



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 8, 2020

Day 27

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 8, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her 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 ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Brooklyn Elhard. In observation of the COVID-19 public health guidelines as outlined by Dr. Hinshaw, please refrain from joining us in the language of your choice.

Ms Elhard:

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Members' Statements

Economic Relaunch and Seniors' Safety

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are relieved and optimistic as we move with renewed confidence through the early stages of relaunch. The economic and psychological impacts of getting our province, our people, and our economy back to work cannot be understated. The Premier's commitment to reopening the economy is bringing much-needed hope and relief, and we are firmly committed to doing so without putting our most vulnerable at risk.

Calgary-Fish Creek has a thriving population of respected, active agers, and as their MLA some of my most enjoyable moments are spent celebrating their milestones while benefiting from their wisdom, experience, and knowledge. It is no secret that Alberta's seniors have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic; hence, our continued investment in keeping our seniors safe and protected but still engaged and thriving as we move through our relaunch strategy. We must continue to respect and honour those who built this great province, but we must also ensure they are heard and not forgotten as we courageously embark on a path to greater economic stability in our province and around the world.

Mr. Speaker, our lives have changed, but let's make sure it's for the better for our honoured seniors. It is our responsibility to ensure their safety and provide the quality care they need. With our seniors population doubling by 2035, we must lay the foundation for the seniors of tomorrow by protecting our seniors today. To achieve this, we must continue to follow public health guidelines and practise physical distancing, and though it is difficult, we must respect the continued risk to seniors' health and well-being while thanking the many dedicated home-care, housing, and care providers from the public, not-for-profit, faith-based, and private sectors that have

protected our loved ones with care and compassion in the face of this unprecedented challenge.

Mr. Speaker, fellow members of this Assembly: I know that we can do it together and prove that Alberta is not only strong and free but also a model of care and compassion for our seniors wherever they may choose to live.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a statement.

Racism

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday just outside these walls we saw an incredible moment in our city's history as over 15,000 people gathered, in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, to call for concrete action to address and end systemic racism in Canada. This followed multiple equally significant rallies in Calgary and was echoed in communities like Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray.

Mr. Speaker, racism exists. It is here in Canada. It is here in Alberta. It is overt, and it is subtle. It is systemic, embedded in social and economic systems and enflamed for political gain. And it is painful. Black Canadians have a right to be angry, frustrated, and to feel deep sadness and pain and fear and disappointment. This is a perfectly natural human reaction to the violence inflicted on black, brown, and indigenous bodies. Its impact is physical, emotional, and psychological. It is constant, ever present, and rooted in every part of their daily lives. To deny it, to say that it doesn't exist, or to equivocate in any way is to further inflict violence. To say, "All lives matter" is to ignore the fact that not all lives are treated equally. We cannot ignore this any longer.

We won't find solutions by hiding from these difficult truths, the ones that make us uncomfortable, because we have been living comfortably with injustice for far too long. Black, brown, and indigenous Canadians are all tired of experiencing, seeing the same cycle of violence, speaking out, hearing empty promises, and then watching us take short, fleeting glances at the truth before covering it back up again.

I must do better. We must do better. All 87 of us who hold the privilege of sitting in this House to chart the course of our province must do better. On Friday our caucus committed to meet with black leaders from Edmonton, and we will extend that invitation across the province to take the first necessary step to listen, provide resources, and then take actions so we will do better.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Lethbridge-East.

Early Childhood Brain Development

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta family wellness initiative launched in 2007, with an ambitious goal of improving outcomes in health and well-being for children across Alberta. I'm proud to say that the Lethbridge early childhood coalition and their program Building Brains Together have worked hand in hand to help build this program and are recognized from places as far away as Harvard University as being a leader in early childhood brain awareness. To achieve this goal, they had to understand modern science in brain development and work to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and brain development, mental health and addiction, and what has to be done in policy and in practice.

Through lectures and presentations the Alberta family wellness initiative communicates the brain story to people across the province to continue to grow and expand the theory that investment into early

childhood development can prevent additional treatment later on. The structure of our brains as they develop in early childhood is determined by more than just our genes. The experiences we have in our developing and early childhood years will affect the architecture of developing brains. This has lifelong consequences as we take these brains into adulthood. A brain that was built poorly in early childhood will not be able to cope with many issues such as stress. Young children who have been affected by toxic stress are at a much higher risk of physical and mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and addiction.

As the Alberta family wellness site states, children cannot build strong brains by themselves. Positive interactions with caregivers are the building blocks to support them later in life. That is why I continue to advocate for our government to invest in resources for early childhood learning and giving local school boards the flexibility to move funds to where they are needed most. We must recognize that by making investments early in life, we can prevent the need for spending later. This investment significantly reduces the need for support later in life and helps protect our citizens and our children by building a stronger, healthier province.

Government Policies and Youth

Ms Hoffman: As the class of 2020 celebrates years of hard work through online and drive-through ceremonies, I was disappointed that this UCP government would try to make these high school celebrations about MLA egos instead of being about student accomplishments. Since this government and the Education minister like focusing on themselves at this time, let's reflect on what they've done for the graduating class of 2020.

Almost immediately after getting elected, they cut youth wages by \$2 per hour. They got rid of the tuition cap and jacked up fees as much as 7 per cent per year. They increased the interest rates for student loan payments as well. The NDP government was investing in a child and youth mental health facility, but the UCP cut that. Then there was the STEP grant, that helped students gain work experience in nonprofits and small businesses, but they scrapped that, too. Now there's a 31 per cent youth unemployment rate in our province.

1:40

While we were working with GPRC and Red Deer to support their plans to become universities, the UCP has taken another route. Postsecondary campuses throughout Alberta are downsizing and/or closing permanently – for example, goodbye to Bow Valley's Canmore campus and NorQuest's Whitecourt and Drayton Valley campuses; Medicine Hat College and Lakeland College are cutting programs; and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker – and the UCP also laid off more than 20,000 education staff who were supporting students with their studies, all of this while exploiting a loophole to funnel taxpayer dollars to their political party to pay their partisan staff. Students, staff, and families have enough on their minds right now. The government has put much of it there. The last thing they should have to worry about are UCP MLAs' egos.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Energy Industry Diversification

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be easy today to talk about the very real challenges Albertans are facing. Instead, I want to talk about hope and the Alberta companies that I believe have some of the answers to our economic problems.

Eavor is a company whose technology has the capacity to produce geothermal heat and electricity anywhere in the world by

drilling to where the heat is. This baseload, absolutely clean energy would create the most stable electrical grid in the world in Alberta, attracting any business that needs constant electricity. This could create a new export of this drilling technology and ensure that every piece of critical infrastructure like hospitals would always have heat and power in Alberta. It could also lower the carbon footprint in Fort McMurray, enhancing the environmental, social, and governance factors needed to attract foreign capital into our energy industry.

Another Alberta company from my constituency, called Cream Energy Group, has a solar-powered portable air compressor station that has the capacity to reduce over 3 million tonnes of CO₂e methane in the next eight years. If implemented in 2020, this solar instrument air package could reduce emissions by 74 per cent of the federal government's target.

Another exciting opportunity is a company, A2A, that wants to build a railroad from Fort McMurray to Alaska in order to ship 1.2 million barrels per day of bitumen into Asia. It will reduce the costs of travel and delivery by four to eight days, with a corresponding reduction in carbon. Equally important, it will bring the trade of Asia into the heart of North America and through Alberta, diversifying the Alberta economy while potentially making Edmonton the inland port for Asian goods entering North America.

My point is that Alberta is full of entrepreneurs who see a need and are prepared to meet that need. Government can help along the way even if it's to just get out of the way by reducing red tape. Alberta is experiencing tough economic times, and it will require willing individuals to create the jobs for this province.

Postsecondary Education Funding

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about the three-pronged plan this UCP government is using to decimate Alberta's world-renowned postsecondary system. First, they incite deep operating cuts to public universities, colleges, and especially trade schools. Then to address these cuts, these same institutions must raise tuition so that students either take on massive amounts of debt or, even worse, drop out altogether.

Second, budget cuts forced layoffs at our postsecondary institutions. In Budget 2020 the government said that in order to address their cuts, postsecondary would have to lay off about 400 people, but that's certainly not what happened, Mr. Speaker. In reality, postsecondary institutions like NAIT, SAIT, Lethbridge College, Grande Prairie College had to lay off so many people that the actual number is nearly 10 times what this government predicted. As a result of these cuts and layoffs, the University of Alberta's Augustana campus is ending its nursing program for rural nurses, Bow Valley College is closing its Canmore campus, and Lakeland is shutting down five trade programs, just to give a few examples.

The third part of the plan, Mr. Speaker, was to impose performance-based funding. Last week the minister announced that they would shelve this new funding model indefinitely, a destructive model that never should have been brought forward in the first place. Good riddance, I say. Alberta colleges, universities, and polytechnics share my view.

Postsecondary institutions are critical to this government's economic recovery. As more young people move to enter postsecondary and unemployed workers in a down economy look to retrain, Alberta needs more investment in spaces in universities, colleges, and trade institutions. Apart from cutting funding and laying people off, Mr. Speaker, where is the minister's plan in that?

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Sherwood Park.

D-Day Anniversary and Canadian Armed Forces Day

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the early morning hours of June 6, 1944, over 14,000 Canadian soldiers landed at Juno Beach in Normandy, France, as part of the D-Day landings. These brave Canadians pushed directly into the formidable Atlantic Wall defences that had been built up by the Nazis during the occupation of France. It is nearly impossible to fully grasp the courage and discipline that it took to push on. By the end of that first day 359 Canadians had died on Juno Beach.

We have many reasons to thank the young men who stormed Juno Beach many years ago: their bravery was critical to the fight against freedom in Europe, their sacrifice for the democratic society and freedoms that we enjoy in Canada today. As time passes and fewer veterans are able to share their stories, it is more important than ever to remember D-Day. We have a duty to live each day in a way that honours their sacrifice.

The first Sunday in June also marks Canadian Armed Forces Day. For decades before D-Day and in the 76 years since, brave men and women from Alberta have chosen to serve their country in all branches of Canada's military. Each day they remain dedicated to defending our country and stand ready to defend our freedoms or support our country at a moment's notice.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to all those brave men and women who have chosen to serve their country: thank you for your courage, your commitment, and your dedication to upholding Canadian ideals at home and around the world.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Racism Prevention

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The history of discrimination and racism dates back centuries and continues to affect many communities around the globe. Over the last year hate-related incidents and crimes have spiked across the country and here in Alberta. Racism is a grave problem that hinders the path towards a healthy and vibrant society. The need to increase awareness and education around racism is greater than ever.

Racism is real. People experience it every day. We cannot say that it's a problem that only occurs south of the border. Canada has a long history of racism. I have experienced racism in my life. I know many people who face racism in their lives. People of colour and indigenous communities experience it and face it in their day-to-day lives.

This UCP government has a history of failure on the antiracism file of Albertans. Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. While the Premier was a federal MP, the Harper Conservatives created two-tier citizenship with the passing of Bill C-24. This Premier and his government failed to denounce Quebec's racist Bill 21, where government workers had to choose between their jobs and their faith. This UCP government brags about creating a separate ministry for multiculturalism and has been creating panel after panel, yet they have failed to allocate funds to the Anti-Racism Advisory Council, whose primary role is to advise the ministry how to best tackle racism in Alberta today. Further, the UCP failed to condemn racially charged attacks on the consulate of China in Calgary, and recently the UCP's founding chairman, Ed Ammar, ignorantly cursed at a black federal MP while he was expressing his experience with racism in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we need to take racism seriously. My NDP caucus colleagues and I are committed to fight against racism to the end. As Angela Davis once said: in a racist society it is not enough to be a nonracist; we must be antiracist.

Federal Fiscal Policies

Mr. Stephan: I stand to raise a voice of warning. Canada is marching to bankruptcy, taking Alberta down with it. Canada is rudderless, under the control of individuals out of their depth. The socialist Trudeau, NDP, and Bloc undermine our ability to compete and succeed in the real world. Albertans do not like socialism and came out in record numbers to fire the NDP.

Alberta is in a rigged partnership with so-called partners who strangle and suffocate the contributions of their most successful partners, Alberta businesses and families. In the real world a partnership agreement providing structural welfare payments to hostile, parasitic* partners would never survive. That is equalization. Alberta has contributed more than \$600 billion into equalization; Quebec takes more than \$476 billion from it. In the real world Quebec would be kicked out of the partnership.

1:50

Alberta must liberate itself from this mess. As a fair deal asks Alberta to get Ottawa and Quebec politicians to act in good faith, a naive proposition, it is prudent, then, to develop contingency plans for them persisting in bad faith. It is urgent that Alberta seek greater self-reliance to free our businesses from hostile interference and insulate our families from a \$1 trillion debt train wreck. That is in the public interest.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has the call.

Rural Physicians

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Member for Calgary-Acadia arrogantly Shan-splained to the Legislature that only one doctor was leaving Crossfield and he was just going down the road. Minutes later he was forced to admit that he was wrong. He then claimed the clinic was just relocating.

Mr. McIver: Point of order.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, both statements are false. Here are the facts. The clinic is closing, those doctors are leaving, and 3,000 people don't have a family doctor in town. Let's be clear. It's the member's fault. To the Premier: how can you have confidence in a member who's chasing doctors out of rural Alberta so fast he can't even keep track?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the physicians in question are moving 20 minutes down the road to north Calgary, but several hundred physicians enter and leave the practice every year in Alberta. Net overall the province gained 293 physicians over the past fiscal year. The latest data nationally indicates that we have about 10,800 fully registered physicians as of March 31 of this year. Alberta has seen the fastest growth in the number of physicians amongst Canadian provinces. We have the highest per capita number of physicians in the country. We also have the best compensated physicians in Canada.

