a single ride and given that a 12-hour day rate for a single 10-minute round trip can't possibly be seen as reasonable, who approved this wasteful $2,300, which demonstrates just how entitled this government is to spend money on themselves?

2:20

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, it is common knowledge that when the Premier travels, she travels with security detail and large delegations who go to promote Alberta. Again, the members opposite are trying to hide their own record and the record of their leader, who decided to reject a critical infrastructure report that has now cost Calgarians hundreds of millions of dollars, all at the same time accepting expensive theatre tickets; $25,000. I didn't know it was that expensive to go see *CATS* or *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* or *Les Mis,* but those must have been some really great seats. [interjections]

The Speaker: All right. We're all having fun, but let's hear the question asker and the question answerer.

The next one is the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Service Dogs

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dogs have been described as man's best friend. Although my best friend is Hank Mardukas, our new rescue dog Lenny, like many dogs, brings endless joy and is a member of our family. The contribution service dogs make is on a whole different level, including providing essential support to many Albertans living with disabilities. I recently had the privilege of meeting Sammy, a PTSD service dog right here in the Leg. To the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction: what protections are in place to ensure Albertans with service and guide dogs can fully participate in their communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of mental . . . [interjections] Order. The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Wilson: We all love dogs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the great question. Service dogs play a critical role in supporting independence, safety, and quality of life for many Albertans. The Service Dogs Act and the blind persons act help ensure Albertans who rely on qualified service or guide dogs can fully participate in their communities without facing discrimination. Anyone using qualified service or guide dogs should be able to access the same places and opportunities as any other person, and our government is committed to supporting that they do exactly that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's important to balance tough questions with what I would say is literally a fluffy question but an important one, given the vital duties service dogs fulfill and given that many Albertans would benefit from trained service dogs like our aforementioned fluffy hero Sammy and further given that there's a need for qualified service dogs across our province, can the same minister provide an update on the number of qualified service dogs that have been approved and what our government is doing to support the organizations that train them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for that great question. The number of qualified service dogs approved has grown in a big way, increasing by more than 1,000 per cent since 2018, more than 800 dogs. There are currently 15 approved organizations across the province that provide training and assessments for servicing guide dogs, and additional applications are under review. Alberta also provides grant funding to select organizations to help off-set the costs associated with training and assessing those dogs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for that answer. Given that service dogs are so central to the lives of Albertans who rely on their support and given that supporting their critically important and extensive training is integral to developing programs that will allow more service dogs and further given the growing need for the support that service dogs provide, can the minister tell this House what steps our government is taking to ensure these important supports continue to meet the needs of Albertans?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the very fine member for this question. We continue to monitor demand, access, and program delivery to ensure Albertans who rely on service and guide dogs can receive the support they need. I've asked my department to look for opportunities to continue to improve access to service and guide dogs. Our government will continue to work for Albertans who rely on service dogs and thank all the good dogs out there who dedicate their whole heart to helping their humans.

Education Funding

Ms Hayter: This education minister is so out of touch. He's demanding that schools waste infrastructure dollars on extra flagpoles, removing core requirements students need to enter the trades, and ignoring parents' and teachers' warnings about overcrowded and underfunded classrooms. The UCP government wasted endless amounts of time gerrymandering Alberta's electoral boundaries to try and cheat in the next election. Why is the minister focused on plans to cheat . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Ms Hayter: . . . instead of helping our students in Alberta classrooms?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:24.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, our focus remains exclusively on the educational best interests of children. That's precisely why we've mandated early literacy and numeracy screening for every student in K to 3, a process that was replicated by other provinces. It's precisely why we've created and funded over 700 complexity teams to support students with additional needs. It's precisely why we developed the schools now program to build and modernize over 200,000 spaces in every corner of this province, and it's precisely why we've also provided additional investments to help support students with special needs. We're going to continue to keep our focus on the kids.

Ms Hayter: Given that thousands of the minister's constituents signed a petition demanding that he step down for his gross mismanagement of our formerly world-class education system and given that the Justice Miller led independent Electoral Boundaries Commission twice rejected the minister of education's unconstitutional request to hybridize his riding and given that instead of listening to his voters, the minister now appears set on picking and choosing them, when will the minister support public education instead of the UCP's unconstitutional cheating plan?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I didn't understand a lot of what the member was talking about. As I mentioned, our priority is focused on the educational best interests of children, and that's exactly why, as well, we've also provided a 7 per cent increase in Budget '26, which is the largest increase in a budgetary standpoint in the history of this province. That additional investment has helped to support meaningful changes in our classrooms, including the hiring of over 2,100 net new teachers and over 1,000 net new EAs. We're going to continue to stay focused on reducing class sizes as well.

The Speaker: In case I didn't mention it, there were points of order called at 2:24 and 2:26, so if I didn't say that before, I'm catching up now.

Ms Hayter: Given that Calgary voters have rejected the UCP's wrong priorities at the ballot box twice this fall and given that Calgarians demand shovels in the ground for schools, not endless announcements, and my constituents of Ranchlands need a replacement playground and given that this minister has failed to listen to parents, educators, and students, will the minister of education admit that he's too focused on the UCP's plan to cheat to ever actually get anything done in education that Albertans so sorely need?

The Speaker: Another point of order at 2:27.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to put our record up against the NDP. When they were in office, they funded 48 school projects whereas our government has funded over 205 projects. When the NDP was in office, they increased the number of teachers in our education system by only 9 per cent. We've increased the number of teachers in our education system by 11 per cent and approximately 16 per cent as it relates to EAs. We're going to continue to stay focused on hiring more teachers, hiring more EAs, building more schools, and getting students the support that they need.

National Defence Investment in Alberta

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, the Lakeland is preparing for significant growth. In October Ottawa announced roughly $8 billion to ongoing Alberta defence investments, including nearly $4 billion in future fighter capabilities at CFB Cold Lake. Residents, businesses, and local governments want accurate and timely information about what is coming. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration: how will our government keep the public and local municipalities informed as this important investment moves forward?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I encourage members of the opposition to take note. That is how you ask a question in this Chamber, and that is how you represent your constituents.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that our government continues to engage with the federal government to ensure that Alberta is seen as a viable destination for defence-related investment. The federal government has released their defence industrial strategy outlining spending across the country, and billions of that money is going to land right here in Alberta and right up north near Cold Lake, no pun intended, with the F-35s.

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, given that this investment will bring new personnel, families, workers to the Lakeland region and given that growth will increase demand for housing, schools, and highways and further given that Ottawa has committed billions to dual-use infrastructure, to the same minister: what progress has been made in pursuing federal dual-use infrastructure funding, and how will you work with Municipal Affairs, transportation, and other ministries to ensure the Lakeland region is ready for it?

2:30

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, the member is two for two for questions, and I can tell you that Alberta holds several advantages when it comes to being a leader in defence-related investment. We have access to land for testing and for training, natural resources, and, of course, the skilled workforce. Of course, we are the gateway to the north. Across government we are working to identify areas of opportunity across ministries like Advanced Education, also with the minister of transportation. I thank those members for their diligent work, and I thank that member for the question and representing his constituents.

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, given that this investment is bringing military families, construction crews, and defence contractors to the Lakeland region and given that oil field workers and their families already call the region home, further given that growth will increase demand for affordable housing, schools, and justice services, to the same minister: what is the ministry doing alongside the other ministries to support the families of oil field workers, contractors, and our military who will build, supply, and sustain this important investment for my region?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three for three. Call that a win streak. On this side of the House we know that there are growth pressures being put across this province as we continue to see record investment on things like housing, roads, schools, and other local services. That's why our government is investing in building a new school in Cold Lake, investing in future health care infrastructure upgrades. We're excited about this new chapter with the Canadian Armed Forces in Alberta expanding their footprint, creating real, meaningful jobs in that sector, and we know that Alberta is the best place for investment. That's why we're going to continue to do exactly what we're doing to attract investment.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Auditor General Recommendations on AISH

Ms Renaud: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The UCP government changed the payment dates for 80,000 AISH recipients from a few days before the end of the month to the first day of every month in 2020, insisting that the change was to help severely disabled Albertans. It was not. Asked if Treasury Board and Finance had been involved in the change or if a risk assessment was done – at the time we asked in PAC and Athana Mentzelopoulos was the deputy minister. She said that none had been done. We asked, "Should it have been?" She said, "Yes." She answered honestly. Today in PAC we asked similar questions. What has Treasury Board and Finance done with the recommendations issued in 2020?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we continue to look seriously at all recommendations that come forward. I can tell you that what has happened since 2020 is that this government has balanced six consecutive budgets. When we are given reports, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we read them and we take action on said reports. We will have a look at whatever was discussed at PAC. I haven't seen it. I haven't had a chance to talk to the Deputy Minister of Finance yet. I will.

In the meantime I'd ask that member when she's going to apologize for her leader and to the people of Calgary because they don't have any water right now.

Ms Renaud: Given that this government continues to dismantle AISH and they continue to brag that they're making changes because they care about disabled Albertans and it's not because of their bottom line and given that the office of the Auditor General has clearly recommended that the Department of Treasury Board and Finance address the weakness of incomplete and missing risk analysis, to the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance: what has this ministry put in place to address the weaknesses identified in 2020?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we take all audit reports from the Auditor General seriously. We look at those recommendations, and we make the best decisions that we can based on those recommendations, just like the other day as we got an Auditor General report to this Chamber and to the public that made clear that the minister's expenses were fine, unlike the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar when he was a minister, who failed said Auditor General report, the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall when he was a minister, who failed his Auditor General report, and the Member for Edmonton-Riverview, who failed her Auditor General report. I don't think the members there should argue about the Auditor General.

The Speaker: St. Albert. [interjections] Order. Order.

Start with a fresh 35.

Ms Renaud: Given that we have witnessed the UCP roll ahead with expensive, widespread changes seemingly without oversight such as illegitimate maps created using an illegitimate process that allows rigging in the next election, costly extra flagpoles, an expensive, useless referendum, a new employment program that brags about pretend work sites . . .

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

Ms Renaud: . . . in places for disabled Albertans, to the minister: as we are five years postrecommendation from the Auditor General, can the minister explain what has changed to manage risk of corruption and wasteful spending?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:35.

The minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what I'm proud of? I'm proud of a government that stands up for all individuals across the province. That's what our government has done since day one. That's why we have record investment for people with disabilities, $3.7 billion. We've put our money where our mouth is, something the NDP failed to do. They drove investment out of the province. They drove people out of the province. They had all kinds of problems because they didn't know what they were doing. You know what we brought back? We brought common sense back to government. We put Albertans first. We take care of them. We invest in them so that they have the best future possible. That's real government.

Health Care System Capacity

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding are suffering from the UCP's dismantling of our public health care system. They're still waiting for the south Edmonton hospital that this government will never build. They are waiting for ER wait times to decrease. While they wait, this entitled UCP ignores concerns, privatizes their health care, and gerrymanders the electoral map to try to rig the next election. When will this government stop rigging the process and start building the south Edmonton hospital?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we were very clear that we are going to build spaces in Edmonton, making sure that we have an urgent care centre in south Edmonton. It'll go up much quicker than a hospital will. Beyond that, we're going to make sure that we add 350 beds to the Grey Nuns, 350 beds to the Misericordia community centre hospital, as well as making sure that the Stollery finally has a stand-alone building. When we repatriate that, we'll have an additional 250 acute-care adult beds.

Mr. Deol: Given that the care centre is not a hospital, given that the Premier has promised to fix health care in 90 days but four years later wait times keep getting worse and given that Albertans have sent a clear message to this UCP government that they reject American-style, two-tier health care, why doesn't this government stop gerrymandering the next election and start listening to Albertans and fixing public health care for everyone?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we are fixing health care for everyone. We've been happy to be able to make sure that everyone is going to be attached to a family practitioner. We've added over 4,000 doctors to the province since we came into power in 2019. What I think the members opposite should account for is that when they were in office, the wait time for open-heart surgery increased by 50 per cent. How on earth could you get it to increase by 50 per cent? That is deplorable.

Mr. Deol: Given that this government has more than doubled the cost of health care administration while communities like south Edmonton are still waiting for new hospitals and care beds and given that this government finds money for Turkish Tylenol and bloated insider contracts for their friend Sam Mraiche, why does this UCP government think it's still entitled to Albertans' votes if it cannot even deliver the basics on public health care?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Besides opening the Stelmach health centre recently, we've also made sure that we are in fact increasing the number of surgeries. That's what people care about. They want to get their surgeries in a timely fashion. Volumes are up 15 per cent since the members opposite were in power. We are actually five points above the national average. We are doing well in Alberta. There is more work to do. But wait times for hip surgeries are down. Wait times for cataract surgeries are down. Radiation therapy: down.

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

Environmental Policies

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has shown that meaningful environmental progress is possible when government works collaboratively with Albertans, industry, and innovators to solve challenges together. This approach has helped reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas sector while supporting jobs, investment, and responsible energy development. Can the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas update the Assembly on how Alberta's collaborative, made-in-Alberta approach has contributed to methane reductions and how our progress compares to the province's original targets?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a beacon to the world when it comes to innovating our way out of the problems that the world has. Through our emissions reductions Alberta initiative we have developed innovations that have gone all over the world to reduce greenhouse gas. Since 2007 we have had an industrial price on carbon, but instead of putting that money into general revenues, we invested it in entrepreneurs and in research and development, and we're seeing great results. Methane emissions have fallen 62 per cent from 2014 levels, well on track to meet the 2035 target of 75 per cent.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Alberta achieves its best outcomes when government works alongside farmers, municipalities, and local communities and given that producers have identified excess water management as a challenge affecting productivity and agricultural sustainability, can the same minister update the Assembly on Alberta's tile drainage initiatives and how collaboration with farmers and local partners is supporting better water management and stronger agricultural outcomes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government listened closely to farmers and agricultural organizations who told us that the existing Water Act approval process for tile drainage was too lengthy and costly. In response we are replacing that process with a simpler code of practice expected to be completed in early 2027. This will make it easier for farmers to manage excess water and improve growing conditions on their land. These types of common-sense practices are what help keep farmers in business, reducing their production costs and the price Albertans pay in the grocery stores.

The Speaker: Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's methane reductions were achieved by working collaboratively with industry and given that our tile drainage initiatives reflect the value of partnering with farmers and local communities, can the same minister explain why this government's approach of working with Albertans continues to deliver practical environmental results while top-down policies proposed by the NDP negatively impact people and ultimately lead to poor environmental results?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This government believes that the best solutions come from working with Albertans, not against them. Albertans remember when the NDP brought in Bill 6 without properly consulting the farmers and ranchers most affected by it. Too often the opposition's answer is more rules, more paperwork, and more costs. While they focused on things like mandatory porta-potties in farmers' fields, our government is cutting red tape, lowering costs for Albertans, and giving producers greater freedom to do their job. We trust Alberta farmers, and that approach is delivering results.

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

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Tablings? I see none. Oh, no. It's because I didn't see the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Al-Guneid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings. The five requisitioned copies of the Alberta Surface Rights Federation letter that I cited called Surface Rights, the Mature Asset Strategy, and the Alberta Government's Failure to Address the Consequences of Energy Development.

The second tabling is Alberta Landowner Asks for Probe into Premier's Top Energy Aide over Potential Conflict-of-interest Breaches. It's an investigation.

The last one is a *Globe and Mail* article, 'If You Make a Mess, You Clean It Up': Alberta Landowners Take Energy Regulator to Court over Orphan [Wells].

The Speaker: Calgary-Edgemont.

Ms Hayter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of three letters I referred to yesterday during debate on protecting public health care. One is from Susan, titled Protect and Rebuild Our Healthcare. The second is from Alison, Rebuild Universal Public Health Care – No Two-tier Healthcare. The third was from – sorry; it's sticking. I think it was Shannon. Yes. Shannon asking for us to call an election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a letter that was written to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs by the MLA for Edmonton-Glenora, and she referred to it in the questions.

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

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is an e-mail from Erin Morgan, a physiotherapist who practices in Calgary-Varsity. It's expressing concerns about the new model for physiotherapy with the new insurance scheme and how it will degrade service.

The Speaker: Please give us the subject matter without reading the whole thing.

Dr. Metz: The second tabling is a letter from Fix Physio in my riding. This is a letter from October 23, expressing concerns about the new model.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling an article from CBC that I made reference to in debate last night, entitled Combining Rockies, Foothills in New Electoral District Gets Pushback: Mayors, residents question proposed electoral boundary change.

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. Wright, Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services, pursuant to the Health Professions Act: Alberta College of Dental Hygienists annual report 2025; College of Acupuncturists of Alberta annual report April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026; College of Dental Technologists of Alberta annual report 2025; College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta annual report 2025-26; College of Physiotherapists of Alberta 2025 annual report; College of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta annual report 2025-26.

The Speaker: Okay. That takes us to points of order.

Point of Order
Allegations against Members

The Speaker: With the concurrence of the two House leaders I would prefer to deal with the use of the word "cheating" together.

Mr. Schow: Are you asking, Mr. Speaker, if we could combine the points of order?

The Speaker: That is correct.

Mr. Schow: Great minds think alike.

The Speaker: That's two thumbs up, one from each side. Okay. [interjection] Stay tuned. If it was your turn to talk, you could tell us what happened, but it's my turn.

Last night there were several warnings about using the phrase "cheating," the allegation, and I will be reminded, I'm sure, by somebody that normally speaking these things as called out to the party oftentimes are allowed. That basically goes along until it causes disorder, which I think is the point where we're at right now. The other thing where this always was sort of on the line is that it's a long-standing tradition here not to accuse others of breaking the law. And when cheating is in relation to the conduct of an election, cheating in an election, it is certainly breaking the law. So I think that has run its course.

Having said that, a point of order – actually, the first one was before QP. It was on the member's statement, Government House Leader, but bearing in mind what I just said, let's not belabour that, please. [interjection] No. You'll get a chance. Both sides will get a chance here.

Mr. Schow: No, Mr. Speaker. We have work to get to. I'll just point out all the times that I have called a point of order on the word "cheating". There were two instances. [interjection] Does the member have something to add to this conversation?

The Speaker: Hon. members, no, no. Listen, the opposition members shouldn't be talking at all, and the Government House Leader should not be addressing anybody but the chair. So let's try that, everybody.

Mr. Schow: Love that idea, Mr. Speaker.

There are two points of order at 1:47 from the Member for Calgary-Shaw. There was another one at 2:16 from the Member for Calgary-Foothills, one at 2:24 from Calgary-Edgemont, one at 2:26. I don't actually have the offender because there was just so many, I lost track, and then at 2:35 the Member for St. Albert. All include either "cheating," the member directly, the caucus, or even use the term "rigging." These, of course, would all, in the context, be considered illegal, and I would ask that the chair rule these all out of order and, going forward, call them out of order on the spot, please. Under 23(h), (i).

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Talking about the UCP government cheating should be a matter of debate because we are talking about a criticism directed at a government policy to reject a map which we believe was fair and created in the proper process to support a map that has been redrawn through a made-up, questionable process that gives them electoral advantage. As you have said in this place, there is generally latitude in this place, especially for the Official Opposition, to be able to call out something that we would say is an injustice and is a problem. We are not accusing the government of a crime, which I have disagreed with in the past when the word "cheating" has been melded with other things. A crime would be in the Criminal Code. It might be fraud, bribery, corruption, breach of trust. In this case we're talking about a process in a way that is a matter of debate.

Now, I do not believe that our use of this term is what's causing disruption, Mr. Speaker. I think that inconsistent rulings and sometimes this way and sometimes that way is part of the challenge, and if a clear ruling that calling a government out for actions that appear to the public, to experts, and to the Official Opposition as cheating would be allowed, that would settle this.

I also think, Mr. Speaker, that last week in reviewing the *Hansard,* there was a ruling about "stealing." We have at times been chastised and cautioned about calling the government cheating, but when the government accuses us of stealing, that is found to not be a point of order, and that is, I think, a more clear crime. It creates a lot of uncertainty. The ruling that I hope you give is not to ban a word that is important to a parliamentary debate that is going to be, in very short order, circumvented because we know that the government motion to time allocate Bill 40 is on the Order Paper. We are talking about the language we can use during an incredibly important debate over the next, literally, 48 hours is most likely what's going to happen.

I do not think that the Official Opposition should be silenced because we are talking about government policy. We are debating around the outcome of what that policy might look like, and we need to be using language that resonates with the Alberta public. I appreciate that the word "gerrymandering" hasn't been ruled out of order, but, Mr. Speaker, the word "gerrymandering" doesn't mean a lot to a lot of Albertans. We need to use plain language in explaining. That is part of our job as Official Opposition. It is our job to communicate to the public what we see happening. We are not accusing the government of a crime, but we have accused them of doing unconstitutional things, as we have done in the past and as is our right to do, and I believe strongly that the word "cheating" is critical for our ability to do our job. I think the latitude should be granted to us.

I think a clear ruling that accusing an individual of cheating is out of order would align with 23(h), (i), and (j), but especially in this context of very complicated, esoteric processes where government motions were invented out of thin air and committees were created in unprecedented ways, to explain that is an important part of the work of the Official Opposition. In this place I hope that the Speaker will err on the freedom of speech, the freedom to communicate what is happening, especially given that we are only talking about 48 hours

before this bill is likely to be passed, and on we go into the next stage of whatever debate or discussion might be happening. We're talking about a very short-term thing that is salient to the public, is important to our communication, and is a policy debate.

It should be allowed. I believe this strongly. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will provide a clear ruling that we can apply going forward so that we can have the conversation we need to have in this place, because not only am I offended by the government's actions but by the idea that we would have to talk about the government's actions with our hands tied behind our back.

In fact, today, when a member pivoted from the word "cheating" to something else, they also called a point of order. I believe the government is just so sensitive that they don't want us talking about what they are doing, and whatever language we use will become a disorder unless you protect the rights of the Official Opposition to do our jobs and to call out what we see happening in plain language so that the Alberta public can follow along and see what we are talking about, Mr. Speaker. I don't think that we need to be more creative and we need to jump through more hoops here. I think that we should be protected to be able to say in this policy debate that we disagree with how the government has done this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, thank you for your submissions on both sides. To be clear, I have sympathy for arguments on both sides of this. Also, you want a clear ruling – when it comes to the point where something causes disorder, then it is my job to bring order back. The word "cheating" has gone there. Hon. opposition, I've often said that there are 100,000-plus words in the English language. You can use "gerrymandering." You can use "circumventing." There are all kinds of things you can do. I think this particular – I see the word that you're referring to that doesn't mean the same thing but it's going down the same road. I don't think that is an issue here today.

So I think that the word "cheating," when it's in reference to the election, seems to have run its course. It's causing disruption. I think we're going to have to find different words. I have complete confidence in the Official Opposition that you'll find those words and you will make your point. That's important. You do need to do that. I support that. I think there are enough other choices that we can make as we go down this road to make your point effectively.

That settles this matter today. In fact, I think that settles all these matters today.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Time Allocation on Bills 39 and 40

48. Mr. Schow moved:
Be it resolved that
(a) when further consideration of Bill 39, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2), is resumed, not more than one hour be allotted to any stage of consideration of the bill,
(b) when further consideration of Bill 40, Electoral Divisions Act, is resumed, not more than one hour be allotted to any stage of consideration of the bill, and
(c) upon the expiry of the time allotted under clauses (a) and (b) for each stage of consideration of a bill, every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at that stage shall be put forthwith.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move Government Motion 48 on the Order Paper. For context, for those who are watching at home and those who are listening here within the Chamber walls, there has been ample opportunity for debate on this and this topic now for months, long before we returned for the fall sitting of this Legislature. There were 113 questions on electoral boundaries in the spring of 2026 alone, 48 of which went directly to the Premier; 42 questions on electoral boundaries this fall so far, 42 and counting; and a combined anticipated debate time on Bill 32, Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2026, and Bill 40, Electoral Divisions Act, of 9 hours. Approximately seven hours were spent on government motions related to electoral boundaries and 10 and a half hours of committee hearings dealing with 30 NDP motions, in addition to countless hours of public consultations and time that the members of the public and members of this Chamber have all submitted their opinions on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to move forward. It is time to see progress on these pieces of legislation. And it's time for the opposition to take on that role as His Majesty's Loyal Opposition, not His Majesty's obstructionists. The government has a mandate. It is required that every two terms we re-evaluate or that the electoral divisions are looked at. That has been done. We now have a bill in front of us. I encourage all members to debate these bills vigorously but also respect the process and realize that there is government business to get to. I look forward to the robust debate.

With that, I move Government Motion 48.

3:00

The Acting Speaker: Are there others who wish to speak? The Member for Calgary-Edgemont.

Ms Al-Guneid: Calgary-Glenmore.

The Acting Speaker: Calgary-Glenmore. Sorry.

Ms Al-Guneid: Yeah. That's okay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is not my pleasure to speak on Government Motion 48. We're back again with this practice of time allocation to limit debate on critical bills with massive impact and overreach. The UCP government continues with their tactics to ram through bills using time allocation, cutting debate on egregious bills, and even ending the legislative session early in the past. Conveniently, this Motion 48 limits debate on Bill 39 and Bill 40. One is about the privatization of health care, and one is on gerrymandering Alberta's electoral maps. So this is about pushing through awful legislation without the Legislative Assembly's duty to scrutinize laws under debate.

Let's not forget that they're silencing debate on Bill 40, which is the let's-game-our-way-through bill. The UCP wants to increase their advantage to win the next election, Mr. Speaker, and they're silencing debate to make it happen. Instead of defending their decision here in the Legislature on this bill, they're ramming through this gerrymandering bill in the House. What we're seeing, what we've been witnessing in the last few months and weeks is the worst instance of gerrymandering in Canadian history, and there's no close second. No politician, no provincial or federal government before has had the audacity to do this in this very blatant way until the UCP government.

Government Motion 48 covers up this questionable bill. First, the Premier threw out a map produced by a truly independent process because she didn't like the outcome. Then she created an unconstitutional process to produce a map that helps the UCP in the next election. As simple as that. Now we have this map where all Albertans lose. These maps are not good for Albertans. They're not good for rural Albertans or urban Albertans. They're only good for the UCP government to cling to power.

We've said this many times in the House, Mr. Speaker. Voters should pick politicians; politicians should not pick their voters. Albertans deserve to have their votes matter at the ballot box, and this Government Motion 48 is eroding parliamentary scrutiny and oversight. That's literally our job here in the Legislative Assembly. Albertans living in cities and small towns and rural areas all deserve representatives who understand their local concerns and can advocate effectively on behalf of that local context.

We've seen recently that over 62 experts wrote a letter to the Assembly telling us that at the heart of any democracy lies an essential promise that citizens can choose their government through fair elections, Mr. Speaker. In different parts of the world people die for the right and privilege of voting in fair and independent elections. This is a reality. That's what the UCP needs to remember. They're fundamentally changing how we run fair elections in this province and derailing the concept of effective representation.

Now, with this time allocation through this motion it forces a vote before all the concerns may have been voiced, Mr. Speaker. That's our job here in this House and especially the Official Opposition, and the UCP government is turning the Legislature into a rubber stamp for these egregious bills, this horrible agenda, rather than having a thoughtful, deliberate legislative body. This bill is limiting the debate on Bill 40, which is redrawing Alberta's electoral maps through a UCP-majority committee. It's limiting debate on creating an American-style health care system because the UCP government knows that Albertans do not want this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any others? The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Motion 48 and time allocation. I think we are representatives of Albertans, and we were sent here to do a job. Doing the job means having a discussion, heated debates in terms of developing policies, and making sure that Albertans' resources are well spent, making sure that Albertans' services are accessible, and making sure Albertans receive quality services.

That takes me to the time allocation that is put now on Bill 39. My colleague has already spoken about Bill 40, so I will just focus more on Bill 39. I think, Mr. Speaker, one thing that is important on this time allocation to know: this is, for example, a bill that will bring out of pocket when you want access to a family physician. This is a bill that will bring out-of-pocket costs on Albertans when you want to do your regular lab work. It's worth debating. It's worth spending hours and hours so that we get the best out of these conversations for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are the shareholders, so to speak, not only members but the shareholders of the health care scheme that we have. The Alberta health care insurance plan is a plan where Albertans are the shareholders. They need to know. They need to have a say. If they don't, their representatives need to have a say in the changes that happen to that plan. Bill 39 makes a change to what will be accessible with your insurance plan and what will not. The government is changing the whole schedules that were covered under the Alberta health insurance plan, and they're not even letting us debate on that. They're not even letting us talk about what Albertans are telling us about how they want care to be accessed. That's something that is not acceptable.

This is a government that has wasted the money that would have covered Albertans in terms of the quality of services that they need to access. Mr. Speaker, I'll just give one example here. The amount of money that used to go to private surgery was about $21 million just five years ago. It's close to $70 million now. It is $70 million now. That is an incredible shift of resources into private delivery.

Bill 39 is making an attempt to change a similar exercise at the family physicians level, at the laboratory services level. Mr. Speaker, they can come with the evidence showing that this is what needs to happen, but they shouldn't shut it off for a conversation. That's unacceptable. Each member in this House on average represents over 50,000 Albertans. We were sent here to speak on their behalf. We were resourced, our constituency offices, to listen to Albertans. When we hear those voices, our responsibility is to bring it here and to discuss. The government's responsibility is to debate it and defend the decisions that they are making on our health care policy systems but not to shut it down.

Therefore, this is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. This trend has to stop, and I ask members of this Assembly to oppose this motion.

3:10

The Acting Speaker: The Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the government motion, I guess, just almost eliminating debate in this place on two pieces of legislation. Now, weirdly enough, I was in the women's washroom when the House leader was speaking, so I was kind of focused on listening because there's not a lot to do in there. What I heard was somebody railing about how awesome this government is and how they've created enough opportunity for all of us to debate this very important legislation and he doesn't know why we're being obstructionist and not just letting it go with 60 minutes of debate. You know, there are 87 of us in here, and God forbid we all be allowed more than five minutes to speak to something that has the potential to put their thumb on the scale of the next election.