Ms Notley: Quote: the government was going to cut back the money that we were going to get paid at the hospital; now they've backed off on that, but we know it's going to be coming back again; nobody has any confidence that it won't. End quote. That's Dr. Collingridge. He's leaving Crossfield. You know what? It's not about billing codes anymore, Mr. Speaker. It's just about trust and

*See page 1156, left column, paragraph 14

the fact that regular Albertans in rural Alberta are losing their doctors. If the Premier wants to fix this trust relationship and re-establish it, he must bring in a new minister. Why won't he?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP is talking about a clinic moving, effectively, down the road and keeping the same patients. Alberta has the highest number of physicians in the country, by far, bar none the best compensated physicians. Under the NDP compensation for physicians went up by nearly \$1 billion. While they froze nurses' wages, they increased doctors' compensation by 20 per cent. Is that really what the NDP is all about?

Ms Notley: We're all about making sure that people get health care.

The member said that we had 100 per cent single-site staffing in continuing care. Not true. He claims virtual billing codes are here to stay, but his department says that they're not. He says doctors aren't leaving Crossfield. They are. He disrespects the AMA, he calls physicians using phone numbers he shouldn't have, and he personally harassed a doctor at his home at night in front of his wife and kids. Premier, is there no one on those backbenches who could do a better job than this minister? Is this seriously as good as it gets with the UCP?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the hard work of this the hon. Minister of Health. It's interesting. He's barely had a question from the NDP in the past two weeks while overseeing the public health response to the biggest public health crisis in over a century. The preamble to that question was loaded with falsehoods. The new building codes are in place and will be confirmed as being available. In fact, we think that it's a great idea to have more people getting secure telehealth, reducing in-clinic calls. That means more efficient care. That's just one of the many inaccuracies being spread by the NDP.

The Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

Ms Notley: And apparently by Department of Health officials as well, but, you know, whatever.

Alberta Energy Regulator

Ms Notley: On a different topic, this Premier appointed a Conservative operative to head the AER. Laurie Pushor is best known for negotiating the scandalous GTH land deal in Saskatchewan that put millions in the pockets of political donors against the public interest. He demonstrated, at best, a severe lack of accountability, transparency, and good governance. Now he's brought this same behaviour to the AER, suspending environmental monitoring with no consultation, no explanation, and no record. To the Premier. The AER needs to be above reproach. Will you replace the CEO with someone who meets that standard?

Mr. Kenney: Wow. Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine who dreamed up that question over at the NDP caucus office, but I would suggest that they should be fired. I want to remind them that it was under the NDP that a massive scandal occurred at the AER. Multiple independent reports came back indicating that the previous government failed totally to ensure accountability in a complete failure of governance of that organization, as a result of which we had to fire the entire NDP-appointed board of the Alberta Energy Regulator and start from scratch.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, the reports were ordered by this government to review the guy that those guys appointed.

Now, several Treaty 8 First Nations are suing the AER because oil sands companies are no longer conducting critical environmental tests. Shockingly, when their lawyers asked the AER for copies of the documents that generated the decision to suspend monitoring, they were told that nothing was written down. This kind of back-of-a-napkin deal-making will generate years of litigation and cost our economy billions of dollars in reputational damage. To the Premier: will he direct the resumption of environment monitoring immediately?

Mr. Kenney: To be clear, the NDP again is asking the government to interfere in independent decisions from a quasi-judicial tribunal and effectively to violate the law in so doing. No, Mr. Speaker. We will not replicate the NDP's tendency to interfere in independent decisions. Our job is ultimately to hold that organization accountable. The NDP didn't. According to the Auditor General there's still \$2.3 million that went missing under the management of the AER during the NDP's tenure. Does the hon. the Leader of the Opposition know where that money is?

Ms Notley: Under the management of the guy that those guys appointed, Mr. Speaker. Section 26 gives the cabinet the ability to fix these problems.

The fact is that the AER is riding roughshod over the rights of First Nations peoples, so much so that they didn't even get the constitutionally protected stakeholders' notice of a decision impacting their traditional lands. Mr. Speaker, if the Premier won't fix this, can he at least assure this House that monitoring will resume when he lifts the state of emergency, or is environmental monitoring somewhere in phase 7, after group hugs and high-fives?

Mr. Kenney: Did she say high-fives? Do you remember all the high-fives she used to give her cabinet about every other week about building the TMX pipeline? How'd that work out, Mr. Speaker?

Do you remember that under the NDP government there were multiple investigations into corruption at the AER? The upshot is this: the NDP, their Minister of Energy, now defeated, and their former Premier, now defeated . . . [interjections] Boy, she's angry today. She's angry because she cannot be held to account for her total failure with respect to governance at the AER. We cleaned up the mess.

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Public Service Pension Fund Administration

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Finance said repeatedly that he has confidence that the decision to force teachers to use AIMCo as their pension investment manager was the right move. Do you know who doesn't have confidence? The plan members, the people directly impacted by this decision. Analysis shows that this is a bad move. Premier, this decision has terrified tens of thousands of teachers who earned their pensions over a lifetime of hard work. You may have heard this old teacher adage before, but it bears repeating here: please show your work.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that there's not a pension management firm that has not experienced a real challenge in Q1 of 2020. In fact, you know, AIMCo's returns in eight of the last 10 years have beat the benchmark. AIMCo has a

history of providing defensible, credible returns for their asset owners, and we have confidence that they'll continue to do so in the future. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is the only one with the call.

2:00

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance brags that AIMCo has beat the benchmark eight of the last 10 years, but beating the benchmark is the bare minimum. It is only better than having no investment strategy at all. To the Premier: when you're investing your own money, is your goal the bare minimum, or is it to gain the biggest bang for your buck? If it's the latter, why don't Alberta workers' pensions deserve the same?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to say through you to pension holders in Alberta that in the event that they have a public-sector pension that's being managed by AIMCo, I want to assure them that their pensions are safe and secure, that right now all of their public service pensions managed by AIMCo are fully funded. Again, we continue to have confidence in AIMCo going forward.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, if we're talking about confidence, we should be comparing AIMCo to its Canadian equivalents. When we look at that, we see that AIMCo consistently underperforms. One pension expert said to me that if this was a marathon, CPPIB would get the gold medal and AIMCo would be struggling to finish the race. To the Premier: I've heard from over 15,000 Albertans and counting. They're worried about you messing with their CPP, with their retirement. Don't you think the voices of these Albertans should be heard, or will you keep ignoring them?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has been clear that should we believe that there are credible reasons and reasons of merit to potentially go forward with an Alberta pension plan, that would go in front of Albertans in the form of a referendum.

Mr. Speaker, we do have complete confidence in AIMCo going forward. Again, they have provided excellent returns for asset holders in the past, beating the benchmark eight out of 10 years. We believe that they will continue to serve Albertans well in the future.

MLAs' Participation in Graduation Ceremonies

Ms Hoffman: This government thinks it has the right to take taxpayers' money without consent to pay the bloated salaries of their political staff. The Minister of Education also thinks that government has the right to use student graduation ceremonies for her own photo ops without their consent. She loves to talk about choice in education, but when students choose not to invite her or her colleagues to their grad, she writes threatening letters. Premier, graduation is about students, and they get to decide who's invited and who isn't. Why aren't you respecting their choices?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The letter was simply sent to remind school divisions that if they are hosting a

graduation through alternative means, there should be ways to accommodate attendance from local politicians. Graduation ceremonies are an opportunity for communities to come together and celebrate the accomplishments of their graduates. This is what the letter was about.

Ms Hoffman: The minister's letter says, "It is my expectation that you will work diligently to meaningfully include your local elected officials, whether that be an MLA, MP or a local councillor." That's not a suggestion, Mr. Speaker. That's not a request. That's a demand, and it's a threat to a board. Premier, what consequences will this government inflict on school boards that don't do what the minister thinks is the right thing? What will they do if boards support their graduating students and let them make a choice about who they invite to their celebrations?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a long-standing practice in our education system to invite locally elected officials from all levels of government, regardless of political affiliation, to participate in graduations. We want to celebrate with our graduates and with their families. It is something we've always done; it's something we will continue to do.

Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: They have a right to decide who they want to celebrate, Mr. Speaker. It's like saying to somebody that you expect an invitation to their wedding. That's not the minister's party. The minister has cut millions of dollars from Alberta schools. She has laid off more than 20,000 education workers. She has pushed hundreds of dollars in new fees onto parents, and she has taken away critical supports from students with special needs. She refuses to take responsibility for her actions, and she writes threatening letters like the one she is in here defending. The Premier really needs to step up and say to Alberta students that they have a right to invite who they want. Students, staff, and family should be able to determine who is at their graduating ceremonies, not this minister.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, all elected officials, including city and town councillors, MLAs, and MPs, are proud of our graduating students, and as representatives of their communities we use graduations as an opportunity to commemorate these students and wish them every success. I'm sure that the members opposite want to join all of the members in this House in congratulating the class of 2020.

Congratulations, class of 2020. Well done. We wish you every success.

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

Bill 1 and Lawful Protests

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year we saw a number of illegal rail blockades that shut down the transportation of a wide range of important goods and natural resources. These blockades hurt Canada's economy. In response the government introduced Bill 1, which serves to protect our critical infrastructure and ensure that in Alberta the rule of law is respected and upheld. However, some have spread misinformation that this proposed law would sanction peaceful and lawful protesters rather than illegal blockaders. To the Minister of Justice: could you confirm to this House that Bill 1 will not impede the ability of Albertans to engage in lawful protests?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Bill 1 does not impact the ability of individuals to have a lawful protest. This bill was designed to deal with illegal blockades. Earlier this year we saw lawlessness across this country. This bill is designed to make sure that people can earn a living in this country, that people can't sit on rail lines for weeks on end disrupting supply chains across this country. We've seen in this pandemic how important those supply chains are for us to be able to provide for ourselves. This bill is designed to go after illegal blockades.

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

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the response. Given that the minister has confirmed that Bill 1 will not impede the ability of Albertans to engage in lawful protest but given that specific concerns have been raised specifically in regard to recent antiracism protests, can the minister confirm to this House and the public that Bill 1 would not prevent those current protests and correct the misinformation that has been spread in this regard?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we condemn racism in all of its forms. We'll stand up for people's constitutional right to protest. This bill is restricted to make sure that we go after illegal blockades. That's its intent. People's right to protest is enshrined in our Constitution. We'll stand up for that right.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for his response. Given that the minister has made it clear that this bill will not affect the lawful and peaceful protests, can the minister provide an example of the type of illegal actions that this legislation would serve to sanction in contrast to the legitimate protests that Albertans have a constitutional right to engage in?

Mr. Schweitzer: I think a perfect example of the type of behaviour that people can continue to do is exactly the protests that we've seen so far in our province of Alberta, peaceful protests like the one that we saw here on the Legislature Grounds this weekend, where thousands of people came out to have their voices heard. The type of behaviour that this is targeting, that Bill 1 prohibits, is illegal blockades where we had people spending weeks on end on rail lines, jeopardizing jobs across this country. We saw people getting laid off, losing their ability to provide for their families. That's where this steps in.

People will always have the right to protest in the province of Alberta.

Victims of Crime Fund

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta victim services model is one of the best in Canada. Quote: Alberta was way, way ahead of the game for going on 30 years. That was Alf Rudd, former police chief in two Alberta jurisdictions and president of the Alberta Police-Based Victim Services Association. Services are provided 24/7, and emotional, financial, and physical supports are available to Albertans who are victims of crime. Can the minister explain why, rather than funding police, he's taking resources away from victims of crime to do so?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like I have to stand up here again to explain that this is about more. This is about growing the victims of crime fund by 50 per cent. Twenty million additional dollars a year, from \$40 million up to \$60 million, will be spent

through the victims of crime fund with its enhanced ability to build on public safety.

I don't know why the member opposite has a problem with drug treatment courts. This is going to give those that are struggling with addictions the ability to recover through our courts. I don't know why that member over there has a problem with that.

Ms Ganley: Given that Alf Rudd has also said that, quote, in the current atmosphere it's not the time for governments to be taking money away from victims and given that our plan had support from many agencies for increasing the fund spent on victims and given that Mr. Rudd has stated that he's already seen operations and training budgets for victim services organizations reduced in some jurisdictions, what does the minister have to say to victim services volunteers who are seeing their training cut?

2:10

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, grants this year went out from the victims of crime fund. But let's get back to the earlier point, what that member won't address. Why won't they support drug treatment courts in this province? These people are suffering from addictions. This government has stood up to create 4,000 spaces to deal with addictions. We have a minister dedicated to dealing with mental health and addictions. We're putting the largest investment into drug treatment courts to find innovative ways to give people a second chance through our justice system. Shame on them for standing up against this and trying to defund drug treatment courts.

Ms Ganley: Given that the Minister of Justice told me that these changes were proposed following consultations in 2019 but given that on at least one occasion a member was denied access to a consultation meeting after identifying themselves as working with victims' services organizations and given that supporting victims of crime is an essential part of the justice system, why did the Minister of Justice exclude victim services organizations from his consultations?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, again, I don't know if this member heard our announcement late last week that we're actually creating a panel here. We've got two people from this Chamber, the Member for Airdrie-East and the Member for Grande Prairie. They're going to go out there and work with our victims of crime fund recipients and grants. They're going to work on coming up with a better way of delivering the benefits as well. This is about rolling out a new program late next year.