This government is stopping debate. Why? Not because it's an ethical, transparent government. It's because it's uncomfortable, and they don't want to talk about it, and they don't want us to say certain words because it might hurt their feelings, so we use other words like "rigging."

Anyway, I would like to point out a couple of things. You know, all of my colleagues, I think, that have stood up to debate this Bill 40 have said that politicians should not choose their voters. I was really hoping that we could all agree on that, that we could all say: absolutely. I didn't agree with all of the boundary changes in the initial report or the final or even the one 10 years before that. But it's not our job to create maps that we like and be comfortable and take care of people that are vulnerable, and that's what this government has done. Then to make matters worse, they're just stifling debate and then gaslighting us and telling us that we've had ample time to debate this critical piece of legislation, and we know that that's not true.

Now, in St. Albert there has been a lot of attention, as you can imagine, not just on the booze cruise but on the gerrymandering that is set to take place. I'll tell you that the people of St. Albert are not happy. As I've heard from other constituencies, they're angry. They're very angry because they're not stupid. They understand what's going on.

They also saw the American Republicans pretty much get wiped out in the midterms because of gerrymandering and more. We saw what happened in Texas. California had to respond. We saw gerrymandering all over the place, and you know what? Where the worst gerrymandering happened, they didn't get the result that they wanted. And I expect that this government is in for a big surprise. Everywhere I go, I don't even have to say the G-word. I don't even have to say Bill 40. People just go off and tell me how disgusted they are with this government stifling debate and setting themselves up to rig an election.

Now, I don't know how many weeks it's been in a row that the *St. Albert Gazette* has been reporting on this nightmare of a government. Here's a little bit, and I will table the article tomorrow. It's from November 17 of this year. Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction minister and MLA for Morinville-St. Albert Dale Nally said that neither party would get what they want through an independent process.

Mr. Hunter: Point of order.

Point of Order
Referring to a Member by Name

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, we do not use proper names.

Ms Renaud: Oh, I'm so sorry. I apologize and withdraw. It's my first day. Yeah.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hunter: First day.

Ms Renaud: Yeah. Second day.

Debate Continued

Ms Renaud: "With the next election only a year away, I would encourage the NDP to stop the election denialism and work across the aisle to debate and vote on these proposed boundaries on behalf of all Albertans," said the minister of red tape reduction.

Are you kidding me? That is bonkers that this MLA actually believes this crap. Like, seriously. It's quoted in a newspaper, an actual quote. That's ridiculous. If any of y'all over there believe that your constituents believe you when you say, "Oh, yeah, I'm all about democracy; transparency, woo-hoo," they don't believe you. They know it's baloney. They know what you're trying to do. You are trying to give yourselves an advantage because you know that you will not win. You cannot win without rigging this election. You can do the song and dance all you want about a committee that you've made up that was independent. Baloney. You know that's not true. We know that's not true. You can continue to make stories up, but Albertans see you. They see exactly who you are, and they see exactly what you're doing. It's bad. I'm going to take my seat and let my colleagues continue.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-North East.

Member Gurinder Brar: Mr. Speaker, as I speak today about this government, democracy, and freedom, I'm reminded of the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, who wrote in 1951 that "democracy is a tender plant which has to be nourished with wisdom and care and which requires a great deal of understanding of its real processes and its discipline." Before we move forward, let us look at the record of this government. This is the government that has invoked time allocation motions 86 times – 86 times – since 2019. It is more than the combined time allocation motions by previous governments. This is how democratic this government is.

This year when EPS issued a statement asking people to report any hate crimes, the Premier didn't blink an eye before she made a statement comparing hate speech to free speech. This Premier has the audacity to defend hate speech but not the democratic participation right here in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. When Albertans look at how this government operates, they have serious questions to ask. Albertans want to know why this government suppresses their voices. Albertans want to know why this government shuts down the debates when things don't go in their favour. Albertans want to know why this government is so entitled and takes them for granted. These are the serious questions that Albertans are asking, and rightly so.

Albertans cannot withstand a government that is so obsessed with notwithstanding clauses, Mr. Speaker. This government is so out of touch that they cannot even respect the process to draw the boundaries. This government is so out of touch that they fail to understand the basic concept of democracy, that voters should choose their politicians and not the politicians choose their voters. This government is so out of touch that they continue to ram their health care privatization agenda even when doctors, nurses, health care professionals, and experts continue to warn against this.

Mr. Speaker, following the process of drawing the boundaries is not about favouring one party or the other. It is about protecting democracy, and respecting democracy is not a favour politicians do to democracy; it is the duty that we owe to the people who have elected us. Letting democracy follow its due course in this Assembly is not about political courtesy; it is about protecting the voices of Albertans who have voted to represent them. This is the government that has changed the democratic process; changed the democratic process to drawing the maps, changed the democratic process to let members represent their constituents, changed the democratic process and handcuffed free speech. This is the government that talks about free speech all day long but only when it benefits them. I want to make it clear that select speech is not free speech. Hate speech is not free speech. Time allocations are not free speech. The reality is that under this government, free speech needs freedom: freedom from notwithstanding clauses, freedom from time allocation motions of this government, freedom from the chains of this government.

Albertans deserve better. They deserve a government that will handcuff the hate speech, not the free speech. They deserve a government that will govern with a helping hand, not with an iron fist. They deserve a government that will respect the democracy and not restrict democracy. This government has failed to respect democracy, failed to keep free speech free, Mr. Speaker, failed to differentiate hate speech and free speech. In the next elections Albertans will have a better choice: a choice that will respect democratic principles, process, and people; a choice that will never use the notwithstanding clause to strip the rights of the most vulnerable neighbours; a choice that will build a province where prosperity will be shared by all and not just by the few. Alberta NDP is ready to build a province where prosperity will be shared by all and not just driven by greed. The government will respect democracy and free speech will be freed.

3:20

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sad that I need to speak to this bill on bringing in time allocation on two very, very critical bills that the UCP are trying to ram through. This government has proven to be more antidemocratic than any government in Alberta's history, specifically in how they're acting in the Legislature. They've been ramming through bills, using time allocation, cutting short opportunities for debate, ending session early, and refusing to pass a single private member's bill from the opposition even though they will then take it, rework it a bit, weaken it, and bring it through as part of their own bill a few months later. They are failing us in this specifically because they're bringing in time allocation on two things that are critical for the future of Albertans.

I'm going to speak a little bit to what they're doing with the health care bill, Bill 39. This was introduced on November 4. They are now bringing in time allocation so that there is really limited opportunity to speak to all of the problems with this bill and allow

any opportunity for us to improve it in any substantial way. One of the things that this bill is going to be doing is further eroding. This Bill 39, which they're not letting us talk about, is further eroding publicly funded health care, and I believe Albertans need to know that this is part of one of many steps that they are taking to erode our public health care system. With this bill they're bringing in an insurance scheme that is going to bring in an Americanized payment system to our public health care system. We're not even being given time with this time allocation to really go through and talk about what the implications of that are.

This is going to cost Albertans a lot of money. One of the big values of the single-payer model in the Alberta and the Canadian health care system is that we don't need to have a whole system of clerks looking after billing, and we don't have to be going to insurance companies to get approval for everything. Yes, we do have that for drugs. That's a problem and a deficiency of our system. No, they're not fixing that. They're just bringing in a multipayer system to our basic health care. One of the ways that contains costs in the Canadian system is the single-payer system, and Albertans will no longer have that, but we're not going to be given time to actually adequately discuss that.

Now, in May to September of 2026 this government brought in Bill 29, an earlier version of the health statutes amendment act, used time allocation to ram that through. That permitted access to certain previously covered things, diagnostic tests, and now people would be able to access that, which takes resources out of a very underresourced system.

Prior to that, one year ago in November, December of 2025, they brought in Bill 11, which is very scary, and we had very little time to talk about that bill because again they used time allocation. They brought in a process called dual practice, which allows physicians to work both within the system and outside the Alberta health care system, so they could charge privately as well as bill the health care system. Other provinces definitely allow physicians to bill privately, but they can't also be within the system. This allows those that wish to do it the best of all worlds, which means that they can build up their business or their practice using the funding from the public system while they build up a private system and spend more and more of their time in that system because, of course, it's going to pay better. There's no limit on what they can charge.

This government brought in time allocation, and now they're doing it again so that Albertans will not have time to appreciate what is going on.

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

Member Eremenko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The irony – the irony – of the Government House Leader to stand up when he introduced Government Motion 48 and tell us to respect the process. I mean, come on, right? I mean, this is rich. Respect the process? Mr. Speaker, I am a nerd about process. Let me tell you that it is really what delights me, one of my favourite parts of the job. This government has manipulated, thrown out, disregarded, ignored the process around the Electoral Boundaries in every way and twice on Sunday. It is unbelievable, and we are here being instructed to respect the process, throw out all of the parliamentary convention around what this space is for.

This is a space for debate, and after the next election when the tables are turned and this government is opposition, they will know that one of the few opportunities that they truly have to get on the record to represent their constituents is what we have to say in these chambers. That is the process. The process is hearing from our constituents, being duly elected regardless of how the tables are tipped one way or another to represent those constituents, to have the challenging conversations, and then to come in here and represent those interests. That, Mr. Speaker, is the process. It is high time that government respect it themselves.

They dismissed the commission process, the one that for every 10 years or so has been respected and honoured regardless of the outcome in favour of one side or another, because that is the process. Then they created this complete sham process on the fly because of one line that they seized upon in the very robust final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Here we are being denied what is absolutely the most fundamental part of our job, which is representing the constituents of our respective ridings here in the Legislature.

Now, fun fact, Mr. Speaker. I learned that time allocation is also referred to as the guillotine in the west parliamentary system, and certainly this government is executing debate. I guess, it's not executing, like, the carrying out. It is the killing of debate, to be very clear. The guillotine is also known as time allocation, and I can't think of a more kind of demonstrative example, an image in our minds, when once again we are having to deal with time allocation from this government because they are afraid of the debate. They might roll their eyes and claim that it's our turn to respect the process, when in reality it is their summary execution of debate, the one time when all Albertans across this province can have their voices be heard via the person that they duly elected to be here.

The process they threw out? They passed the legislation that assigned 89 seats to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The commission was struck. It did its work for months. It toured across this province hearing from Albertans on how they wanted the next electoral map to look like with some parameters that the UCP government established. It was their parameters, which was their ability to do so. They didn't like the commission's final report, and so they threw it out, Mr. Speaker, and created a back-of-the-envelope process that – I don't even know if you can call it a process if it had never been tested or done before. This was just a brainstorm that decided to put together an advisory panel that would be overseen by a UCP-majority committee. No public consultation. No accountability. And they want to continue to limit debate, as they have so many times before. It is shameful.

3:30

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

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise reluctantly but necessarily to speak on Motion 48, which is a time allocation on perhaps one of the most outrageous bills that has ever been brought forward in this Legislature not just during the time that I've been here, which is longer than anybody else in this room, but in the history of the entire province. I think we need to ask ourselves: why would this government be in this situation, bringing forward this change to the boundary commission's legally mandated boundaries that they drew and took so many months to put together and so forth? This government threw it out and wrote their own. You know, maybe they thought: oh, well, people won't even notice.

But here in 2026, after all the other outrageous things that this government has done, oh, they're noticing. They are taking up a notice, and they understand what the word "gerrymandering" means. They understand how people try to manipulate the boundaries of an election in order to get the outcome that they want as a government. That goes completely against any principle of democracy. It goes against any precedent that's ever been set not just in this province of Alberta but in the entire nation of Canada. And it goes against the tide of reason and logical thought and the tide of public opinion that is sweeping across not just Alberta, Canada but indeed North America

and many parts of the world, too. You can't simply manipulate and rig your way out of losing an election.

You know, it bears some look into the last couple of years to sort of see what the logic of this government was. As I said, not just this outrageous legislation here today but a series of unbelievably outrageous choices this government has made over the last three-plus years. Starting backwards from the referendum, it was a complete washout and a destructive thing not just for this UCP government, who lost the referendum terribly, right? They shook the dice and said: "Okay. Let's go. We're going to discombobulate this province, and they won't even know what hit them." Well, Albertans sure did, and they voted against that referendum. They voted to stay in Canada, they voted against the racist immigration policies, and they voted against many other manipulations that were happening from this province.

Why did the government say, "Oh, well, we can do this; we can write something crazy because – you know what? – we will just change the electoral boundaries, and we'll win the election anyway"? Uh-uh. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't work that way, and it will not work this way in the next 10 months.

How about privatizing health care – right? – a long-standing, very foundational part of why people chose to vote to stay in Canada. It is the most Canadian thing we have. It is the envy of the rest of the world that we have public health care. Yes, we have to invest in it. You know, this government said: "Well, let's go for the big one. We're going to privatize health care. We're going to have a dual payer. We're going to allow people to participate in both systems, doctors and so forth." People said, "Oh, well, how on earth could you think you can do it here and now in 2026?" "We'll change the boundaries. We'll change the electoral boundaries, and we'll win anyway." That was the logic. Totally outrageous and totally going against both logic, reality, and common sense.

How about using the notwithstanding clause four times, never before used in the province of Alberta, forcing teachers back to work, stripping of their rights, stripping down and compromising the integrity of our public education system? How on God's earth do you think that you could get away with that here? They'll say: "Well, you know, in 2026 we're going to change the boundaries. We're going to change the electoral boundaries. We're going to win anyway." I don't think so. It's not going to work. Albertans are smarter than that. We know that you cannot simply do something like that and get away with it. I'm sorry. It's just not possible.

Lowering diploma standards. Again, you get these crazy things washing up on the shores of this Legislature every week, it seems like. They say: well, let's change the diplomas, and then it'll look like we have better graduation rates. I don't know what they were thinking, right? People say: "How could you do that? That's outrageous." "You know what? We'll change the boundaries. We'll change the electoral maps. We'll win the election anyway. We've got this covered." Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. You don't have this covered at all. It's quite the opposite.

This UCP government, by choosing to rig elections, by choosing to bring this boundary thing forward to this fine Legislature, insults the intelligence and the integrity of Albertans and of democracy, and it will fail.

Member Campbell: Mr. Speaker, we're all familiar with the idea of who wore it best, but today we're going to take a little tweak on that and it's who delivered it best.

> Mr. Speaker, the democratic process matters. We are elected by Albertans to come to this Assembly and make sure everything that comes out of it is debated, vetted, tweaked, adjusted, and voted on to represent our constituents' views. That is how this is supposed to work. [But] the arrogance of this government is astounding. Bills are introduced and passed in a matter of days. Amendments are steamrolled as though perfection has already been achieved. Committees are sidestepped. Consultation is ignored. This process has to stop. We cannot keep making laws like this.

If that sounds familiar, that was delivered by our Premier when she was a member of the loyal opposition recording her dissatisfaction with time allocation, with being limited in debate, with being unable to voice the concerns of her constituents. How unusual that now the shoe is on the other foot, and we are setting new records about how often this tool has been used. A little surprising. But today is actually quite a unique instance of this because we have a buy one, get one sale, two time allocations for the price of one. How exciting. Again, are we making more history in here? Remarkable. So efficient. I've heard so much from members of this government that government is inefficient. Now, I've seen some of their handiwork, and it is inefficient, but it is great to see such efficient work coming out to the floor of this Chamber.