But that member still won't answer why they don't support drug treatment courts. That member was a minister for four years, didn't do it, didn't get the job done on drug treatment courts. They invested maybe half a million dollars a year. We're putting in \$20 million a year to make sure that people have a chance in life.

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

Support for Small Businesses Affected by COVID-19

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday the UCP government begrudgingly took a small step forward to finally support small business. It was too little too late. Fifty-seven days after we proposed support for small business, the government finally relented. They found up to \$7.5 billion for KXL 68 days ago in a secret deal but only found \$200 million for small business. Can the Minister of Finance explain to this House why his COVID-19 economic response package is 38 times larger for foreign multinational corporations than it is for Alberta small business, many of whom are hanging on for dear life?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government inherited a troubled economy brought on by the failed policies of the members opposite when they were governing. That's why we immediately implemented the job-creation tax cut. That's why we immediately repealed the carbon tax and moved forward with a reduction of red tape, a regulatory burden on businesses. Our plan was working. January and February economic data showed that our economy was growing, investment was coming, jobs were being created. This government is delivering in the long term for Albertans.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it seems like the Finance minister has put small businesses on the back burner during this pandemic and given that the Prime Minister announced nearly \$1.5 billion in supports for Alberta and Alberta businesses and given that small businesses are struggling, why is the Minister of Finance only spending an eighth of that relief on small businesses? Where is the other \$1.3 billion going? Why can't small businesses catch a break with this government? Why is it that 160,000 small businesses are the ones who are going to get the least?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is leading the country in supports for job creators. On June 5 the Premier and I announced a grant for businesses that were forced to close or severely curtail their operations due to public health orders. This grant will be up to 15 per cent of the small business's or nonprofit's monthly revenue, up to a maximum of \$5,000. This is in addition to our previous actions and deferrals, including paying 50 per cent of WCB premiums, freezing and deferring education property taxes, abating the tourism levy, and much, much more.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this government already failed all those small businesses, particularly in Calgary with their announcement of a delayed restart, and given that some Calgary restaurants say that they lost nearly \$10,000 because of this government's communication blunder and given that the city of Calgary has stated that up to 40 per cent of the city's restaurants are at risk of failure and given that this Finance minister has an extra \$1.3 billion from Justin Trudeau, will the Minister of Finance step up and provide relief for Calgary restaurants that incurred added costs because of this government's errors? Or are the only folks worthy of a taxpayer bailout the UCP, who found a loophole to take care of their own?

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, we said it before, and we say it again. We find it laughable that the members opposite are suddenly feigning support for businesses. The members on this side, the government, have always supported our job creators from day 1. From killing their carbon tax to our open for business act to our job-creation tax cut we on this side have always stood up for job creators, and we will always continue to do so.

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

COVID-19 and Care Facilities

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The disturbing report coming from Ontario demonstrated a lack of oversight and support for seniors during this pandemic. Also, given that Quebec has had issues as well with long-term care facilities and I have heard some concern from Albertans who have parents living in long-term care homes here in our province, to the Minister of Health: what is the ministry doing to ensure that our seniors are supported and are not subjected to similar conditions as seen in Ontario and Quebec?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I feel for all the families who've lost a loved one. The pandemic has taken a tragic toll on continuing care residents around the world. As the Premier said, protecting vulnerable seniors is going to be a key part of our relaunch strategy here in Alberta. I think it's fair also to point out that our situation is much different than central Canada. For example, we've had, since June 6, 112 deaths in our continuing care facilities compared to 1,700 in Ontario and 2,700 in Quebec.

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

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected seniors who have pre-existing conditions, it is essential that long-term care homes continue to follow health orders and guidelines to prevent further spread of the virus. Again to the minister: can you please update this House on how the government is ensuring that those running long-term care facilities and the health care workers at those facilities are supplying residents with a high level of care to ensure that they are safe from COVID-19?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our continuing care operators have done a good job protecting residents here in Alberta thanks in part to the direction from the chief medical officer of health and support from our government as well. We're providing \$21 million per month to increase staff levels, to top up health care aide wages and offset other costs and lost revenues, and we're working closely with AHS to provide effective oversight, including intervening as needed all the way to taking over management at a few sites that have had critical staff shortages.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given the impact that this pandemic has had, Alberta has experienced 146 deaths since the last update on Saturday, many of whom are seniors, stemming from outbreaks at long-term care facilities, to the minister: is the ministry planning ways to better respond to outbreaks that may occur in the near future or in preparation for any future epidemic or pandemic?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you. I have directed that our review of continuing care legislation, Mr. Speaker, be expanded to look at how the system performed through the pandemic, and we're going to learn from that review. But here's what we won't do. We won't play politics like the NDP, using the pandemic as cover for an ideological attack on our independent providers in this province, and

we won't make ourselves ridiculous by saying that employers are delaying the wage top-up when the only delay was caused by a union.

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

Policing and First Nations Communities

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team is investigating an encounter in March that involved the RCMP and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation's Chief Allan Adam. Video of this incident surfaced over the weekend, and Chief Adam says that police used excessive force when arresting him for not having proper registration on his vehicle. Chief Adam was joined by numerous other indigenous leaders over the weekend to decry the incident. To the Premier: I understand, Mr. Premier, that you have spoken to Chief Adam. Was he satisfied with ASIRT conducting the investigation into this incident, and what else were you able to discuss?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for the opportunity to respond. This matter being investigated regarding the police conduct is with ASIRT, so I can't get into all of the details on that, but we've seen an outcry. Numerous people from across Alberta have marched, brought forward concerns regarding policing. We're going to listen to them. They have a voice in this government. We're going to make sure we listen to their concerns. We're going to expedite the work on the Police Act and our policies. We're going to be reaching out to indigenous communities across Alberta. We're going to be working with our police chiefs as well. We're going to make sure we have the right policies to deal with this. We're not going to put our head in the sand. Thousands of people have spoken; we're going to listen.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the answer. Given that indigenous communities were already hurting as a result of the murder of George Floyd in the United States and given that the incident involving Chief Allan Adam is raising the concerns to new levels and given that many, many indigenous people have attended protests against police brutality in our province in recent days, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what specific steps are you taking to promote a better relationship between the police and First Nations in this province? Minister, these communities really need you to be specific.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I thank that member for that question, and I do truly believe this is one area where people on both sides of this House can work together in making things better for all Albertans and better for our indigenous communities. We're open to having a complete dialogue around the future of policing. We want to make sure that we get our Police Act right. We're going to expedite the work on that. We're going to expedite the work on our policing policies. We do have some excellent examples of indigenous police forces in this province. We've provided additional funding for additional members to be added this year. We're going to continue to work with these communities to get this right for Albertans.

2:20

Mr. Feehan: We certainly are looking forward to more specifics.

Given that Marlene Poitras, the Alberta regional chief for the Assembly of First Nations, said that the March 10 incident involving Chief Allan Adam reinforces the need for more federal funding to go to First Nations to administer policing in their own

communities and given that one of the best ways to build trust with police in indigenous communities is to have more indigenous police officers, to the Minister of Justice. You've held your post for more than a year. What work have you done to advocate for additional resources for First Nations communities? Please be specific.

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the previous question I noted the fact that we provided additional resources for indigenous policing. We also put out a statement today regarding expediting our consultation on the Police Act. We also called on the minister of public safety federally to review the legislation and regulations around the RCMP, who do the policing work for many of our indigenous communities. We're going to advocate and engage with the federal government. We're going to advocate and engage with indigenous communities to make sure we get this right for Albertans.

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

Racism Prevention

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are living in historic times. Thousands of Black Lives Matter protesters aiming to address systemic racism protested around the world and in Airdrie, Lethbridge, Banff, Calgary, and Edmonton. Alberta's own Anti-Racism Advisory Council's statement is clear. They stand in solidarity with these protests because black lives do matter. To the minister. Language does matter. Why does your statement not denounce racism specifically against black people, and why was the council's full statement silenced from the public?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this question. You know, I have always spoken openly on this but also on my own lived experience with respect to racism, and last week I gave a brutally honest interview about the challenges that black people face in this country and around the world. That is why I was totally disappointed last week when I received an invitation to speak at the Black Lives Matter rally at this Legislature and then got disinvited.

Mr. Sabir: Given that this UCP government has an amazing resource in the Anti-Racism Advisory Council for guidance during this difficult time and given that the members of the council have noted that their expertise is not utilized for decision-making and ultimately addressing systemic racism, to the minister: how do you plan on understanding and learning about the council's concerns and issues surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement when you and your caucus refuse to even engage with or share the full statement of your council with the public?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the NDP and their allies did not want me to attend that rally last Friday. On their side of the aisle all they want is division, and this is a matter that affects all of us regardless of political parties. The question that I have for the members opposite and their allies is: what was the reason why someone like myself would not be allowed to speak at that particular rally?

Ms Ganley: Point of order.

The Speaker: Order. A point of order has been called.

Mr. Sabir: Given that the UCP government has cut antiracism initiative grants and given that Albertans are concerned about lack of supports from this government for antiracism initiatives and given that now we see a near complete refusal to consult with the antiracism council, to the minister: can you please be specific on what actions, if any, you have taken or intend to take since the Black Lives Matter protests began about two weeks ago? And be specific about Black Lives Matter.

Mr. Madu: You know, Mr. Speaker, racism is a scourge on humanity, and that is why on this side of the aisle we are very committed to making sure that we work to end racism. It is also important that we don't just talk about racism; it is important that we listen to those who actually have had the lived experience, who have had to face racism in this society and around the world.

Agricultural Support Programs

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, Alberta agricultural producers are struggling. All sectors of our agricultural industry are having a difficult time financially, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, our livestock producers, who make sure that Albertans have access to high-quality meat and dairy, need help. The ongoing pandemic has forced the temporary closure of two meat-processing plants, with another one operating at reduced capacity. This has impacted the bottom line of producers significantly. To the minister of agriculture: what is this government doing to support our livestock industry in this difficult time?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member. We have extended our AgriStability deadline to July 3 as well as extended our calf insurance deadline to June 18. That's an additional three weeks from when it was prior. That is ultimately to help out our ranchers to be able to access the programs that are available to them right now. In addition, we've developed a \$43 million set-aside program for our fed-cattle producers here in the province. We've also created a \$5 million agriculture training support program, which will also help to find and attract workers to our agriculture sector across the province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our grain producers are also experiencing difficulties during this time and given that this spring, due to weather conditions, many of our farmers were faced with harvesting the remaining 2019 crop at the same time as seeding their 2020 crop, to the same minister: can he provide an update to this House regarding the harvesting and seeding efforts of our producers and how our government is supporting them?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of agriculture.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to inform the member that as of the June 2 report that came in from AFSC, 97 per cent of the seeding is done across the province of Alberta. Also, I'd like to just personally take the time to thank the AFSC inspectors, 118 of them, that actually went out to areas, especially in the northern parts of the province, to make sure that farmers there got the extra attention that they needed with the additional acres that they've had that weren't harvested last year. They did actually help to expedite claims to make sure that farmers could be able to make

seeding intentions based on the reality that they were facing rather than having it delayed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that the agricultural industry needs help at this time and given that the AFSC, the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, has existing programs such as crop insurance, livestock price insurance, and income stabilization designed to assist producers through these challenges, to the minister: are you fully satisfied that these support programs are sufficient to address the current needs of our food producers during this difficult time?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The short answer is no. We are working with provinces and the federal government to make sure that our business risk management programs are better designed. Something that we as the province of Alberta know and understand is that insurance programs are the best way. They're the most predictable and bankable programs that farmers and ranchers can actually have access to. Again, what farmers and ranchers in this province need is certainty. Unlike the NDP, that introduced Bill 6, that threw a carbon tax on our farmers and ranchers – that's something that we would never do because we understand that our farmers compete on a global stage – we're going to help them compete.

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

Physician Recruitment and Retention

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a great honour for me to be invited to address the graduating class at the University of Calgary's Cumming School of Medicine and department of family medicine. In my speech on Friday I told these young professionals that I had been very moved to hear how much they love their work, how much they care for their patients, and by their passion to build practices that truly support their communities. My question is: why do these young Alberta doctors have a government that calls them, their educators, and mentors lazy, greedy, and dishonest?

Mr. Shandro: I don't even know how to reply to that, Mr. Speaker. That is totally untrue. Look, we pay our physicians on a per capita basis more than any other province in this country. We're spending \$5.4 billion on our physicians in this province. It's the highest level in this country. In particular, if the hon. member is going to be attending medical schools and their graduations, I'd point out as well that recently, on April 24, we announced that we will now start investing in places in our medical schools in Edmonton and Calgary for rural practitioners.

2:30

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that 127 medical students from the University of Calgary and University of Alberta wrote to this government in April:

As physicians in training we are questioning whether to practice medicine, urban or rural, in a province that will limit us from providing stable patient care. Many newly graduating physicians are looking to leave Alberta. Such an exodus would be a significant loss of all that was invested in training and could ... create a physician shortage for years to come.

Why is this government continuing to chase doctors out of Alberta who were born, raised, and trained here?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, chasing by providing further benefits, especially to rural physicians, \$81 million that we announced on April 24 for them to have the rural, remote, northern program cap removed for them and adding that extra ability for rural communities to retain and recruit physicians in their communities. We have a net increase in physicians year over year every year, including the last year. We had an additional 293 net new physicians in this province because most physicians throughout the country and throughout the world see this is as one of the best places to practise medicine.