I imagine that we should apply the same zeal towards efficiency to our other public services. Let's tackle our outstanding taxes to property owners from oil and gas companies who are defunct in paying their bills on time. Maybe we should do our data centre rollout with the similar efficiency without leaving glaring holes in legislation.

You know, these government-created maps are wrong. I think Albertans of all stripes can look and say: this is wrong. This process has been wrong. The way it is now and is literally right now being pushed through here is wrong. People know in their hearts and in their guts that this is just wrong. It's appalling to see the fundamentals of our democracy being jeopardized in this way. The use of time allocation to stifle debate is wrong.

What are we talking about here? One of these is health care in our province. We spent 41 per cent of the 2026 provincial budget on health care; 41 per cent. That is an enormous line item, yet we don't have time to talk about it? Forty-one per cent of every tax dollar, thousands and thousands of individual Albertan contributions, will go into this one program alone, and we ain't got the time.

Before I ever became a political candidate, I had actually asked my voice to be heard by this government. I submitted feedback to the boundary commission, and I was grateful to be heard. It worked. The process worked. The boundary commission put together an even-keeled majority report until the UCP put their thumb on the scales, until it threw away the work of a public commission, until it cherry-picked a single recommendation from a single committee member, which has been repeatedly misrepresented on the floor of this Chamber as being that the majority opinion has asked for this. Incorrect.

The UCP has erroneously implemented a very clear instruction from the only line that they cherry-picked, and if you're only going to use one line, at least use the whole line. It's 18 months of work, over a million dollars of public money spent, and a noncontroversial outcome to a routine process totally thrown out the door by this UCP government. But what's a million dollars between friends? I know that this government has a sordid history of lavishing significantly higher amounts to get even less. I'm still waiting for a couple of free shipments of Turkish Tylenol to my house because I know it hasn't shown up anywhere else.

3:40

Albertans have the right to have their voices heard. We are here. All that is required is gathered in this room right now. The only thing missing is a government that doesn't mind reclining in their chairs and listening while the representatives of the people have their say. How deeply partisan is it that there is no time for dissenting opinions?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on yet another time allocation motion. Seems to be that my few opportunities to speak are actually associated with time allocation motions and complaining about them. But this time, as my excellent colleague from Calgary-Shaw – boy, what must this government think when that Member for Calgary-Shaw showed up on this side of the House? They could learn from that. They could choose to govern for the Alberta people because the Alberta people told them that they're not governing for them. They could change their ways, but what they're choosing to do instead is fix the bounds.

So we have now a super time allocation motion, which, to paraphrase one of my favourite movies, *Office Space:* two bills at the same time. I want the record to show very clearly that I am being silenced. One of the 87 members of this province, one of the 87 people in this province who was chosen to represent us in this edifice of democracy, is being silenced. What are they doing to everyone else? What are they doing to the doctors, to the nurses, to the home-care aides, to the cleaning staff in hospitals who don't have a voice? What are they doing to them if they could do that to me?

Now, Government Motion 48 time allocates two bills. One is the boundary commission bill, Bill 40, and the other is the bill to privatize health care even more, Bill 39. In Montreal it is possible to pay for primary care. A primary care appointment costs $350. One appointment: $350. I just spoke to somebody yesterday who said that – you know the health spending account that many people get, many of my constituents get? Folks who work downtown often have good health spending accounts that they can spend on gym memberships, a whole bunch of other stuff that CRA approved. In Montreal that health spending account is spent on primary care. That's what this government wants to import. This government wants to increase the cost to every household by thousands of dollars a year.

Even worse, the number one cause of consumer bankruptcy in the United States is medical debt. That's the system they want here. It's bonkers. It's bonkers, and it's something that people didn't vote for. Instead of fixing that, instead of fixing health care, instead of fixing how they govern, instead of fixing their attitude so that they actually win the odd by-election, they're fixing the bounds.

We see now how the legislative committee operated. This is how it operated. When our two members who were on the committee, the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View and the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods, stood in this House and said that they were being silenced, this is another example of how they were silenced by prematurely adjourning debate before all the thoughts had been expressed before the debate had happened.

Now, why is debate important rather than just question period? I noticed that, wow, we asked a lot of questions on this. Yeah. It's called question period. It's not called answer period. Just because you ask a question, just because we ask a question doesn't mean that an answer comes in. We just saw an example of this today when the Minister of Justice created a very, you know, deeply inaccurate statement of Justice Miller's commission on electoral bounds when he said that the Miller commission asked for two extra seats. They did not. They absolutely did not.

I see that my time here is ending, but you know what? I'm just going to keep going. There is absolutely no . . .

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

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Government Motion 48 means that this government is scared of debate. There is no other way to say it. One hour and that's all they allow at each stage of Bill 40, the bill that redraws the electoral boundaries of this province, and one hour at each stage of Bill 39, a bill that changes nine health laws at once. If this government is proud of those bills, they would want us to talk about them all week. They don't, and Albertans should ask why? Why are they afraid?

Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-Ellerslie, who I'm representing, did not send me here to sit and watch the clock, and I'm sure none of the members of this House are here to do so. They sent me here to ask hard questions, so when the UCP shuts down debate, it's not just my voice they are silencing; it's the voice of every family I represent.

A lot of my neighbours came from countries where the people in power, the lines they drew and the results were known before anyone voted. They left that behind, Mr. Speaker. They did not expect to see it here again.

Let's be clear about Bill 40. Albertans are promised an independent process. The commission did its work. They listened to thousands of Albertans and recommended a new boundary map. The UCP did not like it, so they threw it out. Then a committee with a UCP majority oversaw the panel. Now we have 91 seats and Calgary ridings that cross way over the city lines. Lethbridge, one city, slides to four ridings. When the government rejects the independent map and draws its own, that's gerrymandering, Mr. Speaker, and now they want to rush it through before Albertans figure out what happened.

Bill 39 is the same playbook. Friends of Medicare warns that it pushes us toward more American-style health care. If the minister thinks they are wrong, if they think experts are wrong and it's not American style, then stand up and prove it. Instead, this government reaches for the stopwatch.

With Bill 39, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the laws affecting people receiving care, mental health and addiction treatments, and families trying to help someone they love. They deserve to understand what these changes mean. Who makes those decisions? What protections are there, and who can they run to when the system fails them? Those questions deserve an answer before we pass this bill.

That's a habit. As my colleague from Calgary-North East said, this government used time allocation 86 times since 2019. Every time the debate gets hard, the UCP shut it down, and Albertans are watching. The election is not far, Mr. Speaker. This government can rush the vote in this Chamber, but it cannot rush the judgment of Albertans. So I ask all the members of this UCP government: vote to shut down this motion.

3:50

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, once again, like my colleagues, cannot believe that I'm being compelled to have to speak to a time allocation motion. I actually want to comment on the fact that this is actually the 88th time since 2019 that this UCP government has brought in time allocation. That is way more than half the number of times in Alberta history that time allocation has already been used, and it's been used all by this government in the last seven years.

I want to comment, Mr. Speaker, on the fact that the members across the way act as though they have a supermajority of seats in this House, and they simply do not. They have the barest of majorities. In fact, the members of the Official Opposition, every single one of us, including the independent member, represent over half of all Albertans. In fact, over 2.5 million Albertans are represented by the individuals sitting on this side of the House.

Why that's important is because these members seem to think that this Legislature is only about them and implementing their agenda, an agenda that we have outlined numerous times is far removed from the reality of the priorities of Albertans. We continue to see motions and legislation brought forward that do not reflect the priorities of Albertans, but, like it or not, the majority of Albertans are represented by the members of this Chamber.

The majority of Albertans, more than half of the people in this province, are represented by us. When we are in this House, we are not speaking for ourselves. There's a reason why we do not use our individual names: because I'm not up here speaking as myself. I'm here speaking as the representative for the almost 60,000 people who reside in the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud.

Every single member in this House represents thousands and thousands and thousands of Albertans, so when they curtail the time to debate, they think in their gleeful way that they're just silencing the individuals in this Chamber that they don't like hearing from. They don't want to hear our voices. I get that. I don't really want to hear their voices either, Mr. Speaker, but they represent Albertans who I need to listen to, and, like it or not, as government they have to listen to the voices of the Albertans that we represent.

When we're bringing in legislation, when this government is introducing legislation that will by its intent and purpose dilute the voices of my constituents, of the constituents that live in the large cities, that live in the urban centres, they will be ensuring by trying to pass this legislation that the constituencies represented in urban ridings will have more than 7,000 more constituents than any other ridings. We will have a huge, huge disparity between the number of voters represented in some ridings versus others. It is far beyond the terms that we agree effective representation can be met. It goes far beyond that, Mr. Speaker. So they're already diluting the voices of Albertans through this legislation. That is their intent, but now they're trying to dilute the representation and voices of Albertans in debate on that very legislation. That is shameful.

It is also shameful, Mr. Speaker, that if these MLAs across the way took the time to actually listen to the priorities of Albertans, they would know that health care is the key issue driving almost everybody today. Every one of our offices is hearing time and time again about concerns about accessing health care. The ministers and the Premier can stand up and give all the statistics they want. The reality is that you just need to talk to an Albertan and they'll tell you their health care and access to it is worse than it has ever been.

Then they want to bring in limited debate on legislation that would expand the powers beyond any scope of what's reasonable of their ministers of health, because they have multiple – largest government in Alberta history. They want to expand the scope of those ministers to make unilateral decisions by policy, by ministerial orders about their health care, and they don't even want to have debate on that issue in this House. We don't even know, through Bill 39, what their ministers of health are going to do because they're hiding it all under the ability to do it by ministerial order. Yet they don't even want to talk about that in this House. They're too afraid to talk about what they're actually doing, that they're limiting debate of all those members in this House.

Speaking up for the millions of Albertans that we represent is not obstruction. It is our job. If this government took its job seriously, they would stand up and speak for their constituents. I know many of their constituents are affected by this as well. We will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to be the voice of Albertans even if this government doesn't want to hear it.

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

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, it looks like I may be ending debate on a motion that ends debate. I cannot tell you how incredibly frustrating this is. I stand once again feeling that deep sense of déjà vu. For those folks watching at home, and I know there are some, we are once again debating a time allocation motion. What that means is that this UCP government is once again limiting our opportunity to debate on substantial bills. This time they're doing it on not just one bill, but, in fact, they changed their own standing orders to make it easier for them to limit debate, and they're doing so on two bills.

It looks like already my time is being cut off. I'm going to urge those members opposite to grow a spine and to defeat this motion.

Mr. Williams: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order.

Point of Order
Insulting Language

Mr. Williams: To encourage individuals to grow a spine is calling them dishonourable in an important way in the Chamber. It's an unnecessary attempt at the end of debate to cause division. So under 23(h), (i), and (j) I ask that the member apologize and withdraw when they make personal comments as such.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, I do want to address the point of order, but I'm also quite confused about the time for my member running out, yet the vote still hasn't happened. Are we not under time allocation? What is happening at this point?

I believe he cut off my member early. So allow me to say that I don't believe this is a point of order. I do think we're under time allocation. I think if my member still has two to three minutes of debate, they should be allowed to continue.

The Acting Speaker: Time has run out on the debate on the motion, so we will deal with this point of order after the vote, then.

Yeah, time is up with – I have to interrupt. The one hour of debate that has been allocated for programming motion is concluded, which requires us to now move to the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 48 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:59 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For 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	

4:10

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Eremenko	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Goehring	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Gray	Renaud
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Sabir
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Schmidt
Campbell	Hoffman	Shepherd
Ceci	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Dach	Irwin	Sweet
Deol	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.
Ellingson		

Totals: For – 44 Against – 37

[Government Motion 48 carried]

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 40
Electoral Divisions Act

[Adjourned debate November 19: Dr. Metz]

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are now under time allocation and so I know that I and many of my colleagues will not have enough opportunity to talk about Bill 40 and what is happening therein. But I'm very pleased to be able to rise and put a little bit more on the record, especially to counter incorrect facts that the Justice minister continues to put on the record in this case. And that is where I want to begin with my remarks.

Even on November 19 when moving second reading, the Justice minister said, "in spring the majority of that commission concluded that it would have been more proper if the proposed representation included an additional two electoral divisions," and that is false. That is not what happened because we have in the form of the final report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for March 2026 what constitutes the majority recommendation that was put forward to this Legislature, including the clear conclusion section on page 65, that talks about what the majority is actually putting forward:

> The majority are confident from what we have observed during the course of our work that Alberta has and will continue to resist these anti-democratic pressures. As indicated at the outset, Alberta exists as a vibrant democracy, and the majority are confident that our report of 89 electoral divisions will be accepted and implemented by the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, they were wrong. The Legislative Assembly did not accept the clear majority report, and ever since that day the Minister of Justice and the government caucus continue to misattribute the reasons for what they are doing and give that credit to the majority. That is not true. In fact, that kind of disingenuous information that is incorrect being put on the record repeatedly by the Minister of Justice, someone who should understand the process we have undergone and be responsible for making sure that Albertans also understand the process we've gotten through, smacks of partisanship. We see it repeatedly when the Minister of Justice rises in this place and talks about these things. Specifically, he talks about the 91 seats, and he very clearly and very deliberately does not attribute correctly that only one member of the original commission made a recommendation, and that one member, when you read it from top to bottom, was the chair Justice Miller. The chair Justice Miller was absolutely worried that the government was going to implement the minority maps.

The minority maps that my colleagues have put on the record had a lot in similarity to maps that appeared out of nowhere that had government markings on them, maps that provided a political advantage to government members, and maps that, honestly, look like U.S.-style gerrymandering in a way that we now see come out of the panel report in the new process that the government created. But if you read the conclusion, the response to the minority report, the recommendations that came from the original majority report, it tells an incredibly clear story that we had a majority recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot emphasize enough that when there has been a clear majority recommendation in the past, Alberta Legislatures have respected that. The fact that the judge wrote an addendum because he was so worried that the government was going to reject the majority and adopt a completely and wildly unconstitutional minority map does not speak well of this government and the perception of what they were likely to do or not do.

Then we see not only do they take advantage of that recommendation, that addendum, use it for their own purposes, mischaracterize what it and the majority said repeatedly to confuse the public record, to make sure that all private members on the government side can feel like what they're doing is legitimate when it is clearly not. The majority did not endorse it. Instead, they take that latitude, throw it to a panel process that was not just wildly inappropriate, irregular, unconstitutional but one that then proceeded to far exceed its mandate.

Page 66 of the original report, written as an addendum to the majority report by Justice Miller, specifically tried to constrain any future work that would be done. I believe that this was done, again, for the same reasons. I will quote from his addendum. "Due to my deep concern regarding the unconstitutionality and administrative law problems of the minority report, I find it necessary to make one further recommendation that my fellow Commissioners cannot consent to." Again, it is clear if you have read this report that this is not a majority recommendation. Yet the Justice minister when moving this continues to put it forward as if it is, and that offends me, Mr. Speaker.

I think that we should be speaking the truth, especially when it is written in black and white. I think to take Justice Miller's intentions and words and to distort them for one's own political advantage is deeply disrespectful to this place, to commissions that have happened throughout the history of Alberta. We can have a dispute about the facts, but to then warp those facts for your own agenda: I continue to find it very shameful. You will have noticed that I've asked quite a few questions in question period about the boundary commission process, Mr. Speaker, and that is because what this government has done is so deeply inappropriate and offensive to get a political outcome that they are seeking in the next election.

The chair goes on to say: "My majority colleagues do not agree with me on this point. That is why I am alone in making this recommendation." Literally there is a sentence that says, "I am alone in making this recommendation," yet we hear the Premier and the Justice minister talk about how the majority asked for this. It is ridiculous, and it's something that I feel very strongly needs to be put on the record. We are now at the point where we are time allocated, so we will not have a robust discussion, which is something that this government has promised repeatedly would happen for Bill 40. We cannot have that. The largest Official Opposition in Alberta's history, and not all of my members will have time to even engage on this, on a very technical piece.

The general public, to the extent that they are aware of what this government is doing to gerrymander the next electoral maps, are wildly

opposed. Wildly opposed. Today in question period I talked about a letter by 63 experts and what they had to say, asking the government to revert to the clear majority recommendation tabled in this Assembly in March 2026 that represented thousands of Albertans and their input, a process that travelled around the province, that talked to people, that had an interim report. A place where they were able to propose ideas and then respond to Albertans with more information as they had questions and concerns. A process that actually had feedback and engagement, questions and answers as opposed to the new process that came forward, which is nothing but secrecy, darkness – who knows what's happened behind closed doors? – and an outcome that serves the government's political interests and does not reflect what Albertans asked for in the public process. It appears as if the panel – in the majority report that we now have in front of us, it doesn't reflect all of the hours and hours of presentations that are recorded on *Hansard,* that was available to them.

4:20

The government took the fig leaf that was the addendum by Justice Miller, misrepresented it in this House repeatedly, and then committed that they were just using this addendum and they were only going to follow his recommendations, which included some incredibly important boundaries to try to prevent gerrymandering. Keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that the chair talked about his concern about "the unconstitutionality and administrative law problems of the minority report." He was working incredibly hard to prevent further potentially bad acting or bad recommendations from going forward. He did so through his recommendation 5 by saying:

> However, restoration of the two electoral divisions should:
>
> a) have no impact on any electoral division in Airdrie or containing territory south of Airdrie's southernmost border, with the exception of Drumheller-Stettler.

I will quote from the minority report on page 14. "From a purposive analysis, Justice Miller clearly sought to impose terms on . . . the two rural electoral divisions that would prevent inappropriate partisan gamesmanship." And what did we get, Mr. Speaker? We got changes, wild changes all south of Airdrie that absolutely are inappropriate partisan gamesmanship. That's what we are looking at now. This was after the Minister of Justice and the Premier repeatedly in this House and in the media committed that they were just doing what Justice Miller asked them to do. They were just doing what the majority wanted, which wasn't true because, of course, we know the majority didn't sign off on that.

Here in this House the Premier said:

> The new commission . . .

Talking about the panel.

> . . . that will take the direction from this Legislature, which includes looking at the majority report as the base, with the modifications proposed by the judge in his addendum, and they will come up with a conclusion about what that should look like by the fall, and then we will have an opportunity to debate it.

How many things are wrong in that quote, Mr. Speaker? Wrong about the opportunity to debate. Wrong about the modifications proposed by the judge. The panel went wildly beyond that. That's not what we got. This is what the Premier said in this House.

The Premier said to media multiple times that there will be knock-on effects by adding two additional rural ridings, but the intention and what the judge gave his advice on was how to do that with minimal impact on the rest of the majority report. Minimal impact, Mr. Speaker. Instead, we've got gerrymandering in Lethbridge. We've got ridings in Calgary stretched out to the mountains. This is not what Justice Miller even opened the door for, but they took that tiny open door, blew it open, wide open to do any kind of changes that they wanted. And this was their appointees on the panel doing their partisan work. We can map each of these changes, these inappropriate, partisan, gerrymandering changes, to the benefit of UCP cabinet ministers. Not only were two rural seats added back in; three rural seats were added back in because they, of course, removed an urban seat in Lethbridge.

Mr. Speaker, this is wildly different from what the Legislature was told, from what Albertans were told, and from what the intention was. Again – and I will be repetitive in my short time – there was a majority recommendation, a clear recommendation, a well-informed recommendation, one that had hundreds and hundreds of presentations and thousands of submissions and that had clear engagement and that took place over years. In the end, a whole process started off that we did not trust, that we worked hard to try to keep legitimate, and the government resisted at every single turn an opportunity.

I will quote from page 11 of the minority report. "In our view, this attitude to this Panel's mandate is wrong in itself and also constitutionally reckless." They are talking about the conditions imposed by Justice Miller, which should have been followed. Not only should have been followed, but the Premier and the Justice minister, the entire government caucus promised to us and to Albertans that they would be followed repeatedly in this House and repeatedly in the media. And that was worth nothing. When a government's promises are worth nothing, they lose the faith of the people. This entire process has caused questioning of what kind of motives might be involved and a real lowering of the esteem of these institutions, these democratic institutions. I've seen this in many different other areas from this government. It's incredibly frustrating as a member of the opposition.

Again from the minority report on page 6, paragraph 18:

> There is no precedent for the redrawing of the entirety of a province after an independent commission has completed that task in at least the past three decades of Canadian history.

Not just Alberta history, Mr. Speaker. Canadian history. There is no precedent for doing something like this. They go on to say:

> As the Nova Scotia Reference in particular notes, interference in an independent redistricting process is constitutionally perilous.

This is a point that we made at the committee repeatedly in every effort we made to try to hold to any kind of legitimacy as we went through. It was incredibly frustrating because, of course, the UCP members of that panel resisted any attempts to improve, to add transparency, or to help.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 40. You know, I want to be absolutely clear. There's nothing normal about this bill. Not a thing. Nothing normal about the rigged election map that it seeks to establish or the jury-rigged process that this government put together that they developed on the back of a napkin to get us here. It's all entirely abnormal, questionable, an aberration. It's twisted. It's a sham.

What it looks like to me, Mr. Speaker, is like they took that standard democratic process – you know, the one they rejected last spring, that actual independent commission, the one they rejected because it didn't give them the result they wanted – and ran it through an AI engine. I mean, you look at it; it's kind of got the shape of the actual independent process, again, the one they rejected. If you just take a quick glance out of the corner of your eye, maybe from a distance, it might look normal. But you dig in and you look a little closer, you put it under the microscope, and you can see this thing just ain't right. I mean, whose eyes are those looking over the shoulders? Whose hand is in there on that pen?

There are far too many fingers in the pie. And the whole panel kind of seems to tilt to the right.

When you really look at it closely, you see the whole thing doesn't have a leg to stand on because the fact is, Mr. Speaker, again, that none of this is normal. It's a twisting of our democratic norms and processes by a government that is habitual in breaking the rules, bending the rules until they break.

Political scientist Dr. Jared Wesley agrees. He wrote an excellent piece that was published recently in *Maclean's.* He says:

> I've noticed a troubling pattern to the way [the Premier's] United Conservative Party approaches governance. It attempts to overhaul proven processes and disregard the norms underpinning them to engineer what it wants. Whether it's trying to undermine legislative officers, loosen ethics rules governing gifts to politicians, rewrite the rules of direct democracy or override municipal decisions [that] it dislikes, [the] UCP lacks reverence [and any respect] for institutions that keep government power in check.

He goes on to say that it certainly appears that this government, the UCP, is extending that habitual bending and breaking of rules to the "redrawing [of] electoral maps in the form of gerrymandering"; in his words, "the American-style, partisan practice where politicians carve up electoral boundaries to give themselves an unfair advantage." Most folks, Mr. Speaker, would say that's breaking the rules. If I was to do that at a board game, it would be called cheating.

4:30

Now the UCP, as Dr. Wesley points out, "became the first government in Alberta," in our history, "to reject a map [that was] proposed by an independent electoral boundaries commission [and chose] to start a new process [that had no] public consultation." You know, really, Mr. Speaker, when it comes down to it, that's the key difference. The difference between the real, authentic process that this government rejected in the spring and this fake, artificial construct they used to rig the game and give us here Bill 40. That key difference is that that real process, the actual independent commission, was human in that it actually talked to real, everyday Albertans. It was born from actual engagement, real conversation.

The commission went out and they toured the province in the summer of '25, every single corner of this province, heard directly from Albertans how they felt about their communities, what they felt they wanted to see, how they wanted their voice to be represented. They brought that back, Mr. Speaker, and they wrote an interim report, and they drew up an interim map that had unanimous support. Unanimous support. The two government appointees, our two appointees, and the chair appointed by the government: they all agreed.

Then they went out and they listened to Albertans again. They showed their work. They published every single presentation. We know exactly how they got to their answer because they published every step of the way. They went out and they talked to Albertans again. They published that feedback again, and Albertans told them how they felt about that interim map, whether that represented their communities, whether they felt it fairly represented their voice. Then they went back. They wrote another report, and they came back. Mr. Speaker, we had a clear majority report, three out of the five members fully on board, a map that looked a lot like that interim map that reflected what Albertans had actually asked for.

Now, it was interesting that suddenly, you know, there was that break-off. Suddenly the two members appointed by the government had something that looked nothing like what Albertans had actually asked for. I mean, that was the first attempt, Mr. Speaker, at creating this artificial thing, but the government went way too far and over the top. It was cartoonish. Albertans took one look at that and said, "No, that thing ain't right," and this government realized they had gone too far, that they couldn't possibly get away with trying to push something that blatant through the Legislature.

I'll be clear, Mr. Speaker. We worked dang hard to make sure Albertans knew about it, what this government was attempting and what they were trying to push through. Albertans sat up, they made noise, so this government backed off, but they decided: well, we didn't get what we wanted, so the whole process has to go. Chucked it. Tossed it out. Every single Albertan that spoke up, hundreds, thousands of Albertans that told this government how they wanted to be represented and what they thought that map should look like, and this government tossed it in the bin because this government in Bill 40 doesn't care what Albertans think. All they care about is what they want, and what they want is more power, and they believe they're entitled to it. Entitled enough that they should have the right to draw the map, to pick their voters instead of voters picking their representatives.

What we end up with, Mr. Speaker, is this new mutant map born of a bad, artificial process where we have now ridings in Edmonton and Calgary that are stuffed, packed with 7,000 more people on average than ridings outside the cities. Right here where we stand today, Edmonton-City Centre, is one of the densest constituencies. The neighbourhood just over here, Wihkwentowin, is one of the densest communities in Alberta. In the view of this government, my constituents have less right to have a voice than folks in other parts of the province outside our major cities despite the fact that our major cities have had the most growth.

That's the thing, Mr. Speaker. Bill 40 does not reflect reality. It reflects this government's distortion of it, the reality they want to impose on Albertans, just as the Justice minister stands up here and puts out his fictional reality every day in question period about what he imagines the process has been, what he wants to believe is the actual case. This government does not want to actually face up to what it's actually doing, which is undermining democracy, which is telling Albertans their voice doesn't matter, their opinion doesn't matter. All that matters is what this government tells them, and they will tell them where to vote, and they will limit their options on who they get to choose. That is what Bill 40 represents.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, this is a precedent in Canada. This is something we've seen often in the States. The Republicans in the United States are well known for being dishonest, outright liars. Republicans in the States are willing to bend and break every single rule. They are more than happy to cheat, and what we have is this government cribbing from their notes. This government is taking the same practices that they use down there and bringing them up here to Canada as they have on so many things. This government is clearly MAGA obsessed. We see it. We hear it every day. [interjection] I hear it from the minister right now who has his own MAGA hat. I notice that he doesn't bring it to the Legislature, but the fact is that he was the first to bring it here. He was the first to get into it, but what we know . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Carry on. We want to hear your voice.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we know is that obviously he has infected the rest of his colleagues because this is something we see from this government every day. They love American culture wars. They love distractions. They don't want Albertans looking too closely at this fake and artificial process with three hands and five legs.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, they are trying to pull the wool over Albertans' eyes. They are misrepresenting what they are actually doing. They're spinning elaborate descriptions, shall we say, of the

reality they wish existed but does not. They've demonstrated time and time again, just as they were doing in Bill 40, just as they have done with multiple pieces of legislation, just as they did with the entire referendum and citizen petition process, that they will do whatever they can to put a thumb on the scale to manufacture a result to try to cling to power. That is not any government that deserves to hold any kind of power. It is government that has no respect for the people they're actually supposed to be here to represent. Again, it's not just me saying this. They love to just sit there and say: well, it's just those crazy NDP; it's that loud opposition.

This is a fundamental breach in our democratic process in Canada. On so many fronts this government is looking to take us straight to the bottom, and if this government is allowed to get away with this, then we're going to see this spread across Canada. It's going to be a cancer. It's going to eat away at our democracy. We will see governments across Canada start to abuse power in the same way they have. We're going to see the same kinds of chaos that we see south of the 49th. We're going to see the same kind of anger and division and partisanship, the kind that this government, frankly, has already tried to drive and create in our province.

You know, we're going to have a great sovereignty act debate on Thursday that's precisely about that. This government, again, doesn't want Albertans paying attention to what's actually going on. Hey, they don't want Albertans actually to be able to vote the way they want to vote and have the representative they want to choose. That is what Bill 40 is about.

It couldn't be clearer, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the city of Lethbridge. The first time around they tried just cutting it up in quarters like a pizza. Albertans saw right through that one. They thought they were really clever this time to say: "I'll tell you what. We'll take all you folks that don't vote for us, just cram you right there in the middle, and just take enough off the edges and tie that out there, so that way the Member for Lethbridge-East gets to keep his seat."

Mr. Speaker, Albertans aren't stupid. Anybody can look at that map of the city of Lethbridge and go: that is a rigged map. That is a government putting its thumb on the scale. That is a government that does not care what the people of Lethbridge actually think. They only care about the fact that they have a minister that they want to try to save. Entitlement, to think that you are entitled to draw the map because you think you deserve to hold that seat. Albertans decide who holds what seat where. Period.

4:40

I don't care how entitled this Premier is. I don't care how much these government members want to sit and mock. Mr. Speaker, I know why I'm here. I'm here to defend democracy in this province, to represent the people that elected me and put me here, because I actually want to listen to them. If I have this seat, I want it to be because I earned it, not because I felt entitled to it.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if you feel that you've got to rig a map to hold your seat, that's cowardice. That's fear. A government with any courage, with any bravery, with any integrity, isn't afraid to face the voters. They aren't afraid to accept the answer that they give them. Cowardice is being afraid of that. Cowardice is chirping from the cheap seats.