Ms Sigurdson: Not anymore.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that the government is not listening, clearly, because medical students, after that minister's announcement on April 24, in May said:

For a government that claims Alberta is "open for business," the message they're really sending is "enter at your own risk." ... To start a practice now seems like taking on a mortgage without knowing the rate or if full payment is due next month. With all the other uncertainties ...

This is since April 24.

... in the world, it seems reckless to gamble on a career in Alberta.

Is there anyone on that side of the House who understands the generational damage this member is doing to Alberta health care?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By advocating for the previous physician funding framework as the hon. member is doing, I'd like to point out that the hon. member is advocating for removing all of the initiatives we announced on April 24 to help rural communities access the care that they need, to recruit and retain physicians. It's exactly the former physician funding framework which prevented initiatives like that, and that's why we're working forward with physicians and with my rural colleagues to be able to enhance access for care, especially in rural communities.

Seniors Advocate

Ms Sigurdson: I was proud to appoint Alberta's first Seniors Advocate, Dr. Sheree Kwong See, a University of Alberta professor with deep roots in seniors work and advocacy. This government appointed Janice Harrington, a UCP partisan with absolutely zero experience in seniors services or issues. Now it's come to light that the Member for Calgary-Acadia personally cancelled the search for the qualified candidate before it was even posted. Why did the member refuse to look for someone qualified to speak up for Alberta seniors?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to talk about the appointments my ministry has made and this government has made. In particular, I'd point out that we appointed to the board of Alberta Health Services the former leader of a political party that ran against us in the last election. In fact, one of the candidates who ran against me in Calgary-Acadia, we appointed – she's now representing Albertans, in the college of a health profession. We've even appointed former caucus members of that hon. member's to our boards, including one of their former ministerial members, because

we're looking for Albertans from diverse backgrounds to serve Albertans and serve this province.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the Seniors Advocate position is now merged with the Health Advocate and given that the previous Health Advocate had more than 25 years of experience in health care while Janice Harrington has none, zero, will the Member for Calgary-Acadia release the job posting documents that were prepared for this position before he cancelled the search so that Albertans can judge for themselves whether Harrington is qualified, and if he won't, what's he hiding?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, again, we appointed former NDP ministers to our boards and agencies in this province. They don't want to know the background of those appointments because, really, what they're trying to advocate for, as we look for Albertans from diverse backgrounds to serve this province – the real problem is that they want Conservatives to be barred from serving Albertans. We don't believe that. We believe in Albertans from diverse backgrounds being able to serve this province.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the Seniors Advocate has also merged with the Mental Health Patient Advocate and given that Janice Harrington provided the only supportive quote on a government news release regarding amendments to the Mental Health Act just last week, isn't it true that the member cancelled the search for someone who would advocate on behalf of seniors, patients, and Albertans with mental health challenges so that he could hire someone who would only advocate for UCP policies?

Mr. Shandro: Again, Mr. Speaker, we've appointed, actually, now that I think about it, not just one former leader of a political party who opposed us in the last election but two former leaders. We've appointed former NDP cabinet ministers. We've appointed former NDP caucus members. We've appointed, in fact, to serve Albertans, to the college of a health profession, somebody who ran against me in Calgary-Acadia. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Hon. members, you might not like the answer, but I am entitled to hear the answer.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

Energy Industry Concerns

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. COVID-19 has caused serious health and economic impacts that will take months or years to address. Moving past this health emergency, rebuilding efforts to deal with the economic devastation will be vital. In Alberta the issue of COVID has been compounded given a surge of oil on the market, which may push many Alberta producers into bankruptcy. To the Minister of Energy: can you provide an oil production and inventory update, with insights as to the extent of curtailment that producers have been forced to endure?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no doubt that the energy sector here in Alberta has been challenged because of COVID and the associated destruction in price for a barrel of oil. The industry was already struggling because of the failure to build pipelines and the lack of takeaway capacity. Here in Alberta in the month of April we had about 640,000 barrels of oil per day curtailed, voluntary, market-based curtailment, and we expect it to be about a million barrels a day in May when we get those figures.

But demand is returning, and Alberta will be in a good position to recover.

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

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the economic downturn has been made worse by a flood of oil onto world markets by Saudi Arabia, Russia, and OPEC nations and given that these dictatorial regimes have little or no policies concerning the environment, business ethics, or human rights and, as the Canadian Energy Centre has shown, have grown their industry at our expense, to the same minister: do you believe that Canada should adopt a Canadian-oil-and-gas-first policy and build infrastructure to accommodate that policy in a move to energy self-sufficiency?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada has the third-largest reserves in oil anywhere on the globe. We're also the fifth-largest producer of oil, but we're dependent on one market, the United States, and that's primarily because of the failure to build pipelines. Our coastal pipelines, Energy East and Northern Gateway, were killed. The failure to build that has left us reliant upon the U.S. as our dominant customer. I'd love to see another Energy East pipeline proposal brought forward, but the reality is that we're dealing with Bill C-69 right now. That's why we're challenging it in the courts as being unconstitutional.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given that the energy industry is working feverishly to survive this downturn and given that the oil and gas sector is Canada's number one exporter and largest contributor to Canadian prosperity, can the Energy minister provide any information as to how many energy companies have utilized the federal government's LEEFF program, and has there been any feedback from industry on LEEFF's effectiveness in dealing with much-needed liquidity supports?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard many concerns from our companies here in Alberta about difficulties accessing the LEEFF program and about accessing the BDC-EDC loans for midcaps. It's a priority here in Alberta to see our energy sector survive and get through to the other side, and it should be a priority for the federal government because our energy sector supports over 800,000 jobs. That's why our government is working diligently with our energy sector to make sure their concerns are heard and understood and addressed by the federal government.

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

Agricultural Support Programs Small Abattoirs

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we heard earlier, one of the sectors most heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is Alberta's agricultural sector, many of whom have had to find new ways to sell their product and move their product due to lower consumption and supply chain issues. As we as a province begin to recover and as we announce our plans to restart the economy, farmers and ranchers are looking to government for support. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what kind of support is our government making available to Alberta's hard-working farmers and ranchers?

2:40

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. As the member very well knows, agriculture is our second-largest natural resource sector here in the province of Alberta. As a government we have contributed through AgriInvest over \$63 million on average per year and also, when it comes to AgriInsurance, about \$375 million in premium supports for farmers that use crop insurance. As well, we are working with AFSC to look at further program improvements, whether it's crop insurance or improvements to the cattle price insurance program, because, at the end of the day, we want to be the government that can most help our farmers and ranchers compete on the global scale and to be able to prosper.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the need to support Alberta's agricultural producers following the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and given that many of Alberta's smaller family farms are struggling the most and given that the farmers from across my constituency of Livingstone-Macleod have reached out to me about the possibility of enhancing farm-to-table options, particularly for meat producers, can the minister tell us what he and his department are doing in order to support local farming and enhance the farm-to-table approach in Alberta?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is obviously well known for our high-quality food that we produce here in the province, and we are currently reviewing the recommendations of the Local Food Council. We're looking at opportunities to support Albertans in buying products produced here in the province of Alberta. Now, when it comes to local abattoirs, we know they've been extremely busy this year. When it comes to orders that would typically take them into the summer months, they're well stretched out into the fall. So that is good to see that Albertans are caring about where their food is coming from and that we know that we have such high-quality, amazing foods produced here in the province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that some of Alberta's small-scale producers and butchers have actually seen a boom in sales since the beginning of the outbreak and given the importance of supporting small-scale producers and retailers as we begin to recover from this pandemic and given the difficulty of setting up smaller abattoirs in Alberta, can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry tell this House both why it is so difficult to set up and run a small-scale abattoir in Alberta and what our government is doing to reduce this difficulty?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are over a hundred provincial abattoirs here in the province of Alberta – I'm sure there are lots in your riding – but when it comes to the challenges that they face, they are actually competing on a global scale. That's why we are looking at reviewing the meat regulations here in the province to allow them to better compete as well as work with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to be able to allow products produced here in the province of Alberta at provincially inspected

facilities to be shipped across Canada so that all Canadians can enjoy our great-quality food.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to presenting petitions and reports.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has an introduction.

Bill 203 Pension Protection Act

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure and honour that I rise and request leave to introduce a bill, being the Pension Protection Act, Bill 203.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, this bill is intended to protect Albertans' pensions. It will reverse changes that have recently been made to administration, management, and governance for LAPP, SFPP, PSPP, and the ATRF. It establishes what should have been implicit, which is that pension holders have the right to consultation prior to any changes, including changes to governance structure, to their board, and it will also prevent Executive Council from providing notice to withdraw from the Canada pension plan.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is the result of thousands and thousands of Albertans corresponding with me in my office. I know that every MLA in this Chamber, all 87, has received correspondence on this important issue, and this bill will allow us to have what I think is a much-needed debate on these important issues that impact all Albertans.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. At approximately 1:53 the hon. Deputy Government House Leader and Minister of Transportation rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Insulting Language Referring to Proper Titles

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Under 23(h), (i) and (j), in terms of uses insulting language likely to create disorder, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona rose and made a non-word using part of the hon. member's name, our hon. Minister of Health. Not only was it disrespectful and insulting language, but as we all know, you can't use a member's name in the House. While the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona didn't use the member's full name, you've said yourself many times in this House, Mr. Speaker, that you can't do indirectly what you can't do directly. I believe this was an obvious attempt to do indirectly what could not be done directly and in so doing used what I would call "abusive and insulting language."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View is rising to defend.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can't recall the exact word, but I do know what the hon. member is referring to. I guess I probably ought not say it in any event. It did, I believe, employ a bit of a play on words in response to the hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia's name. I don't believe that that was a violation of the rule on using a name.

In terms of insulting or abusive language, I think in this place we trade comments back and forth. I certainly know that the AMA and many doctors feel that they have been subject to insulting and abusive behaviour. I don't feel like this rises to the level of that. I think perhaps it was a jest about a disagreement. Certainly, on this side of the House we don't believe that the minister's behaviour towards doctors, who are incredibly important in this province, has been at all appropriate. I really don't think that this rises to that level, Mr. Speaker, but I will be guided by your ruling.

The Speaker: Well, I appreciate the submissions. I think you'll be surprised that I actually have a fair amount to say on this particular point of order.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition at 1:51 said: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Member for Calgary-Acadia arrogantly Shan-splained to the Legislature." She went on to make some additional comments, but I would like to remind the Assembly that while you might think that that comment is funny, it certainly was not parliamentary, and there has been much said about the use of the word "mansplaining." I'd like to read a section of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 619, chapter 13, Rules of Order and Decorum, References to Members, as a reminder to the Assembly.

During debate, Members do not refer to one another by their names but rather by title, position or constituency in order to guard against the tendency to personalize debate.

This is a very important point for the Official Opposition.

A Minister is referred to by the portfolio he or she holds. The two main party leaders may be referred to as . . .

and, of course, this is with respect to the House of Commons, so it doesn't particularly apply, but I want to read the entire section, the Right Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and other party leaders are identified as leaders of their respective parties, or simply by the name of their constituencies. Former Prime Ministers sitting in the House are also referred to as [the] "Right Honourable", as are other Members with this designation. Parliamentary Secretaries, House Leaders and party Whips are typically designated by the [position that] they hold.

The Speaker will not allow a Member to refer to another Member by name even if the Member speaking is quoting from a document such as a newspaper article. As the Chair has noted, a Member "cannot do indirectly what cannot be done directly".

2:50

I think we have two or three examples in that one sentence that would indicate that this, in fact, is a point of order. First of all, the Leader of the Opposition personally insulted the Minister of Health by describing him as "arrogantly." It could be said that you could use that word, "arrogantly," when describing bodies of people but certainly not insulting a member directly.

Secondly, as I've noted, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states that members shall refer to ministers by their title, which the Official Opposition has developed quite a habit of not doing with respect to the Minister of Health.

Third, the Leader of the Official Opposition used a portion of that minister's name in combination with a word that much has been said about here in the Assembly by the previous Speaker, Wanner.

As such, this is most certainly a point of order. The hon. deputy Official Opposition House leader will be more than happy to apologize.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and myself I would like to withdraw and apologize to the House.

The Speaker: I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

The hon. the Member for Calgary-Mountain View called a point of order at approximately 2:23. The hon. member.

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This point of order arises from a response of the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to the Member for Calgary-McCall. The Member for Calgary-McCall was asking a question with respect to why the statement of the antiracism advisory committee had not been released. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs responded with – I apologize; I do not have the benefit of the Blues – amongst his answers, words to the effect of: the members opposite and their allies prevented him from speaking at the rally.

Mr. Speaker, that rally was a community rally. Certainly, some of our members were invited to speak there, including the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre. We were happy to do that. The protest is incredibly important. I think that's recognized on both sides of the House, that it was incredibly important. One of the most important things to recognize about these community-based protests is that those individuals have the right to invite for attendance or for speaking purposes whomever they might like to invite.

My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I am rising under 23(h) and (i), "makes allegations against another Member; imputes false or unavowed motives." I think my concern with the statements is that the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is implying and has implied previously that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre or others amongst our caucus were in some way involved in disinviting him. It is my understanding that he continued to be invited. He was not invited to speak. That had nothing to do with us. Any allegation to the contrary is absolutely false. It was entirely the decision of the organizers of the protest. To suggest otherwise, that rather than attending with good intentions, rather than attending because this is an incredibly important issue that should be of concern to every person in this province, the NDP was attending for some sort of political gain I think certainly implies unavowed motives to another member, and it certainly makes allegation about another member.