What Albertans want to see, Mr. Speaker, is integrity, and that's why I say: "You know what? I will be voting against Bill 40." This government has the majority. They have the power to force it through. The fact that they forced it through won't make it right, won't make it honest, won't make it any less rigged, but I'll tell you, we will fight the next election on whatever map they put forward, and we are damn well going to win because Albertans are better than this government. Albertans are smarter than this government. Albertans' values are stronger than this government. They have more integrity than this government. They will not let this government take their choice, their power, away as we just saw in this recent referendum. This government did everything they could to put that thumb on the scale: $4 million in propaganda, the Premier touring the province, the website, everything they could possibly do, and they still couldn't get there.

Mr. Speaker, whatever games they want to try to play, we're going to stand here and we're going to represent our constituents.

Member Miyashiro: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, as I rise to speak against Bill 40, I'm reminded of a line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "The lady doth protest too much, methinks." This is one of those lines from Shakespeare that is simple but expresses some complexity of thought and emotion. It's a somewhat sarcastic comment about someone overdoing a denial, suggesting that they are indeed guilty. It reminds me so much of the depths to which this government defends its sham Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, how UCP MLAs react so over the top to our debate on Bill 40. The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

You know what? Enough of these literary references. Let's hear it once again from regular Albertans. Let's hear their thoughts on what they think of this attempt to gerrymander our boundaries. Amy from Lethbridge-West wrote to the Premier:

> Your government has justified this change to electoral boundaries arguing that specific areas of Lethbridge share more interests with communities such as Cardston, Milk River, Bow Island, or Arrowwood than their neighbours across the street in Lethbridge. This is patently absurd and as insulting to the rural communities in these new districts as it is to residents of Lethbridge.
>
> As a citizen of west Lethbridge and recently retired University of Lethbridge faculty member, I can assure you that the city has a unique interest in priorities related to post-secondary education and that many of the university's students and staff reside in the current West Lethbridge riding. As an education researcher with 30 years of experience related to K-12 schooling in this province, I can assure you that the issues facing urban school divisions like Lethbridge School Division and Holy Spirit Division differ from those of the rural divisions in southern Alberta.
>
> Clearly, living in a vibrant urban centre, Lethbridge citizens have many different priorities than their rural neighbours related to the provision of social services, transportation and other infrastructure needs, immigration, utilities and arts and culture. Our rural neighbours will be disappointed by the fact that their urban counterparts have little understanding of their unique concerns related to agriculture, energy, and emergency services among others.

Becky from Lethbridge-West wrote to the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services:

> I'm just another [blanked] off Lethbian incensed about your support of the proposed new gerrymandered Lethbridge ridings. They contradict the recommendations of the independent electoral districts commission. They are partisan and biased and don't represent our communities fairly. These proposed ridings dilute our votes, create disregard for our rural neighbours wishes as well, not to mention our siblings on the Kainai reserve who deserve their own representation.

Brendan in Lethbridge-East wrote the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services:

> I am deeply concerned about the new Lethbridge electoral boundaries. It is almost a comical example of gerrymandering and I just can't fathom how this process has continued to move forward to this point. An independent commission spent months working on fair representation for Albertans and it was all thrown away to come up with this? It's truly embarrassing and I hope that you don't get away with this.

There are also some e-mails we had in response to an e-mail sent by the MLA from Lethbridge-East.

Ben from Lethbridge-East in response to the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services:

> I'm your constituent and I'm telling you I don't want this, you are supposed to be representing me and I think you forgot that fundamental aspect of your job.
>
> I find it very concerning that you have been advocating for this type of crack and pack gerrymandering of Lethbridge since this process started and I have a hard time believing that you're keeping this process fair and transparent. I'm sure you will "proudly" represent Lethbridge in one of these new and safe rural/urban ridings that you have helped create for yourself.

Tania from Lethbridge-East in response to the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services:

> Your argument that merging Lethbridge into surrounding rural districts reflects "community ties" and strengthens our voice in the Legislature does not hold up to basic scrutiny. A city of nearly 114,000 people has distinct urban infrastructure, municipal funding, and services that differ fundamentally from those of our neighbouring rural municipalities. Dividing Lethbridge across four hybrid urban-rural ridings does not give our city four dedicated representatives – it ensures that no single MLA is solely accountable to Lethbridge's urban electorate, effectively diluting our vote and subordinating city priorities to broader regional interests.

Lisa from Lethbridge-West in response to the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services:

> I am so disappointed in [your] reply. . . The cowardice of the UCP in setting aside the recommendation of the Electoral Boundaries Commission shows the fear [that] you and the UCP have in free and fair elections that reflect the wishes of the people of Lethbridge. It also disregards what the people in the rural communities want in their elected officials. The only "winners" in the map the UCP has drawn would be ministers and MLAs who fear for their jobs – people like you, I suppose, but clearly not the people of Alberta.
>
> Until now every map the commission has recommended has passed, including under premiers Ralph Klein, Ed Stelmach, and Rachel Notley.
>
> People deserve to vote with their neighbours and their communities to ensure that they elect representatives to speak for them in the Legislature. The UCP's map takes away that fundamental right and insults voters by stripping them of their voice.
>
> I expected more from you, Minister. I thought you might have the convictions needed in a leader to stand up to this American-style gerrymandering.
>
> I urge you – strongly – to reconsider this map and support boundaries that serve the interests of Alberta's citizens rather than the electoral interests of the government party.
>
> You can do better.

Jodi from Lethbridge-East in response to the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services:

> This stock letter doesn't address why Lethbridge is carved up into four ridings. We have an almost perfect population for two ridings. Hybrid ridings make sense if they're necessary, but they aren't necessary here.
>
> Please allow respectable experts to be heard before ramming this through. University political science professors and others with higher knowledge as well as citizens at large should have been consulted.

Craig, a constituent in Lethbridge-West, wrote publicly about the new gerrymandered maps, and this was taken from a social media post.

> There it is folks. It fit perfectly into my lecture today. The lead-in topic . . . was a review of the 2025 electoral results and the spatial roots of western alienation. The Gerrymander concepts of packing and cracking were from the textbook and not nearly as good as this example. We'll see if students are up for an academic discussion.

Diana from Lethbridge-West wrote:

> What concerns me most is how we arrived at this point. Alberta established an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission to review electoral representation. That commission conducted its work and produced a majority report. Rather than proceeding with those recommendations, the government chose to initiate another process to revisit the boundaries. That decision raises a fundamental question: what is the purpose of the independent commission if the government can set aside its recommendation when it disagrees with the outcome? This seems rather opportunistic and subjective in nature.

4:50

Gary from Lethbridge-East wrote:

> I recognize that electoral boundaries must occasionally be adjusted to reflect population growth and changing communities. However, I believe the process must be independent, transparent, and demonstrably fair to all Albertans.
>
> What concerns me most is the perception that political interests are being allowed to influence decisions that should be made in the interests of democratic representation. The government of the day should not be in a position to influence electoral boundaries in ways that could provide it with an advantage in future elections.
>
> Every Albertan, regardless of where they live or which political party they support, deserves reasonably equal voting influence and effective representation. Rural communities deserve representation, as do the residents of our larger urban centres. Neither should be disadvantaged to serve political interests.
>
> I believe the handling of this process risks undermining public confidence in our democratic institutions. That is a concern that extends well beyond the next provincial election and potentially establishes a troubling precedent for future governments.
>
> I respectfully ask that you stand behind an electoral boundary process that is genuinely independent, transparent and fair, and that places the democratic rights of Albertans ahead of partisan considerations.

Teresa from Lethbridge-East wrote the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services:

> I cannot begin to tell you how disappointed I am in your position that Lethbridge would be better served by being in four hybrid constituencies. I am sure that the good people of Strathmore are not concerned with the needs of Lethbridge. Nor . . . those of Waterton or Pincher Creek . . .. To argue that our city sits in an agricultural area is lame. Four MLAs who can't decide who their constituents are is not going to make for better representation for either the urban or rural areas. As the fourth largest city in the province Lethbridge deserves to be properly represented by MLAs who are committed to its well being and who will fight for its needs to be recognized and addressed.
>
> The fact that this redistribution came about with no input from the public is a travesty and goes against democracy's requirements that citizens have input into the process of defining the boundaries of their constituency.

Jamie in Lethbridge-West wrote to the Premier:

> Under the advisory panel's majority proposal, Lethbridge would no longer have two urban ridings. Instead, the city would be split into four hybrid divisions: one central riding made up entirely of city residents and three ridings that combine the outer edges of Lethbridge with large rural areas of the surrounding county. Roughly 40 per cent of Lethbridge residents will be moved out of a city riding and into one where the majority of the voters live in rural communities, some of them far from our city.
>
> Lethbridge is a single, coherent urban community. People in Lethbridge share a municipal government, transit, policing, schools, hospitals and a local economy. Their priorities on

> housing, public transit, post-secondary education and urban health care are not the same as those of rural households, and both deserve a representative whose attention is not divided. Splitting the city in this way means that tens of thousands of urban voters will be a permanent minority in ridings designed around rural interests. I can see no reason for drawing the lines this way other than to improve the governing party's chances in the next election. Combining Lethbridge's more progressive-leaning neighbourhoods into one seat and spreading the remainder across three rural-dominated seats is exactly the pattern that defines gerrymandering.

Cheryl in Lethbridge-East wrote to the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services:

> As one of your constituents in Lethbridge-East, I'm writing to express my displeasure at your party's proposed gerrymandering of electoral boundaries that would see our Lethbridge community split into four ridings, three of which would extend far into rural Alberta. Provincial government issues in relation to urban municipalities are [far] different from those for rural municipalities. Fairness in representation for both urban and rural communities is threatened.
>
> Partisan political involvement in a process that must be independent tarnishes trust in government and is unconstitutional in Canada. By voting to push through boundary changes obviously made to benefit one political party above another you will be violating not only the rights of Lethbridge residents but all Albertans.

Peter from Lethbridge-West wrote to the Premier:

> As a resident of Lethbridge-West, I need an MLA who can advocate in Edmonton for the provincial decisions that affect my daily life: access to urban health care, schools in growing neighbourhoods, post-secondary education, housing, and the provincial funding and policies that support our city's infrastructure and services. Cardston residents and Blood Tribe members deserve equally attentive representation for their own priorities, including rural service delivery and the distinct interests of their communities.
>
> Regional economic connections do not make these legislative needs interchangeable. Combining communities on a map does not resolve their competing demands; it asks one MLA to divide their attention among them while weakening the coherent voice that each community should have.
>
> My concern extends beyond this particular boundary proposal. Electoral boundaries must serve voters, not the electoral interests of whichever party happens to hold office. As a UCP member, I expect my party to win support through good government, credible policies, and strong candidates, not through changes that appear designed to make competitive seats safer.
>
> There is a democratic taboo here that must remain intact: governments must not treat the electoral map as an instrument for securing their own re-election. Once that restraint is broken, it cannot simply be restored by assurances of good intentions. Every future government inherits both the precedent and the temptation. Each subsequent manipulation becomes easier to justify by pointing to the last.
>
> That is a dangerous slope. A short-term partisan advantage can create a lasting incentive for governments at every political stripe to reshape constituencies around the votes they want. Conservatives should be particularly wary of granting any government the power we would bitterly oppose in the hands of our political opponents.

Tom from Lethbridge-West, in response to the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services:

> Minister, I used to respect you as a politician and an advocate for Lethbridge. Unfortunately, over the past several years your actions have repeatedly left me questioning those interests.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Just so I know exactly how much time I have before time allocation comes into effect?

The Speaker: Fifteen minutes.

Ms Hoffman: Great. Here we go.

Have you ever driven by a hotel, Mr. Speaker, that advertises that they have clean rooms? That's usually a red flag that something else is going on in that hotel. If you have to advertise that your rooms are clean, you probably shouldn't trust that. I have never seen a report come back with the title leading with the word "independent" ever. Typically it would say "electoral boundaries report." This one says, "Independent Advisory Panel on Electoral Boundaries." This is definitely something that seems like one of those flags, like a hotel that advertises that it's clean.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing less independent than the process that was undertaken that resulted in this report that we're reviewing and the gerrymandered maps that we're being asked to consider. This is something that the UCP has done with great confidence. They have moved forward full speed ahead in creating an absolutely atypical process from anywhere else in the country. We did see once within Alberta a time where an interim report came forward, and a bunch of cabinet ministers started freaking out about where they were going to run. Then the government brought back a motion in between the interim report and the work of the commission to do a final report to increase the number of seats.

That's not what happened here, Mr. Speaker. What happened here is that the interim report, which was passed unanimously by all five appointees, the three who were appointed by the UCP and the two who were appointed by the NDP, came into this place. The UCP members clearly thought that they could still get the kind of maps that they wanted. In fact, we started to see maps being circulated that were very similar to ones that political staff in the Premier's office were circulating in the community. Then we started seeing questions being raised in this place, and the Premier responded by saying: Oh, well, AI must have written those maps. Well, then, isn't it interesting that AI was used to write the minority report maps presumably? They sure were very similar.

There was a majority report that was tabled in this place. It was signed off by the majority of the commission. And, again, three members were appointed by the UCP and two were appointed by the NDP. So that makes it a bipartisan agreed-upon report that came forward to this place. The Justice minister committed that it would be debated and considered within this house, that we would have plenty of opportunity to consider the recommendations and the proposed majority report. The Justice minister said that, but that certainly isn't what followed.

5:00

What we saw follow was yet another government motion that this time breaches the motion they'd already passed because they were the ones that decided that there would be 89 seats. So they decided to do another motion before actually introducing the majority report, which is what has happened every other time in the history of this place, and then they decided to come forward with 91 seats. They did this because they cherry-picked very specific language that one of the commission members used in an addendum, clearly stating that it was not to take away from the majority report that they had signed off on and committed to.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, there are three key areas that I and I'm sure my colleagues in the NDP caucus find this motion so disrespectful to democracy. The first is that the UCP-appointed majority went way beyond recommendation 5, which is what they argue is their rationale for being able to call this additional process that

they have given the title of independent advisory panel but is anything but. The second is that the UCP-appointed majority redrew the boundaries by the actual, legitimate Electoral Boundaries Commission that happened previously, in violation of the Charter, and this is particularly evident in ridings in and adjacent to Calgary and Lethbridge. And, third, it dilutes voter parity.

I thought of a very similar situation that happened not that long ago, which is that in the ministry of education there was a desire to have a weighted moving average. This is something that the Conservative government, the present government, decided to put in place to try to cushion budgets for rural school divisions and have less significant increases to urban districts. But, of course, the number of people moving into urban centres – and the Premier definitely celebrates how many people have moved to this province. The overwhelming majority, by far the lion's share, have moved into Edmonton, Calgary, and then after that Red Deer, Lethbridge, and other larger centres, but particularly Edmonton and Calgary.

What we have seen, Mr. Speaker, is that in Edmonton, between the last time the boundaries were drawn and this time the boundaries are being drawn, the population of the city of Edmonton has increased by 30 per cent. That's the equivalent of three Red Deers. Red Deer, which currently has two representatives, so it would be the equivalent of six representatives. That would be the increase to have the same parity as what we have for Red Deer. But that isn't what the UCP is proposing through this set of maps. What they're proposing is that one seat be added to Edmonton. Two new ones, minus one. Plus two, minus one. It works out to a 5 per cent increase in the number of seats, not a 30 per cent increase in the number of seats, as would be the case if we actually cared about voter parity.