Mr. Speaker, I think that on this issue we ought all to choose our language incredibly carefully and avoid making such allegations, and I would ask that the Minister of Municipal Affairs withdraw those comments and apologize to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have the comments from the hon. minister. I'm sure you have the Blues. I have a copy here, and the quote I have is: "Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the NDP and their allies did not want me to attend that rally last Friday." That certainly would be a matter of opinion, a matter of debate, certainly something that the hon. the Municipal Affairs minister feels. The reality is that I could point you to tweets from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, in particular, who referred to comments that would make it sound, certainly when I read them, like they did not want him to attend, but at the end of the day this is an opinion, a matter of debate, certainly something that the hon. the Municipal Affairs minister feels, that he felt they did not want him, including the NDP, to participate in that spot.

I don't blame the hon. the Municipal Affairs minister for feeling like that occasionally when it comes to the NDP. I would remind

this Assembly that the NDP's propaganda arm, PressProgress, once referred to the hon. the Municipal Affairs minister as a white supremacist, an immigrant from Africa, Mr. Speaker, a black Canadian. I mean, it was outrageous but not really relevant to this point of order because it is a matter of debate what the hon. member is referring to.

The Speaker: Well, thank you, hon. members, for your submissions. Are there any others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to rule. At 2:23 the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs – because I have the benefit of the Blues – did in fact say:

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the NDP and their allies did not want me to attend that rally last Friday. On [the other] side of the aisle all they want is division, and this is a matter that affects all of us regardless of political parties. The question that I have for the members opposite and their allies is: what was the reason why someone like myself would not be allowed to speak at that particular rally?

While I certainly do agree with the Official Opposition deputy House leader that members of that side or otherwise – it is unlikely that you are responsible for invites to protests or otherwise. Certainly, the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs didn't make an accusation against any one member about what they individually may have done or otherwise and only spoke about the wider organization that may be the NDP. As such, I don't think that he has said anything that would make an accusation against a particular member. As such, this is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Hon members, Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills

Bill 202

Conflicts of Interest (Protecting the Rule of Law) Amendment Act, 2020

The Speaker: Is there anyone wishing to speak to the motion for concurrence? The hon. the Member for Calgary-Cross.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise here today to discuss Bill 202, the Conflicts of Interest (Protecting the Rule of Law) Amendment Act, 2020. Frankly, it should come as no surprise that I have something to say about this. When I look at the bill, I've taken away a number of key points, two of which I will be addressing here today in the House.

Now, Bill 202 wants to expand the definition of private interest to include political interests, members of a constituency association, or leaders of a political party. It wants to give the Ethics Commissioner the power to compel individuals to hand over information that would otherwise be protected by solicitor-client privilege. I've listened carefully and with great interest to the reasons that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has provided in support of her bill, but one thing I can't seem to reconcile is this. If Bill 202 simply implements the recommendations of the Ethics Commissioner's 2017 report, if these recommendations were so incredibly important, if they were of such grave concern, why through a private member's bill? Why through a channel so rare, where many of us will never have the opportunity to bring forward a bill, three years after the fact?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

That member could have otherwise brought the bill as Minister of Justice, with the full support and the backing of the NDP government. If it wasn't important then, Madam Speaker, why is it important now? Something doesn't add up.

3:00

I think I can provide some reasons to the Assembly. This bill has very little to do with strengthening the Conflicts of Interest Act and so much more to do with partisan politics and the erosion of the fundamental rights that we as Canadians all enjoy. This bill does so much more than the hon. member seeks to accomplish, and the effects of this bill are of great concern to me. I think that all members in this House and all Albertans should consider it to be of great concern to them as well.

Madam Speaker, let's start with Bill 202's expansion of the definition of private interest such that it includes political interests, a community association, or leaders of a political party. Now, for a moment I want to pretend that I am not an expert on this, and I don't want to comment on this in the context of my position as the Member for Calgary-Cross, but I want to look to somebody else who might have a little more authority than me about this. So I thought: who better to look to than the Ethics Commissioner herself to shed some light on this issue for us? I found an absolutely brilliant quote by our learned Ethics Commissioner herself where she addressed this same issue and where she said:

Partisan political advantage is too remote and [too] speculative to be considered the "private interest" of any . . . Member.

Electoral success, Madam Speaker, is something that all members of this House enjoy. The Ethics Commissioner specifically said that incorporating partisan political interests into the definition of private interests would make it

practically impossible for Members to carry out their duties and functions without breaching the Act . . .

Madam Speaker,

this is because almost every activity carried out by a Member has an element of shaping . . . public image, [of seeking] acceptance and [of looking for] support, [all of] which ultimately could affect their [own] and their political party's re-election chances.

Such a conclusion, to include political interest in the definition of private interests, she continues,

would hamstring the operation of the Government and [this] Legislative Assembly and would be against the spirit and the intent of the Act.

Madam Speaker, I don't think anyone could articulate it more unequivocally than the very office charged with the interpretation of the Conflicts of Interest Act. Broadening the definition of private interests to include political association not only goes against the position that the Ethics Commissioner herself has taken, but it would prevent us from doing our jobs. It would prevent us from advancing our mandate. It would stop us from passing legislation.

Madam Speaker, I believe in this government, I believe in our caucus, and I know that our caucus believes in the importance of this House and the responsibility that Albertans have given us.

I also rise today to address a much more serious and much more important issue with respect to Bill 202. Bill 202 suggests that we erode solicitor-client privilege as we know it. The word "privilege" is a simple word. It is an incredibly important concept. It is a foundational element of a free society. It is a right that has been entrenched for centuries in our own common-law legal system, and Bill 202, with one sweeping motion, seeks to erode all of that. Madam Speaker, to that I say: not on my watch, not on our watch.

In the simplest sense of the word, privilege is a concept that recognizes full and honest communication between those who are seeking legal advice and those who are providing it. In reality, though, it's much more expansive than that. Solicitor-client

privilege provides a zone of privacy so that people can provide their legal representatives with all of the facts without fear of interference from outside parties, and they can get the best possible advice in return. People need to be able to disclose all of the information that they have to their lawyers without worrying about compromising their positions in order to get full and fair representation.

Madam Speaker, access to justice is compromised where legal advice is incomplete, hindered, or unavailable. People must feel free and protected to be frank and candid with their lawyers so that the legal system may operate properly. Solicitor-client privilege is simply not negotiable. It is an integral part of our system.

Privilege allows people and their lawyers to develop strategy, to determine next steps, to carefully plan and proceed with their issues without disclosing their affairs to other parties, and that is why it's such an important element of a free and fair legal system. People are entitled to consider their options, to assess risk, to speak to their lawyers about pondering outcomes without the risk of disclosing their position or their private materials or their private discussions to others.

It is such an important and fundamental concept of our legal system that the Supreme Court of Canada has elevated it to a level equal to our constitutional rights. The Supreme Court has, without question, played a leading role in strengthening privilege. Our nation's highest court has said time and again that privilege is a fundamental and inalienable civil and legal right.

Madam Speaker, it pains me to stand here today before this Assembly and advocate for the preservation and the protection of privilege. It pains me even more that the hon. member, a member of the legal profession and a member who served as our Attorney General, would bring forward a bill that seeks to erode privilege – this member took an oath never to pervert the law to favour or prejudice anyone; now I stand before you today arguing about preservation and protection of privilege; it is a right that has become so ingrained in Canadian jurisprudence, a right that has been developed for hundreds of years in our common-law system, a right within a free society that millions and millions have died to defend – all for partisan advantages.

To my mind, for those simple reasons, Madam Speaker, Bill 202 would undoubtedly be struck down on this component alone, and that is why I cannot support this bill. I cannot support a bill that seeks to erode, even if in a small way, a component of our legal system so incredibly sacred, so important. I cannot stand and allow that to happen. I would urge all of my colleagues in this House, on both sides, to consider my submissions and cast their vote against this bill.

Thank you.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have several points to address on this bill, but I think I want to begin by addressing the points of the previous speaker because they actually frame my points very nicely.

One of the questions that was asked is: if it wasn't important then – i.e., when I was Minister of Justice – why is it important now? I think that fundamentally that is the question that defines this bill for me. The reason it wasn't important then is because I didn't fear that a sitting government would choose to impede the investigation of or fire an officer of the Legislature who was investigating their own leader. That is why this bill became important.

Interestingly, I began work on this bill, in fact, before the members opposite voted to fire the person investigating their own leader. I had concerns that they would shrink the powers of the Election

Commissioner or that they might cut the budget of the Election Commissioner in order to otherwise impede his investigation.

As it turns out, Madam Speaker, I could not even imagine the depth to which they would consider sinking, and in fact shortly thereafter they stood in this House and moved closure before they even introduced a bill, that bill being Bill 22. Bill 22 did two things. It fired the Election Commissioner, and it moved people's pensions, against their will, which has been addressed by my hon. colleague's Bill 203, into AIMCo and out of the joint governance model that we had set up. That bill was rushed through the House in under three days.

When we attended the committee, it was my hope to invite the hon. Premier of this province to come to the committee and to address those allegations since he had never had the opportunity to address Bill 22 in either aspect in this House, which I think is a fundamental aspect of accountability.

3:10

To the bill itself, the point of the bill, as I've stated, and the reason it became relevant in 2019 and was not relevant in 2017 is because there was fear that a sitting government might fire the person investigating them, and why that concerns me is because no one else in this province has the right to choose who investigates them, not one person. If you are charged with a criminal offence, if you are charged with so much as a speeding ticket, you do not have the right to choose the individual who will investigate you. That is a fundamental principle of justice, the idea that we are all equal here before the law. That we are all subject to the same rules is fundamental to our system of laws, and to do otherwise is an attack on the rule of law.

What this bill did was that it changed a number of things. It did act on some recommendations of the Ethics Commissioner, though certainly not all recommendations of the Ethics commissioner, which I never claimed it did, and certainly not all aspects of the bill were recommendations of the Ethics Commissioner. What it did, amongst other things, was that it broadened the definition of what can be a private interest. One of the recommendations of the Ethics Commissioner was that there be included a positive definition, that in addition to the negative definition of private interest, there be a positive definition.

Now, at the committee we heard members repeatedly state, despite the fact that I addressed it, that the nonpartisan government official who works for the government, which is currently the UCP, addressed it, and the fact that it was right there in black and white in the legislation – that negative aspect of the definition was not removed. It was simply moved to another section to create greater legislative clarity. You can look; the words are still in there. So that idea that a "trivial" interest was removed, which the members stated over and over and over again, was just completely false.

Another thing that the bill did was that it broadened the definition of who could be an affiliated person. This was, in part, a recommendation of the Ethics Commissioner, who recommended that we broaden the definition of family from simply including a spouse or a child to including various different relatives. That's exactly what we did. We took language which existed in other acts throughout the country, which has been interpreted just fine.

As we sat in the committee, the members repeatedly stated that this meant that, you know, some third cousin that they've never met would somehow become a conflict of interest. I have to address that because it's absolutely absurd. Clearly, these definitions are interpreted. Definitions in every act created by every Legislature throughout the country are interpreted in court every day. It's literally what they do. So I think the idea that the Ethics Commissioner might be required to interpret what the term

"relative" meant is, honestly – I mean, it's a bit of a red herring. It's a ridiculous argument. So that was another one of the arguments raised.

I think that now I should turn to addressing privilege. The point of allowing the Ethics Commissioner to view privileged material was to allow her to determine whether privilege, in fact, applies. What the change did was that it enabled her to look at the privileged material without waiving privilege so that that sort of fence could be maintained. Now, it is, in fact, the case that judges see allegedly privileged material and make rulings on whether or not that material is privileged all the time. It happens in investigations with police officers, for instance. Now, there are special procedures that surround this, where a representative of the Law Society goes with the police officer, looks at the thing, and determines whether it's privileged.

But the idea that someone who is legally trained, who is a lawyer and in this case a former judge would be incapable of adjudicating whether privilege existed, would be incapable of looking at privileged information: I think it's a little bit ridiculous. The point of allowing that is because in this case we don't know if the investigation of the Election Commissioner continues. The allegation has been made that nothing was done wrong, that firing the Election Commissioner was just choosing who investigates you, not choosing whether there is an investigation, so potentially it continues, but no one knows. Potentially the investigation went very deep, but no one knows because he doesn't release findings until he's completed the investigation. We don't know whether the Ethics Commissioner had access to the full scope of the materials that the Election Commissioner was dealing with. We only know that she had access to that which was released publicly, and that may have been woefully insufficient to determine what was happening behind the scenes. I think that that is an absolutely critical part of this.

I think it's also worth noting that I feel that the allegation against the Ethics Commissioner that she couldn't handle this material, that she couldn't determine privilege is ridiculous. I think that I need to remind this House that she was a lawyer, she was a judge, and she's very well versed in these situations. I mean, personally, sitting in that committee hearing, listening to multiple non legally trained men tell me that I ought to be ashamed of myself for so much as suggesting that the Ethics Commissioner, who, by the way, recommended that she have this power, was capable of comprehending legal privilege in the same way that those non legally trained men were: I just find that shocking, Madam Speaker.