That being said, of course, the report earlier from the commission didn't do that either. But, Mr. Speaker, it was a fair process. It was done through public consultation. Thousands of people presented either in person or via writing and made sure that their voices were heard throughout this whole process. And that was shut down, that was ignored, and that was put on the back burner so that friends and insiders could be put onto a committee to use for cover to draw lines on a map to try to protect as many rural cabinet ministers as possible. Oh, and some urban ones in Calgary as well.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that this reminds me a lot of the entitlement that we saw from the then PC government going into the 2015 election. You might recall there was a floor crossing that happened. Then there was an election called a year early. There was a thought that they could just magically call an election and get a massive majority and life would go on as normal.

But, of course, Mr. Speaker, voters get to decide at the end of the day, not the people who are sitting around the cabinet table drawing lines on a map. It's the voters who actually determine who gets elected. It was pretty risky to run in what was considered a Conservative stronghold in Edmonton-Glenora. It was a seat that the Conservatives held for quite some time, and it had been Liberal once or twice before, but the NDP hadn't ever held Edmonton-Glenora itself. Back in the '90s Edmonton-Kingsway, which had a small portion of it.

But the UCP took it and many other seats across our province for granted, and what voters did is that voters decided enough was enough. They were sick of the games. They were sick of the entitlement. They were sick of the political tactics that were playing out in this place, trumping what they knew was their democratic right to have a government that reflected their rights. And I know, Mr. Speaker, you and I, not to pull the Speaker into debate, have both heard learned people say things in the past about governments being fired, not necessarily being hired.

Certainly, in 2015 the government was fired, and the entitlement that is being shown by the current government today is so much déjà vu to what was happening at that time, Mr. Speaker. This is clearly an attempt to rig the outcome of the next election, and that is in no way consistent with the values of democratic representation, representative democracy. It violates the government's own Motion 37 that they passed earlier during this term, and it is in violation of our commitment to follow the law and respect public consultation.

I know that a lot of people thought that folks would just be fine with the referendum, that it would just, you know, be an opportunity to send a message to Ottawa, but what happened with the referendum, Mr. Speaker, is that it sent a message to the Premier and the UCP. They sent a message, and people came out en masse. People who had never voted before in their life, who had been eligible to vote in multiple elections before, chose to come out to vote in the referendum because they knew that something was wrong and something was rotten with what was happening and being proposed here through this process.

One of the things people talked to me a lot about during the referendum was what a waste of money it was, and I will say that the same is true for this process and this sham that we are being asked to consider, Mr. Speaker. Hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on consultation. Many, many hours. I feel so sorry for the folks who showed up and presented.

I also feel sorry for the folks who volunteered their time to be part of this commission. They did receive some compensation, but it was a significant undertaking to travel the province, to hear from folks all across Alberta, to take their opinions into consideration, and to develop a map that followed the law and reflected the feedback that they'd received. That totally got thrown out. Mr. Speaker, I will assure Albertans that should we have the opportunity after the next election to engage in a process that is free and fair, their time, their feedback, their consultation will never be taken for granted again.

The other thing I want to say about 2015 and the sense of entitlement is that so many people when I was door-knocking in Edmonton-Glenora would say, "Oh, but I've always voted conservative," and I would say, "I'm not asking you to vote for me for 44 years; that would be so entitled," and people would usually have a good chuckle. I'm saying, "But if you're mad and you want to send a message, think about sending me there to do that on behalf of all of us." I am so grateful that people took the chance and that risk. Certainly, things have changed significantly in the political landscape of Edmonton-Glenora, of Edmonton at large, and of our entire province.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the very specific cutting and piecing, particularly of ridings in and around Calgary and Lethbridge, it sure feels like they're being taken for granted. It sure feels like certain cabinet ministers think: if I could just get a little piece of that conservative community, I'd be safe.

Dr. Elmeligi: Like Springbank.

Ms Hoffman: Like cutting strongholds into three different chunks and then splitting them among three different ridings. It feels so disrespectful, and I will say, Mr. Speaker, that even in the most conservative polls in Edmonton-Glenora people knew that entitlement was wrong, and they knew that they were being taken for granted.

I hope the government is listening and taking this as a little bit of a learning opportunity to reflect on the fate that the vast majority of PC members faced after the 2015 election and what kind of fate they hope to face after the next provincial election because of the entitlement around changing the timing of the election, making the term longer by six months; the entitlement of redrawing maps twice, increasing the size of the Legislature twice, then appointing a second commission when they didn't like what the first one did; the fact that the UCP continues

to spend money on things that are not aligned with the needs of everyday Albertans, spending millions, probably hundreds of millions and hundreds of thousands of dollars, on things like consultation that they ignore, on things like a referendum that was so frustrating and so disrespectful to the voters of this province, telling them that they needed to spend their summer, that they needed to galvanize around something that already was an 80-20 issue.

Mr. Speaker, if you ask people, "Should elections be free and fair?" I will argue that it's greater than an 80-20 issue. I believe it's 100 per cent of Albertans believe that elections should be free and fair. So it is interesting that the government is trying to add tag lines to emote certain things like "strong and free" on licence plates when they are doing anything that is but strong or free when it comes to the future of our democratic process as it relates to these electoral boundaries.

5:10

I also want to say that it waters down votes and community voices all over the place to try to protect a few specific cabinet ministers. Boy, what power must be in those specific offices for them to have inflicted all this cost and frustration on Albertans to go through this process multiple times as opposed to the simple process that has always been followed, which is that you have a majority report, it gets debated in the House, and it's always been passed, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve to have their votes matter at the ballot box, and certainly their representatives in this place should have their voices also clearly weighted in a respectful way, not favouring what the government takes for granted and believes might be their areas of loyalty.

I also want to say that the commission submitted a unanimous interim report, as I mentioned earlier, that has a reference in it to the "public hearings and written submissions [that] had been received, the Commission focused on fine-tuning and amending [their] interim report," they say in their final report, and "in late January, the minority departed substantially from that goal." Isn't that interesting, Mr. Speaker? Something happened to the minority of the folks who were part of the actual commission to move them away significantly from that goal.

The chair goes on further in the addendum and recommendation 5 in the final report of what was actually done independently to say, to be clear that the recommendation is in no way to detract from the majority opinion. The justice within recommendation 5 itself was still telling the Legislature through the actual independent report to implement the majority report.

To limit outside or partisan influence, we brought forward many recommendations through committee to try to get this new process and its fake title back on track, and they were rejected at every point.

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Government Motion 48, agreed to earlier today, which states that after one hour of debate all questions must be decided to conclude debate on Bill 40, Electoral Divisions Act, I must now put the following questions to conclude debate.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:12 p.m.]

[Three minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Metz
Arcand-Paul	Eremenko	Miyashiro
Batten	Ganley	Nenshi
Boparai	Goehring	Pancholi
Brar, Gurinder	Gray	Renaud
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Sabir
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hayter	Schmidt
Campbell	Hoffman	Shepherd
Ceci	Hoyle	Sigurdson, L.
Dach	Irwin	Sweet
Deol	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.
Ellingson		

Totals: For – 43 Against – 37

[Motion carried; Bill 40 read a second time]

5:20

Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 40
Electoral Divisions Act

The Chair: Before the committee gets under way I will remind hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 21 and Government Motion 48 agreed to earlier today, Bill 40, Electoral Divisions Act is subject to one hour of consideration in Committee of the Whole, following which all questions must be decided in order to conclude consideration of Bill 40 in Committee of the Whole.

Furthermore, pursuant to Standing Order 32(3.1) the interval between division bells on all divisions required to dispose of each of these bills in Committee of the Whole shall be three minutes.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Williams: I believe before we entered into committee there was an outstanding point of order that I had called that would be dealt with afterwards. I'm asking if now is afterwards.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're in committee. Is it amenable if we do this when we rise out of committee after?

Mr. Williams: That would be fine.

The Chair: Would that be fine with the opposition?

Ms Gray: I do not wish to discuss the point of order during our meagre time under time allocation right now.

The Chair: It wouldn't come out of the time that would rise against it, but we would have to rise out of committee to deal with the point of order and then come back into committee. We can just do it when we're done with this matter, and then go back to the point of order. Okay. Perfect.

Your hour starts now. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. That's 5:22, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Yep.

Ms Gray: Okay; 5:22. Thank you. I am pleased to begin some of the comments at Committee of the Whole knowing that we will only have a single hour.

Now, normally Committee of the Whole is a part where we would expect to have some of that robust debate that the Premier and the Justice minister promised us we would have, but with only an hour and knowing that not all members of this Legislature and certainly not all members of the Official Opposition will have the opportunity to respond, I want to quickly repeat the two key points from my discussion at second reading, which was limited.

The key points being that the window dressing that the government is using to defend this panel process and these unconstitutional maps that are complete with gerrymandering does not hold up to any scrutiny, and you can see that when you read the final report that was tabled to the Speaker in March 2026. Secondly, the work of the panel far exceeded the mandate they were given, the mandate that the Premier and the Minister of Justice both suggested: "Oh, we're only opening it up a little bit. The majority of the report will stay the same. We won't make changes south of Airdrie." None of that was true, and so we are now here today in Committee of the Whole debating a bill that is being rushed through this Legislature, that brings forward gerrymandered maps that are to the benefit of UCP cabinet ministers, and we can point to those partisan leanings in each and every case.

Now, part of the process for how we got to the report that is before this Assembly is that the government circumvented the normal legislative process that informs and governs the drawing of electoral boundaries in a government motion, Government Motion 37, that they wrote themselves, which caused no end of challenges when the Official Opposition looked for clarity as to what would and wouldn't happen because, of course, no one could advise us because the government made it up, so we had to make some best guesses as to what would happen and how this would proceed.

Myself and my hon. colleague the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View were two of the Official Opposition's representatives on the select special committee that was formed, and from day one we took it upon ourselves to try to bring as much transparency and information as possible to this process. That resulted in us moving nearly 30 different motions to try to improve in one way or another what was happening to Albertans without their consent and without their input. I wanted to read into the record not the wording of the motion but a brief description of all of the different ways that we tried to improve this process and the ways that the government stymied our efforts, starting with a motion simply that all of the committee meetings and all of the panel discussions should be held and broadcast publicly. We would all have such a more clear idea of what was happening and why if we could actually see transcripts.

Now, the original commission, all of the public presentations are recorded on *Hansard*. All of the original submissions are recorded on now the Elections Alberta website. You can go and see what people said to the panel. You can review what the panelists said back, and you could get a real sense of how that conversation went back and forth and that the commission was listening. None of that exists for what the panel did because, of course, those two motions were defeated.

Now, we also moved motions to try and prevent any backroom influence from taking place. And I was surprised when the government rejected these. We wanted all of the independent advisory panel members to publicly report to the committee any perceived attempts by an individual other than a member of the independent advisory panel to provide them with materials relevant to their mandate or otherwise influence their deliberations. Essentially, Madam Chair, we said: if somebody comes to you and tries to slide you some maps or talk to you about what lines you should be drawing, you should tell us. That level of transparency should have been implemented, but, of course, the government members said no and voted that down.

We also tried to amend the motion when it came to choosing the chair. We wanted to strike out the references to the phrase "retired," simply because making sure that a nonpartisan judge was involved in this process struck us as an eminently reasonable suggestion. Instead, the government rejected that. Now, in the seeking of a judge, the chair of the panel sent a letter to the Chief Justice, and the Acting Chief Justice replied – and I think this is materially important because in the normal course of things under the proper legislation, who chairs the electoral boundary process is actually quite collaborative. The Acting Chief Justice works with the government, I believe through the Justice minister, to choose the chair. That would have been the process that was used when Justice Miller was chosen to chair the commission. Instead, we received as a committee a letter back thanking Mr. Chair for the letter and saying:

> We have been advised that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries is actively seeking retired judges from both the Court of King's Bench and the Court of Appeal to fill this role. Given this advice and the irregularity of this process, the Courts will refrain from disseminating your May 4, 2026, letter or providing any input on the selection of [the] Chair.

It goes on to say that normally in the act,

> ... when properly constituted commissions are established, the protocol has always been that the Chief Justice ... be consulted for advice in respect of presently sitting or retired judges who may wish to offer themselves to accept the role.

In this case this government said: "We want no advice. We want no collaboration. We are not going to follow the normal process. We just want to be able to pick a judge," and the legal community said, "That is irregular, and we're not going to be part of it," and it actually reduced the legitimacy of what was going on. I think, in my opinion, that it was an appropriate reaction from the Acting Chief Justice. It was then repeated by the president of the Canadian Bar Association and other legal authorities. And so, of course, we tried to improve the process again. We put forward a motion to make the chair selection unanimous – let's all work together to choose a chair for this process rather than the government using their majority to pick their preferred chair – and it was rejected.

5:30

We then asked for a motion that the committee not appoint a chair who had in the past 10 years donated politically in Alberta – that's not what we received – or applied to be a candidate for election in Alberta, served on a political party constituency association, or been a member of a provincial public agency, board, or commission.

Now, keep in mind we're talking about the chair role in this case. Having a nonpartisan chair would have been ideal. Having a chair selected through the normal process that worked with the Acting Chief Justice would have been the gold standard. Guess what? We had that. We had that for the original commission. We had a chair that was duly appointed because the government worked with the legal community to find the best suited person to take on that work. They did wonderful work. We got a majority report. The government should have accepted that majority report.

When that motion failed, we moved a motion to be allowed to interview the chair, allow us to ask questions, allow us to find out what preconceived notions this chair might have about the boundary process and the constitutionality, what they might be coming in with. Again, denied.

At our next meeting we tried to pass a motion to make sure that the letter from the Acting Chief Justice would become part of the public record. Eventually it was made part of the public record, but it seemed important to us to be able to get there sooner.

We asked for the committee to ask for the Acting Chief Justice's advice. Why not? If they won't just forward correspondence on, because they're not Canada Post, why don't we talk to them and say: who would you recommend chair this for us? No. That was denied.

We again asked to be able to share the Acting Chief Justice's letter specifically because the committee was now going to contact the Bar Association and other authorities, including university presidents, I believe. We said: well, let's pass this letter on. They should know what they're getting into, especially the irregular nature. No. That was denied. That being said, I think a lot of these professionals were aware of how irregular what the government was doing was, and we actually saw most of them decline to participate as well.

We moved motions to be able to interview some of the candidates. We've moved motions to rescind Government Motion 37 and go back to the majority report, as we have advocated for here in the Chamber through question period, through bill debate, through motion debate, and now through Bill 40 debate. We said similar things at the committee, again, because of the unconstitutional nature of what is happening.

Finally, we asked – I shouldn't say finally. We're halfway through all the motions. Apologies. I didn't mean to get people's hopes up.

An Hon. Member: And then . . .

Ms Gray: And then we moved a motion for candidates for chair to disclose political donations. Remember that earlier motion where we said that we shouldn't select anyone who has political donations? Well, now after the fact, we said: let's make sure that the chair discloses political donations. That was rejected as well.