One additional point, I think, to note about the bill is the reasonableness test. This was another big issue. The hon. member just now raised it, too, suggesting that somehow by saying that a political interest that a reasonable person would consider to be a conflict of interest would mean that all political interests are drawn in. That's just not true at all. The members of the committee went on and on and on extensively about the fact that applying this reasonableness test to political affiliations would be impossible, but the truth is that the entire civil law system is based on reasonableness.

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. member to speak on the motion for concurrence on Bill 202. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Speaker. While I deeply respect the Member for Calgary-Mountain View in her intention to strengthen the Conflicts of Interest Act by protecting the rule of law, I fundamentally oppose the governmental overreach and extraordinary powers described within the proposed legislation of Bill 202. Bill 202 was presented as a response to the removal of the

Election Commissioner under Bill 22. It was meant to present changes to, quote, who is an associated person, unquote, and clarify what constitutes a conflict of interest. It was also presented as only strengthening the Conflicts of Interest Act and strengthening investigation by adding additional powers.

This proposed legislation, in fact, does all of these things but to such a degree and by granting such extraordinary powers to the Ethics Commissioner that it may in fact deter people from participating in the elected office in the future in this province. Those who may wish to serve in this Legislature would be hesitant if their rights to privacy and protection were stripped away in the manner described in this bill.

The bill begins by adding a short line in part 2, section 1, under subsection (iii), defining “legal privilege,” and it reads:

- (b.2) “legal privilege” means solicitor-client privilege, litigation, parliamentary privilege or any other type of legal privilege, including privilege of the law of evidence.

Now, this seems straightforward, in order, and with no cause for concern until you come to part 4, section 25, subsection (5)(a)(ii), where it changes the current language by striking out “any documents or other things” and substituting “any documents or other things, including documents or things that are subject to a legal privilege.” Now, what makes this so shocking is that when you read the full Conflicts of Interest Act and place this change into the full sentence in context of the act, it would be amended to read:

For the purpose of conducting an investigation, the Ethics Commissioner may . . .

- (ii) compel persons to produce any documents or things, including documents or things that are subject to a legal privilege.

In other words, the Ethics Commissioner would have the power to compel, which means to force or oblige somebody to do something by the use of force or pressure, that person to give up legal privilege.

3:20

What are these legal privileges that someone like a Member of the Legislative Assembly could be forced to give up? Now, I am not a lawyer, so I had to research these definitions and talk to legal counsel to fully understand them. Here is what I found. Solicitor-client privilege is “a principle of fundamental justice and a civil right of supreme importance in Canadian law,” as stated in the case of *Lavallee, Rackel & Heintz versus Canada* in 2002, and it “must be as close to absolute as possible to ensure public confidence and retain relevance,” as stated in the case of *R. versus McClure* in 2001.

Litigation privilege can be understood better this way. The distinction between the solicitor-client privilege and the litigation privilege does not preclude their potential overlap in a litigation context. Anything in a litigation file that falls within the solicitor-client privilege will remain clearly and forever privileged. Being forced to give up these two privileges alone, that every confidential conversation a Member of the Legislative Assembly could potentially have with their lawyer and everything written down between that individual and their lawyer would have to be handed over to the Ethics Commissioner under these new extraordinary powers, is almost unbelievable if it wasn't written down in the proposed legislation before us today.

This isn't all. Members of the Legislative Assembly would also be giving up the right to parliamentary privilege, which is, and I quote, legal immunity enjoyed by members of certain Legislatures in which Legislatures are granted protection against civil or criminal liability for actions done or statements made in the course of their legislative duties, unquote. That means that in the course of debate within this Chamber words uttered here can now potentially be scrutinized not only by the Speaker and viewers online but by

the Ethics Commissioner through the lens of civil and criminal liability. These members would be compelled to produce all previously privileged documentation and conversation, virtually stripped of constitutional rights and any protection of the law yet made to face the full force of this law, striking against the fundamental principles of justice, fair and equal administration of the law without corruption, favour, greed, or prejudice. Why would any member of the public agree to be stripped of these rights in order to serve the public in this way?

As all of us in this House recognize, this position is a privilege, but it is also a challenge. In a democracy we uphold every citizen's right to disagree with our policies. Close scrutiny and criticism are expected and essential, but members of this Assembly should not be expected to waive the rights that are guaranteed to all citizens within our country.

The last point I would like to make in terms of parliamentary privilege is to read from documents from our Parliament in Ottawa.

The privileges enjoyed by the House and its members continue to be vital to the proper functioning of Parliament. The privileges enjoyed by the House and its members are part of the Constitution and, therefore, are of the utmost importance; they are in fact vital to the proper functioning of Parliament. This is as true now as it was centuries ago when the English House of Commons first fought to secure these privileges and rights.

The next major concern I have with this bill is the extraordinary powers granted to the Ethics Commissioner. Part 4, section 25(12), states:

. . . on conclusion of the investigation, the Ethics Commissioner must

- (b) file a copy of the report with the Provincial Court . . .

This instantly elevates the power and position of the Ethics Commissioner above the Legislature and equal to the courts.

In addition to this, the bill adds two provisions that the Ethics Commissioner would also recommend:

- (A) that the Member be sanctioned for the breach by imposition of a penalty, and
(B) the amount of the penalty.

Further down it also clearly states the only recourse a Member of the Legislative Assembly would have:

- (d) the Member may appeal the penalty and related findings to the Court of Queen's Bench.

This extreme and exceptional power immediately raises any investigation from an independent, arm's-length body to an arm of the court with legal and binding powers of judgment and penalty and the imposing of legal costs without recourse. This should cause every member in this House to stand up and object to the heavy hand of someone outside the system of justice having these powers over elected members serving the public. This is madness and an incredible overreach of power that is undemocratic.

For these two reasons, among others, I urge every member of this democratically elected Legislature to vote against this Bill 202 from proceeding in this House in any way, shape, or form. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the concurrence motion on Bill 202? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to add some comments on the concurrence motion here. As you're probably aware, I was part of the private members' committee that submitted a minority report disagreeing with the overall direction of the committee itself with regard to Bill 202.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that I've enjoyed listening to our two speakers from the opposite side, especially the last one,

because, of course, this is the second time that he has kind of delved into the language that's being presented. I have to admit I find it very rich when I hear words such as "extraordinary powers," yet we've seen the member and most members vote in favour of powers allowing a minister, if in their opinion they think it would be in the best interest, to make legislation, change legislation, or delete legislation. To sit here and say that you have problems with the extraordinary powers – your words, by the way – and not have a problem with those is completely conflicting. Again, the language. I do applaud you for bringing up the language because it's very, very important: what's said, what's written down, what does it mean, what will it mean to others when we're no longer here.

You know, there are other examples that I could discuss here with regard to Bill 202 and why it should proceed in this House. We have seen actions of the government that have tried to absolve themselves of accountability should something go sideways, so when I hear some of the things – and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was very, very correct. The Ethics Commissioner, a lawyer, a former judge, not being able to rule on privilege, I think, is ridiculous.

This bill talks about the rule of law. I want to key in on that phrase, "the rule of law," Madam Speaker, and why it's so important. I've heard members of the government bench and I've heard members of the government caucus use that term over and over and over again. If you actually believe that, if you actually believe in the rule of law, then why is it that you thought it was okay that the Election Commissioner was terminated during an investigation in which he levied over \$200,000 in fines? I don't think you get to that kind of level of money if there was nothing there. Just the optics of it are incredible. I have had people that have come to me and said: I can't believe they did that, whether it happened or not. Like, it was just unbelievable.

When we look at Bill 202 about protecting the rule of law – it's right there in the title – and listen to all these members over and over again talking about the rule of law, you should honestly have no problems with this because it is based on recommendations from the Ethics Commissioner. I mean, we've heard words such as "great concern." I found it a great concern although the member apologized for voting on something that shouldn't have.

I've also seen a pattern within the committee, Madam Speaker, and why it is so crucial that this proceed through debate in the House. I have seen over and over again where members of the opposition bring forward private members' bills, and we can't get even stakeholders invited.

3:30

Let's say we run with some of the arguments that I've heard from members opposite. We at the committee didn't even have the opportunity to talk to maybe the Ethics Commissioner about what she thought of the proposed legislation, maybe some suggestions of changes. We didn't even hear that. This is a recurring pattern. I'm starting to wonder if all we're going to see in the future is that kind of pattern, where we can't even get stakeholders in.

How is it that we can properly debate a bill when we don't even have all the information? At the very least it's our responsibility to proceed with debate on Bill 202, and hopefully we get the opportunity to maybe garner some more information around this, because that's what I'm hearing: there's not enough information. I'm hearing questions from the other side. I'm trying to play fair here. We have unanswered questions. Let's get those questions answered. Perhaps, maybe in the course of that debate, maybe there could be a suggestion to send it back to committee to hear from those stakeholders. Wouldn't that be novel?

As you can imagine, Madam Speaker, I do believe we need to debate this here in the House. I am on record, of course, through the

minority report along with a few of my other colleagues who sit on the opposition side that disagree with the committee, but at the very least we need to do our due diligence, and yes, I've heard that word, too, from members opposite as well. Do our due diligence, debate this fully within the House, suggest amendments, and maybe we can bring in some good legislation so that all of us can be above any kind of scrutiny, I guess. If you're doing everything right, if there are no issues, it's going to be fine anyway.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll take my seat. I look forward to hearing some more comments from members in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think it's been a good debate so far. It's been good to hear from members of all sides of the House on this. I, of course, am a member of the private members' committee, so I'm very happy to get up and speak to this.

Before I dive in to what I have prepared to say, I'd like to comment on what the previous speaker just talked about with extraordinary powers. I think he referenced giving extraordinary powers to elected people during a pandemic crisis, more specifically temporary extraordinary powers, and compared that to stripping parliamentarians of privilege permanently. I don't see the two as the same thing at all.

I think I, like all members of this House – I choose to believe that, that we would all be fully supportive of legislation that would strengthen and support our democracy and protections against conflicts of interest. I don't think people want to see abuse of power in this Chamber or by any member of this Legislature. Of course, I'm in favour of well-thought-out legislation that keeps Alberta's politicians honest regardless of their political stripe.

Unfortunately, though, this bill before us is nothing like what I just described. This bill before us adds unnecessary complications and interruptions to an already well-monitored system, and it seems intentionally built to provide a minefield of traps and obstacles to elected representatives from doing their jobs. It infringes upon the rights and privileges of members, their parliamentary privilege, privileges and rights that are absolutely necessary for members of this Legislature to be able to do their job, the job that constituents elected them to do.

Parliamentary privilege does not only extend to the members but to the House as a whole for their protection and authority and their dignity. As my colleague from Lethbridge-East has said, both when this bill came before the private members' committee and now, "the housing of parliamentary privilege, which is legal immunity enjoyed by members of certain Legislatures in which legislators are granted protection against civil or criminal liability for actions done or statements made in the course of their legislative duties."

Now, if you read in Bill 202, specifically on page 5, point 4 – which we've already heard today but I'm going to reinforce – regarding amendments to section 25, it strikes out "any documents or other things" and substitutes that with "any documents or other things, including documents or things that are subject to a legal privilege". As the Member for Lethbridge-East commented that night and again today, this change gives unprecedented and massive expansion of the powers of the Ethics Commissioner; again, different than the temporary extraordinary power during a pandemic. This is an incredible overreach into legislative powers, specifically when we get into the nuts and bolts of solicitor-client privilege, something that would be greatly threatened if Bill 202 is passed into law.

Again, we heard this today as stated with Lavallee, Rackel & Heintz versus Canada in 2002: solicitor-client privilege "is a

principle of fundamental justice and a civil right of supreme importance in Canadian law.” Another statement there: it “must remain as close to absolute as possible to retain its relevance.” *R. versus McClure* in 2001: the distinction between the solicitor-client privilege and the litigation privilege does not preclude their potential to overlap in any litigation context; anything in a litigation file that falls within the solicitor-client privilege will remain clearly and forever privileged. But the broad, ill-defined powers that this bill would give the Ethics Commissioner would have the potential to paralyze members of this Legislature from doing the job that their constituents hired them to do.

The terms are so broad on many levels. The term “relative” is in the bill with no qualifiers. What does it mean? And, more importantly, where does it end? I have a brother who is a teacher with the Calgary board of education. Does that mean, because he’s a teacher, that I would have to recuse myself from anything that involves teaching or teachers? If my fourth cousin is a cop, does this mean I cannot ever speak to anything relating to police work? If my father’s brother’s nephew’s cousin’s former roommate is at all connected to a matter before this House, must I recuse myself then?

Madam Speaker, I have reservations about this bill and have had them since it was first tabled. I had hoped that in committee the members opposite would shed light and hopefully clarify the overreaching sections of this bill, perhaps tightening the focus from the broad, shotgun approach to a much more straightforward and nonpartisan approach, strengthening the conflicts of interest protections in this province. What also struck me was that no mention was made of unions, even though the members opposite have as part of their constitution guaranteed seats for unions within their structure.

I will close by saying that I would be open to a sincere attempt to strengthen the conflicts of interest legislation, but I’m not in favour of enabling witch hunts and hobbling of the elected members of this House in order to allow for the opposition to continue to push frivolous claims and abuse the office of the Ethics Commissioner. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise and join the debate on Bill 202, Conflicts of Interest (Protecting the Rule of Law) Amendment Act, 2020. I have the privilege and responsibility of being on this committee for the Official Opposition. We did submit a minority report on this bill because we did not agree with the majority government report. We don’t agree that this bill should not be debated in the House; we believe very strongly that it should be debated in this House.

3:40

One of the things that I just would like to note is that, you know, when this committee was created, when the government was elected for the First Session of the 30th Legislature, the UCP members, who are majority members on the committee, have consistently voted against private members’ bills sponsored by the Official Opposition, that they may not proceed and also, in this case certainly, that we can’t hear from any stakeholders to understand from experts about this legislation.

As my hon. colleagues have already mentioned, on this side of the aisle for us to fully understand this, it’s important to be able to listen to stakeholders. But time and again we have not been given the opportunity by the majority members on the committee from the UCP government, and that seems to be a challenge to democracy; not allowing us to actually speak about that and then, again, not

allowing us here in this House, with a much greater number of members, of course, and with representation from all across our province – we can’t speak about it.

Of course, this is happening with Bill 202, but it’s happened previously, too. This is a concern, for sure, because certainly in a specific focus like this and the conflicts of interest, obviously, many lawyers have to develop the legislation and it is very detailed and can be misconstrued. I’m, you know, sad to report, Madam Speaker, that that is exactly what has happened. Assumptions have been made even though there was representation from the Minister of Justice’s lawyer, from that ministry. The UCP members present there disregarded her comments, which were actually in alignment with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who did, obviously, put forward this bill and did extensive work on it and brought in some really excellent legislation that would increase the accountability of members in this House.

I must, as a member myself, and I’m sure my colleagues on both sides of the aisle know the importance of accountability, and certainly members have brought in, you know, recall legislation which they also feel is important because we need to be accountable. I’m just a bit confused because this legislation would also create that, but it is being rejected by the UCP government.

Certainly, the committee for private members’ bills, that I sit on along with colleagues and members of the UCP government, is meant for us to not stifle debate but actually create opportunities for that. Sadly, it’s not happening that way, and that’s a deep concern for me.

The purpose of this legislation, of course, is to strengthen the rule of law in Alberta when it comes to conflicts of interest regarding the actions of members in their various roles. So why do we need that? I mean, some would say: well, it’s self-evident. We need it even more now because of something really significant that happened in the fall. The most blatant reason for that was the passage of government Bill 22, which eliminated the office of the Election Commissioner in our province. Certainly, this is a significant issue, and that’s why this legislation is so important.

We know that there was an active investigation into the UCP leadership, and the Election Commissioner was leading that investigation. We know there are lots of unanswered questions about that investigation. We know that five members of cabinet have been questioned by the RCMP, and a member of the UCP caucus was being investigated by the Election Commissioner for allegations of bribery, fraud, forgery. I mean, these are serious allegations, and this legislation would help strengthen our conflicts of interest so that issues like this can be dealt with. We know that over \$200,000 in fines were levied by the Election Commissioner in relation to the so-called kamikaze scandal, and the Election Commissioner, whose office was, you know, ended with Bill 22, was investigating these allegations.

This bill would have updated the Conflicts of Interest Act to implement recommendations by the Ethics Commissioner, and that would have created more fairness in making sure that we all as members of this Chamber, as representatives of constituents across our province, would be not taking advantage of our positions, not doing things unethically, really setting actually a higher standard, that we would make sure that what we did had integrity in it.

Sadly, this legislation, this private member’s bill by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, was struck down in committee, really. Even in committee there wasn’t an opportunity to debate it with stakeholders speaking to the bill, experts in the field. That’s because the UCP government, the UCP members on that committee are not wanting more strength in this legislation so that they’re held to a higher account. That really concerns me because I know that the members on this side of the House do care about that. We do care

about ethics, we do care about fairness, we do care about justice, and we don't want people to be winning elections by unfair means. We want fairness in our democracy.

I just want to really thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for her extensive work to develop this legislation. I know she did a lot of research and certainly looked at other jurisdictions. She looked federally. It was really cutting-edge leadership that she provided.

Certainly, the lawyer from the Ministry of Justice concurred with much of what the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View said. Despite the UCP members of the committee indicating, you know, "Well, this is what this means, and this is what that means," and despite the lawyer from Justice, that representative, saying, "No, that's not what that's about," it was just dismissed. They had their own narrative. Really, it wasn't fair, what went on in that committee, because even though that was one expert – it was like the technical briefing that we get when we have bills – it was dismissed. It was made out to be – you know, the previous UCP member spoke about making it out to be witch hunts and all this stuff. It was just all this fabrication, which wasn't what the legislation said at all.

So it disturbs me that we are not being allowed to debate this in the House, and that's why, along with my colleagues, I was so proud to contribute to the minority report, where we indicated that we did want to debate this legislation. This legislation is important for Alberta, and it is important for each of us as members because it means that we have nothing to hide, that we know that our conflicts of interest are transparent and we're not benefiting from some clandestine situation. Sadly, unfortunately, sometimes that has happened, you know, not only in our jurisdiction here in Alberta but in other parts of the world, where people in elected office do take advantage. It's a sad fact, but it is a fact, and that's why we need this type of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? Just to be very clear, hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika, if you are to speak, that will close debate, so I just want to see if there are any other speakers before we proceed with that.

Okay. I will call on the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika to close debate.

Ms Sigurdson: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry. I will ask one more time: is there a speaker? Okay. There are just a few minutes left. The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

3:50

Mr. Carson: My apologies, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 202. I've followed this debate with great interest as it was introduced in the Legislature and subsequently went to committee for discussion. I appreciate the Member for Calgary-Mountain View bringing forward this legislation because I truly believe that it is extremely important, especially with the history of what has happened here in terms of perceived conflict of interest and the conversations that we've had since, as it's been described, the kamikaze scandal within the UCP leadership race.

First off, I would just like to echo the comments of some of my colleagues when the Member for Calgary-Cross opened up the discussion saying: it wasn't important before to move forward on strengthening conflict-of-interest legislation; why is it important now? I would once again reflect on the words of the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View, just sharing my concern that it wasn't an issue before because we hadn't seen a level of attack on our democracy within the party system, in my opinion, until we saw what happened within the UCP leadership race. It's important to recognize that elections within parties should be held and scrutinized

to the same extent, I believe, as elections across the province. When we have RCMP investigations happening within the UCP, that is an opportunity for us to pause and look at how the legislation is working now and how we can take time to strengthen it.

I would share one more time that within this very House, UCP MLAs were elected and subsequently investigated by the RCMP. The Member for Sherwood Park, the Member for Cardston-Siksika, the Justice minister, the Infrastructure minister, the minister of culture and multiculturalism, the Minister of Seniors and Housing, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: these are all members in this very Legislature that were interviewed by the RCMP. Now, unfortunately, we have not seen the conclusion, as far as I know, and the wrap-up of these interviews and investigations, so how are we to take it at face value, the word of this government, saying that it is in everyone's best interests to not move forward with this legislation? I think that through the conversations that have been had, it has become even more clear that we need to implement Bill 202 and not support the concurrence motion that is in front of us.

Now, we've heard comments from the Member for Calgary-Klein as well and several members of the UCP, and their conversations seemed to revolve around solicitor-client privilege. I can appreciate that it is something that we have to look into deeply before moving forward, but that would have been an opportunity that we had, through friendly amendments, to move that forward.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt.

According to Standing Order 8(7)(a.1) we'll provide up to five minutes for the mover of the motion to close debate on the concurrence of the report on Bill 202. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise and close debate on the motion for concurrence on Bill 202. Just for clarity's sake for my colleagues on the government side, I will be voting in favour of concurrence with the committee's decision to not proceed with this bill. I think there are a number of problems with this bill that are well documented both in my remarks and the remarks of my hon. colleagues. I think even a number of things the members opposite have said point out a lot of the flaws with this bill.

There are a couple of things that are worth mentioning at this time. Actually, my colleague from Calgary-Cross, the member who spoke first, had mentioned the oath that lawyers take when they become lawyers: I shall not pervert the law to favour or prejudice anyone; in all things I shall conduct myself honestly and with integrity and civility and shall seek to ensure access to justice and access to legal services. Madam Speaker, in section 25 of this bill it does just the opposite of that.

This is a partisan witch hunt. It's very clear. I don't understand how lawyers across the aisle, particularly the person who produced this bill, could actually think that there is any validity with this bill, particularly with the issue of waiving attorney-client privilege. This is a fundamental pillar of the law. I think it's just crazy, but we see that the NDP has a troubling past of casting aspersions at this government. They talk a lot about caring about justice and ethics. Well, again, this is a blatant contradiction of that stance.

I'm not quite sure what committee meeting the member opposite was at when talking about the lawyer from the Department of Justice, but she expressed extreme caution on this bill. I was interested and intrigued by those remarks because – again, I'm not sure where that member was – those things were not quite said in that committee.

Now, after losing, I do know that the NDP is still angry with Albertans for rejecting them with historic numbers, and I understand that the NDP is angry with us as we move forward with a robust agenda to get Alberta back to work, to restore confidence in government, which was clearly lacking over the past four years, but this bill is certainly not the way to do that. I understand that members opposite are entitled to their own opinions, Madam Speaker, but they are not entitled to their own facts. Standing in this Chamber, casting aspersions at this government, and suggesting that this bill is anything but a partisan witch hunt is ludicrous.

Again to my government colleagues, I encourage you to vote in favour of concurrence with the committee's findings. As we talked a lot about this bill in the committee, we noticed a lot of flaws, things that were fundamental in this bill that could not be fixed with an amendment or a couple of slight word changes. This bill is not prepared to be debated in this Chamber, and I honestly think that, as I said in the committee, a little more fiery at the time, the person who's moving this bill should honestly be ashamed, and so should any other lawyer who could actually consider supporting such a piece of legislation. To bring this to this Chamber, to be so upset that the members opposite cannot execute their political goals that they want to go and change a fundamental pillar of the law to do so: well, Madam Speaker, I think my opinions on this are well documented.

With that, I will just simply say: shame on the members opposite for bringing this bill to this Chamber. Taxpayers and Albertans and voters deserve far better from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. With that, I close debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for concurrence carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:58 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Nally	Sigurdson, R.J.
Allard	Neudorf	Smith
Amery	Nixon, Jeremy	Stephan
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Rehn	Toor
Fir	Reid	Turton
Getson	Rosin	van Dijken
Gotfried	Rowswell	Walker
Hanson	Schow	Yao
Horner	Schulz	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Carson	Ganley	Phillips
Deol	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 6
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[Motion for concurrence carried]

The Deputy Speaker: I will now recognize the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Member's Apology

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In my member's statement this afternoon I described behaviours as "parasitic." That was an unparliamentary choice of words, which I am going to rectify. I wish to sincerely apologize for this word choice.*

Thank you.

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 201

Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act

The Chair: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the House for hearing this and for embarking upon Committee of the Whole with respect to private member's Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act. I want to focus my remarks today on the scope and the breadth intended by this bill in allowing for a more concerted, informed, and strategic approach to the broader aviation and aerospace sectors.

Of course, they're of even more vital importance post COVID-19 as we work hard across ministries to encourage diversification, investment, innovation, and Alberta's renowned entrepreneurial spirit in getting our economy back on track for a vibrant and stable future. Again, this bill was envisioned prior to the pandemic, but we can all see that airlines have been particularly hard hit. The reset button will mean that we must compete fiercely but with sound strategy in ensuring that we have the passenger and cargo networking capacity necessary for a vibrant economy.

But more than that, Madam Chair, of course, this bill is intended to reach across the aviation and aerospace sectors, so let's talk a little bit about the potential players and the composition of this first-ever strategic council. Firstly, the appointment of members. Of course, "the Lieutenant Governor in Council must appoint at least 7 members but no more than 15 . . . to the council for a term not exceeding 4 years." The term of this act and the council is five years, and this is meant to have a refresh and the opportunity for either extension or renewal of that council at the four-year mark.

Of course, individuals must also be residents of Alberta, which is key to their focus and knowledge of this great province.

"The members of the council must include, but are not limited to, [certain] individuals from the following sectors or organizations." I want to get into that just as we move forward, but before I get into the specifics of that, let me remind you that the council will also have the ability to consult with or receive submissions from or even to establish working groups to engage subsectors of the aviation and aerospace sectors. There are some parts of this industry which are very specific, very knowledge- and technologically based organizations and operations.

The first one on the list is "airlines or commercial aviation." Of course, we know that our flag carrier, as I like to call them, WestJet, with their hub in Calgary and their services across Alberta, across this great country, and around the world, are vitally important to us. Air Canada, our national carrier, has significant services in, through, and to and from Alberta as well, which are vitally important in terms of not just passenger but air cargo. Of course, the international carriers serving Alberta are very important to us as well. They provide the linkages around the world to places like Beijing, Amsterdam, Dublin, Rome, and the list goes on; the 122 different destinations that we serve from this province are vitally important to our connectivity to the world. Of course, charter or other contracted carrier services, both fixed- and rotary-wing: that's where the aviation services come into play, Madam Chair.

*See page 1139, right column, paragraph 3

One of the impetuses for me to move forward with this bill was the fact that we had lost such significant and vital links like Cathay Pacific Cargo twice a week from Calgary to Hong Kong, which is the world's busiest air cargo terminal. If you can get it to Hong Kong, you can get it to anywhere in the world, probably, in under 30 hours. We lost that because we did not have that strategic approach. We have essentially lost the Air China Cargo flight from Edmonton.

4:20

Again, we need to be more strategic. I'm concerned that with the pandemic and with the reset button from that that we could stand to lose other vital services around the globe that might be more important. That is really the impetus of that, that we as a government, we as Albertans need to be more strategic, focused, and supportive not only in securing those services but in retaining them.