Now, at our next meeting a terms of reference for the independent advisory panel was debated. We tried to amend the terms of reference, and here's something wild, Madam Chair. We wanted to put in an amendment that told the panel they needed to take note of the addendum in their terms of reference.

Remember Justice Miller's addendum that both the Justice minister and the Premier have pointed to repeatedly? We thought it would be good to make sure that the panel knew that the Premier and the Justice minister and the government wanted them to add these two rural seats but to follow Justice Miller's recommendations because that's what they had said in the Chamber and in the media, so we should make sure that that's clear.

You know what, Madam Chair? The government members said that it wasn't necessary, that it was clearly included already, so why would we do something as redundant as repeating that, and what do you know? The recommendations were not followed. In fact, we have gerrymandering south of Airdrie in multiple places, all to the benefit of UCP cabinet ministers.

We put forward an amendment that the members, the panel members, publicly disclose all information they receive, making sure that if there were presentations, if there was information coming their way, we would get that information in a public way so that the public can have confidence about what was going on. We asked for more transparency of the committee chair's communications with the independent advisory panel chair, and I think I read independent advisory panel. Madam Chair, I do not believe it was an independent panel, so I'm using the technical term here but certainly don't agree with the name that it was given.

We moved a motion for more transparency as to the panel's activities. We wanted a list of the date and duration of each of their deliberations; a list of any external discussions or consultations held by the panel, including the names and positions of the stakeholders; a list of submissions and documents requested or received because as the panel members continued to work, we started to get some strange signals about what types of work and questions they were doing.

Our next motion was to include all deliberations, external discussions and consultation submissions, and requested documents in the final report. We did not receive that. That motion failed. To be very clear, none of these motions for increased transparency were accepted by the committee.

We moved a motion that the panel's maps needed to comply with recommendation 5 of the addendum. You'll note we took a second stab at that, Madam Chair, to make sure that the recommendations from Justice Miller were actually adhered to because they were so critically important and also because the Premier and the Justice minister had repeatedly stated in this House and in the media that that's what they were doing. We thought that they should do what they said they were going to do, and we wanted to put that in a motion, and that was denied.

We had a motion that the panel members would have to disclose any contact or attempted contact from the Premier, ministers, members, or government officials. What calls were they receiving? Why wouldn't we want to share that? And if the answer was zero, that would be an easy report to write. Instead, they said no, that they would not do that. We asked for them to disclose contact or communication with and from lobbyists. Again, defeated and not put forward.

Then government motions started coming forward that we tried to amend and tried to make improvements to, especially when there was a request from the panel for a political scientist that they wanted to hire to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel who has expertise in voting behaviour or electoral boundary determinations. Madam Chair, did your spidey senses just go up? Mine sure did. Why was the panel asking for a political scientist? Why did they need an expert in voting behaviour? Is it possible that the panel was being sent off on the wrong direction, that they were actually operating to political outcomes. That seems to be what the final report they've delivered does. How did they get there and why did they want to hire a political scientist?

They also asked for access to the previous chair of the correct boundary commission, the other members, and more information from the office of statistics from the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance. We tried to move an amendment to strike out political scientists because voting behaviours should never have been considered, and it is deeply concerning that the panel asked the committee to be able to get more expertise on voting behaviours before they finished their deliberations. To try again to prevent that from happening, we asked for there to be unanimous consent before a political scientist could be hired by the panel.

At the very least, could we try to find someone who is not known to have a particular partisan slant? There's a wide range of political scientists in the province of Alberta. There are hundreds of them. Not all of them make public comment to media. Lots of them do work in universities and in other locations. Certainly my comments are not intended to suggest that political scientists don't add value, but voting behaviour isn't something that should be considered when we're redrawing electoral boundaries, and we know that because of the Constitution and because of the precedent from previous boundary commissions.

We tried that a couple of different ways, including striking out a second concern where they wanted to enter into a service agreement with an experienced independent pollster to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel to provide the independent advisory panel with advice on voting behaviour and historic voting patterns. So now we have two separate requests. One is for a pollster, then the previous one that we were talking about, about the political scientist. The panel is now trying in multiple ways to get to the same thing. They wanted to know about voting behaviour. They wanted, perhaps, help modelling the outcomes of future elections on different boundaries.

5:40

It's wildly inappropriate, Madam Chair, and we were deeply concerned, but our attempts to amend that were struck out. We also wanted disclosure of legal advice because the panel wanted to engage legal counsel. We were curious as to why that would be. Were they future-proofing their recommendations? Were they trying to map out the exact legal bound that they could go to without going over? Very concerning activity from the panel at that time.

Then when the final meeting was being held with the committee, we asked at that point for – now that the work is done, one of the reasons the government told us that they couldn't possibly ask the panel members to disclose who they were talking to was because it could unduly influence the work they were doing, and they needed to maintain their independence. Well, once their work was complete, we said: "Okay. Now they should tell us who they met with, how they made their decisions. The work is over. We cannot influence it anymore. All we can do is learn from it." Again the government said no.

Over and over and over the members of the Official Opposition worked to try to hold this government to its own word that recommendation 5 was all that was being done, tried to add transparency for the public, tried to raise concerns when we saw a real impetus towards voting behaviour. Over and over we were stymied and the government did not allow that to happen. These are just a few of the many reasons why I have such deep concerns about this process, never mind the fact that you can just look at the maps that the process developed and try to answer those questions.

The Chair: Are there others?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I've had the opportunity to speak extensively about this. Unfortunately, there is so much questionable material here that it is difficult to get it out in the time available, especially in light of the time allocation. I want to start in this instance by talking a little bit about the addendum and the chair's recommendation 5.

I want to start by saying very clearly that it is clear and, in fact, Justice Miller literally uses the words: I make this recommendation alone. So despite the UCP's attempts to characterize it otherwise, everyone in this Chamber is absolutely aware of the fact that that was a recommendation only of the judge. To say that this is in any way taking the majority view is absolutely incorrect. The majority report is a set of maps, a set of maps that the UCP threw out. That is all there is to it.

Now, that being said, this government comes into the House and they claim that they want to act on the addendum. We were, I think understandably in light of their history and normal behaviour, extremely skeptical, and we've turned out to be right, but I think it is worth pulling a few statements from what the Premier specifically said about this. From the Premier on April 20: "We accepted the majority report with the addendum of the judge." I just want to make it clear for the record that error, or an incorrect statement, is in the original. I am not making it because obviously they did not, in fact, accept the majority report, but in any event. So they're going to accept the addendum of the judge, and to continue: "He said that the rest of the province . . . must be maintained to the extent possible." Literal words coming out of the Premier's mouth, quoted from *Hansard*, April 20.

Very clear what she was trying to say. Very clear that she's trying to tell Albertans that it will be minimal disruption to the maps of the majority. On April 21:

> The independent committee is going to . . . hire . . . a new commission, and it will be the . . . commission that [takes] . . . direction from this Legislature, which includes looking at the majority report as the base, with . . . modifications proposed by the judge . . . and they will come up with . . .

et cetera, et cetera. Again, taking the majority report at the base, only the modifications necessary. I think it's quite clear to me that the government understood the substance of what was in the addendum when they went out to the public and told them repeatedly that they were only doing the addendum. Ultimately, they did not only do the addendum.

Now, obviously, we were incredibly suspicious, and one of the reasons for our suspicion is that you don't drum up an entire gigantic new invented process when there is a very simple solution unless you're trying to hide something. I mean, that's just a basic fact. The very simple solution would have been to go back to the same commission to ask them to simply consider further what was in addendum 5 and to make those recommendations. The government didn't consider it. They didn't consider it because that was never their intention even as these words were being spoken.

They set up this panel. They claim it is to implement the addendum, but again we're deeply suspicious because there was a really easy way to do that, and they chose not to do it. Instead, they generate a brand new process with a committee of MLAs and a panel that reports to the committee and a whole host of weird rules.

We actually tried to move a motion to hold them to it. One of the very first questions we asked in that committee was: are they going to be held to the addendum? What is the purpose of the panel? Is the panel going to be required to stick to what the Premier said in the House? Was she telling the truth or not? The chair could not answer four times, but he did answer for the media, apparently. That's fine.

Ultimately, when we brought in a motion to do, again, what they claimed was going to happen, which is that they were going to stick to the addendum of the judge, they rejected that amendment, so here we are. Ultimately, we don't get them following what the addendum was.

I want to quote a little bit from the minority report here because the minority makes some incredibly able arguments about, like, what is happening here and what the mandate of the panel is. To begin, this is paragraph 55 of the minority report.

> Our colleagues propose further changes that, though discrete, could have extraordinarily consequential partisan implications.

By their colleagues they mean the UCP panel.

> Presumably, the clear but minimal partisan implications of the restoration of the two electoral divisions on his specific conditions are why Justice Miller recommended that an all-party committee study this process. An all-party committee, where the government has a majority of the membership, would normally not be an acceptable way to draw electoral divisions given the risks of partisan gamesmanship.

What they're talking about here is that they were meant to draw on the specific conditions of Justice Miller and they feel that the panel has not done that and also that the changes that the panel makes have, as they put it, extraordinarily partisan implications.

The next one I wanted to read is from paragraph 10 here.

> Our colleagues further recommend changes to several electoral divisions in the south and southwest of the province. They have removed one of Lethbridge's urban electoral divisions and added a new mostly rural electoral division. This has significant cascading consequences, including forcing Diamond Valley into being in an electoral division with Banff and Canmore. These changes not only do not facilitate effective representation, but actively undermine it. They have ignored the overwhelming desire of Lethbridge residents to have two mostly urban electoral divisions. They have systematically diluted the weight of Lethbridge residents by unnecessarily placing them in electoral divisions that extend for hundreds of kilometres.

5:50

Essentially, this is them saying, like, this is the problem with what is happening here. That's at the beginning, and then they sort of go on to what I would say is a very long argument regarding, you know, what the mandate of the panel is. They quote from Motion 37. This is what lawyers normally do in this respect. They talk about Motion 37:

> (e) the independent advisory panel's mandate is to
>
> (i) conduct a review of the electoral boundaries of Alberta and make proposals as to the area . . .

Then under (ii)

> (B) incorporate the recommendations provided in recommendation 5 in the addendum to the majority report subject to any modifications the independent advisory panel considers necessary, taking into consideration the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

What's going on here is that, essentially, they're making a legal argument. They're describing the Motion 37, and they go on to argue that this section, which talks about that, would be redundant if it had been the intention of the Legislature for the panel to just redraw the boundaries willy-nilly, however they saw fit. And it is very well made.

One of the other things I think is worth drawing attention to, because I find it, if I'm being honest, extremely curious, is the chair of the UCP panel's reaction here. He has an entire section in the report titled Unnecessary and Counter-productive Controversy. He says:

> Too much of the advisory panel's time and energy were taken up with responding to the indictments of the panel's minority who suggest that the process of the advisory panel was constitutionally reckless, an abuse of process, and that the panel's proposals infringed the Charter. Suggestions of "inappropriate partisan gamesmanship" and warnings about the "threat of litigation" dogged the panel throughout. The minority appointed themselves legal counsel to the panel, though no one invited them to assume that role.

What is interesting about this is that what the minority argues through their entire legal argument is the most normal possible legal argument that exists. Entire lawyers have made their career off arguing what is meant by legislative documents, whether they are motions like this or whether they are legislation. The idea of calling it an "unnecessary and counter-productive controversy" is really weird because this is literally the bread and butter of lawyers. Like, at law school you take an entire class, an entire semester class – at U of C it was called legislation, administration, and policy. I don't know what it's called elsewhere. But it's literally about something called the modern principle, which is a guide to statutory interpretation.

I think what I want to highlight for those who don't understand how normal it is for lawyers, particularly lawyers or judge people who are on a panel doing work of this nature, which requires them to understand the scope of their mandate, is that this is the most normal lawyer conversation that can occur. So the fact that the chair is having this, like, weird sort of hyperintense, name-calling reaction to this is super strange. He used to be a judge. Mr. O'Ferrall used to be a judge. I don't know why he would have such a strong reaction to this, but I do think it's suggestive. This is not the only thing, in my view, that is in this report that I find highly suggestive and highly problematic.

I'm going to quote now from page 55, the section entitled Northeast Calgary's Boundary Dilemma. They're talking about the rate of growth in northeast Calgary. I mean, one of the peculiar things here is that they cite Calgary-Klein, Calgary-Cross, Calgary-East, and Calgary-Confluence. That is peculiar because there is a growth problem in the northeast, but it is, like, located sort of more so in Calgary-North East and Calgary-Bhullar-McCall and Calgary-Falconridge and those sorts of areas. So it's curious, in the first place, why this is the way it is. Ultimately, this section, which is weirdly signed by only two panel members and nothing else in this report is signed by anyone, concludes that they need something called a precommission secretariat to examine growth in the northeast.

That part is not the part that concerns me. What does concern me is on page 57, where it says, "The northeast Calgary challenge reached the panel late." I'm just like: where did it reach the panel from? As my colleague has very extensively outlined, this panel is not talking to anyone in the public. We asked that the panel consider the record that was before the commission. They declined. We moved multiple motions about transparency. They declined. So, essentially, we've moved a motion saying that the panel should reveal to the committee and to the public who the panel is talking to. The UCP says no. You don't get to know who the panel talks to to draw these boundaries, but it sure won't be the public. Then we get the panel, like, explicitly referencing arguments reaching them late, but we don't know from where because, again, they refuse to tell us who they talked to.

And we have a second example of it. There are actually several, but I'm just going to quote only a second because time is running short. This is on page 59, and it says, "Despite submissions requesting that the western boundary of the electoral division be moved westward to include," blah blah blah. Anyway, again, reference to submissions although this section is a little less clear. It's not clear whether perhaps they were saying that there had been public submissions at the commission level. Again, we don't know what they're looking at in terms of what's before the commission. We don't know whether they're considering that record, whether they care. Certainly, what they do to Lethbridge would suggest that they flagrantly disregarded it since submissions in favour of keeping Lethbridge's two urban seats outnumbered others 5 to 1.

Did they not look? Did they not care? We don't really know, and we never will because the public has been kept entirely out of this process. They're not allowed to know about the deliberations. They're not allowed to know who spoke to the panel or where these arguments are reaching them from. And the reason this is so questionable to me is that this all occurs under cover of darkness. We know arguments are reaching them. We have a judge seemingly deeply offended by arguments that are, like, basically, the bread and

butter of lawyers about what the mandate of the panel is. We have the Premier promising that they're only going to do what's on addendum 5 and then a report that absolutely, completely renders that false. And I think the most telling thing here is that with all of this evidence accumulating, we end up in a situation where six UCP cabinet ministers are protected.

There is no reason for these changes. There's no reason to take Springbank out of Cochrane, a district which is already underpopulated. There is no reason to change Lethbridge. There is no reason for the knock-on consequences in Banff. There is, as Justice Miller said in the addendum, no reason to impact anything south of Airdrie, but we get impacts. And the result is that we have a Lethbridge cabinet minister who now has a small portion of the city and a huge portion of the county to protect him from his voters. We have two other UCP cabinet ministers who are not required to run against one another in a nomination because they have borrowed . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the committee is now recessed until 7:30 this evening.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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