We have the aerodromes, airports, or air navigation authorities as well, our international or other registered airports or aerodromes, from Calgary and Edmonton internationals to Fort McMurray and Lethbridge, YMM and YQL – for those of you that understand a few of the airline codes; I've got a few stuck in my brain; we could have some tests later on that – quite literally from A to Z, or, in Alberta's case, actually from Airdrie to Zama Lakes, totalling 314 airports and aerodromes by last count, serving people and moving cargo across Alberta and around the world.

The economic development opportunities and consideration within this bill as well: economic development, trade, and tourism, certainly very much in deference to our Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism and our minister there, who has been very supportive in this bill. Ministry representation is possible, certainly, to sit in on that as extra members of the council but to work closely with them. Economic development organizations across Alberta, from our major cities, like Calgary Economic Development and Edmonton Economic Development, to smaller hamlets: almost every town, city, and hamlet across this great province has an economic development organization, which knows what their needs are and certainly can use the air services and aviation sectors and aerospace sectors as an opportunity to develop and diversify their economies.

Of course, our REDAs, or regional economic development alliances, also can work together with the local airports in supporting economic development opportunities. We also have Economic Developers Alberta, which wraps that whole group together and is an incredible group and very insightful in terms of providing that kind of information and that kind of liaison with the strategic aviation advisory council.

There are also export-focused and industry and bilateral trade corporations and organizations that will move things forward in terms of trade and can be consulted. I look at one that I was involved with for many years, the Hong Kong-Canada Business Association, one of Canada's largest bilateral trade organizations, that we can work with. There are so many more that represent that and, of course, our consular officials in this great province, that we can work with closely in developing those ties and those bridges.

We have travel. Travel Alberta, tourism associations, destination marketing organizations, and sector operators as they're represented through various associations will be vital to be consulted in this. As I was talking about with one of my colleagues, maybe the advent of aerotourism, the fly in and fly out, that was mentioned by one of my colleagues here as well, who happens to be a pilot – maybe we can all hop onboard his flights and enjoy some of these great opportunities to visit our province.

Pilot training institutions and programs, Madam Chair, such as Mount Royal University. Just a few weeks ago I had a gentleman

come in for a notarization, and he saw an airplane model that I happened to have up on one of my credenzas. As it turned out, he was a pilot for Cathay Pacific, the company that I worked for for 20 years, and he had trained at Mount Royal University and was taken on by Cathay Pacific in 1997 and has been flying for them ever since, based out of Calgary. So we are spreading that expertise and that knowledge around the world.

We also have over 20 private flight schools at my last count, which I've reached out to. Certainly, they've all been very pleased with recent decisions to allow them to move back into operation, representing many opportunities for Alberta to continue to be a leader and to develop a robust industry around the training of both private and commercial pilots, not just from around Alberta and across the country but from around the world. We happen to have a little more open airspace than many parts of the world do. Trust me. Take a look at flight radar, and you'll see where that comes into play.

Aircraft maintenance engineers: a huge shortage around the globe as well. We have training institutions and programs, most notably at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, private industry operators, and other private-sector innovators across this province, who are training those people at the highest level of skills and technology in terms of aircraft maintenance, engineering technology, and again the opportunity for us to expand the scope of that, to bring people from around the globe here to Alberta to learn about aircraft maintenance and technology.

Also, as I found out recently, SAIT is also doing ground service training. They've developed a program for WestJet. Well, why don't we sell that to Vietnam Airlines or Air Zimbabwe or around the globe and bring those people here to Alberta and become a centre of excellence in the aviation sector?

Of course, there's commonality, actually, with the energy sector because the GE turbines that are used in aircraft are also often the same that are used for compressor stations in natural gas, so we actually have that technology embedded in the oil and gas sector, and there's no reason why we can't bridge those two.

Aerospace engineering or emerging technologies – companies like Wave, Peloton, Pegasus, Aurora Aerial – but also our postsecondary institutions like the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, the University of Alberta, Medicine Hat College, SAIT, and NAIT and many more that touch this, of course, even places like Olds College in terms of the agricultural aspects of this, are very, very important to us.

We've talked a little bit about search and rescue, emergency medical, and air ambulance. It's vitally important that we also consult with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services has contracts for 11 fixed-wing aircraft to provide 24-hour air ambulance service throughout the province, transporting about 7,000 patients each year, with 10 bases across the province, with both rotary-wing and fixed-wing services provided through them but also through STARS, HERO, and HALO, which we all know and love because they're there to provide emergency service to people who otherwise may not survive because of the time it takes to transport them for vital services, critical services.

Madam Chair, this is a great opportunity for us to move forward. Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. You know, the great thing about Committee of the Whole is that members have the ability to pop up and down all the time. I have a feeling that the

Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was probably summing up his remarks. I would actually like to hear the end of those before I get a chance to add my remarks, so I'll take my seat. Maybe he might want to finish those off, hopefully.

The Chair: He cannot speak again, so I'm going to let you take the rest of your time.

Mr. Nielsen: Oh, he can't?

The Chair: Yeah. Sorry.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, I will have to, hopefully, just imagine what some of those remarks might have been, but I'm sure they're very, very positive about this Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act, a piece of legislation that I'm looking forward to supporting through all of our debates. But, you know, there are a few thoughts I would like to share with members of this House.

I guess, to start off with, you know, being the critic for red tape, I do know that I've heard members of the government talking about how government needs to be smaller, that we need to be more efficient, things like that. I am concerned that there's a possibility that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction might think that this is creating unnecessary red tape. My hope is that that's not the case and that we do get the opportunity to see this council.

The other thing I'm concerned around is: will the minister potentially rush to reduce other things with that whole one-in, one-out argument that I've heard, one-third reduction? You know, hopefully, we don't see steps like that being taken around this.

One of the other thoughts I have is, of course, that, you know, it will take some resources in order to form this council, and I'm wondering if the government will be prepared to provide those resources. Certainly, we don't want to see this thing shortchanged and simply, I guess, created just for the sake of creating it, with no actual ability to be able to do anything. My hope is that the government will see value in this, especially around diversification. We've certainly heard the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek talk about being able to create a diversified economy here in Alberta, and I think this is a great avenue to do this. As I probably said during second reading, Madam Chair, it kind of feels like the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is doing a little bit more around diversification here in the province than the actual government is doing around diversification.

You know, I will definitely commend that member for bringing this legislation forward. I think it's an opportunity that we have to create some momentum here in the province, highlighting, as he said, our flagship airlines and other things. If there are possibly some airline tours around, that he was mentioning, with his colleague, hopefully those will be all above board. We may have to declare those, so we'll be sure to do those kinds of things.

4:30

The third thing that I would like to express around Bill 201: I've seen, unfortunately, since the current government took over, that they have populated different committees and commissions with patronage appointments. I feel that although the list for potential members is large, there are probably some that have been left out. As you even said yourself, not everybody will get a seat at the table. That's why I think it's so incredibly important that we don't see patronage appointments to this council, so that we get the experts in the industry that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek spent 20-plus years in and brings a great deal of knowledge from. I want to see that council populated with the right individuals. I mean, let's be honest, Madam Chair. I don't want to see the Mental Health Patient Advocate and the Health Advocate being filled without a

proper procedure for that, and it happens to be, you know, the UCP's former executive director. Hopefully, those kinds of things will not happen with regard to the aviation advisory council as it moves forward.

I think it's a very good opportunity, especially with, you know, COVID-19 happening and some of the unfortunate layoffs that we've seen within the industry. It's been very, very hard on them, and as we come out of this recovery, my hope is that the government will move swiftly to potentially bring this council together and start getting some really good, expert advice on how we can help the aviation industry get back on its feet and help diversify the economy, coming from all of the expert advice that potentially could be available through this council.

I guess, with that, my hope is, again, just to sum up some of my thoughts, that we don't see this council shortchanged. I don't want to have it formed and then not have the resources, to potentially dissuade this council from doing its job. I don't want to see it become a potential casualty, I guess, of red tape or be the cause of rushing to remove other supposed red tape, you know, all in the interest of being able to hold up a placard with a number saying: "See? One in, one out." Then the other concern I had is around, shall we say, the fiscal reckoning that I've heard about, having this just simply end up on a shelf somewhere and nothing ever really happening to it.

Again I commend the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this forward. I think it's a very good opportunity to pursue that will diversify the Alberta economy, and I would urge all members in this House to support this piece of legislation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member as well for his kind words and insights. I'll just maybe start off quickly by recognizing some of the questions he had about red tape. Hopefully, this is a very strategic and very focused group and they don't create red tape; they actually try and cut through it. That will be a thing.

I also see this as an essential move, that has been asked for by industry through the many letters and conversations I've had, because there was a gap, a gap that needs to be filled with a council of experts. I guess the proof will be in the pudding there, but the idea is that this will be a council of experts from across a broad cross-section within the industry. In terms of resources, you'll see in the bill itself that there is secretarial support provided by the Ministry of Transportation, which is really meant to be a very soft supporting there – obviously, we could host some meetings – but the idea, of course, is to run this lean and mean and with very, very little cost to us.

I'm just going to make a couple more comments with respect to the breadth. Emergency management and Agriculture and Forestry are very key to this bill: again, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency; the air operations of Alberta Wildfire; fire monitoring and detection not only by aircraft but increasingly more by drone technology, as we'll see as that develops – we could be the hub and one of the epicentres of that new technology development – the Alberta Aerial Applicators Association doing crop spraying and dusting but more even in the forestry sector as well as the agricultural sector.

Consumers need to be represented, no question: their passenger rights, consumer protection, and, of course, private citizen input in surveys to find out what they need. Some of this is not only going to be about bringing people to Alberta but ensuring that they

actually have access to the world through the connectivity that we create and that we recommend through this, not just to anywhere but to strategic places, places where we can do business, where we can visit, where we can have exchanges of tourists from both centres but also from the legal, finance, labour, or professional organizations that are noted there. There are policy, legal framework, and barriers that the legal community can address when we certainly get into more policy issues. Labour and union representation: many of these sectors have union representation within the employee base that they work from. We have trades and regulated skilled trades that will need to be part of this program and also the apprenticeships that can come from this, which are vitally important, and then, of course, relevant professional organizations or associations.

Madam Chair, this provides some insights into not only the opportunities that lie within the sector but the complexity of it and how and why we need to harness the expertise across the various subsectors to ensure we truly provide knowledgeable, experienced, and impactful recommendations through the great work that I know can be done by the establishment of the strategic aviation advisory council, again, that council of experts, in not only maintaining our position as a global leader in aviation – and we’ve heard a lot about the history and the legacy that this great province has – but in advancing our global connectivity and opportunities for all Albertans through greater leadership and success in aviation and aerospace in the future.

I thank the member for his very sound endorsement and for his comments with respect to: “Let’s get it right. Let’s make sure that this is a council of experts.” I appreciate the support there, and certainly I’m looking forward to any comments or any questions from members in the House here as we move, hopefully, towards passage of Bill 201, Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak at the Committee of the Whole stage on Bill 201, Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act. I will be speaking in support of this bill; however, I will offer a few caveats and questions. I am sure that the bill’s sponsor would not have it any other way, and hopefully my comments will be taken in the spirit in which they are intended, in particular my desire to see Alberta’s small cities represented in this bill’s eventual work.

The first item that I would like to provide a brief comment on is, of course, some of the process around private members’ bills. Every single time I speak to private members’ business, I must issue a caveat, that this business of going to committee and having private members’ bills not necessarily make their way to the floor I find deeply problematic in terms of our business as private members, both on the government side and on the opposition side, in doing the legislative branch work that our constituents in the first instance, regardless of whether we make our way into cabinet or not, elect us to do.

While I am glad that we are having a good conversation about this bill on the floor of this House, it is my view that we should be discussing all private members’ business, as brought forward by private members, on the floor of this House and that this process should not be collared or otherwise limited by committee deliberations in which the government has a numeric majority and in which there might be interference of other political considerations in the normal discharge of the legislative branch’s duties.

4:40

Having said that, I think there are a couple of things here on the strategic aviation council that we need to consider. Now, I’m aware that this member maintains an active interest in this file, and I think that’s a good thing. I think that he’s done his best here, within the confines of what we can actually effectuate under a private member’s bill structure, and brought forward a reasonable piece of legislation, Madam Chair. Of course, economic conditions and, in particular, the aviation sector have changed considerably since the hon. member brought this piece of legislation forward, and I think that he is quite right – and I concur with his statement – that that indeed actually makes the bill more relevant, not less. We have seen places like the Edmonton International Airport announcing a 40 per cent reduction in their workforce. Similar layoffs and other challenges have beset the Calgary International Airport, and certainly with investments in new regional airports, whether they are on the commercial carrier side or even the cargo side, some of that investment climate will become more difficult and more challenged as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

There is no question that the aviation industry, not just in carting people around, Madam Chair – I think that for a lot of people that’s the part of the aviation industry that they see, when we all, you know, get in line and are funnelled into cattle cars, which is what the experience of flying has often become – but in the cargo piece is really, really important to regional economic diversification and regional economic growth. Certainly, as the city of Lethbridge, for example, has examined their options on the governance structure of their regional airport and the expansion possibilities of their regional airport, that is something that they have focused on considerably, that cargo potential, because indeed that is a major driver of a regional economic development strategy.

Now, we were very pleased, when we were in government, to be able to fund some of the study that was jointly undertaken with Lethbridge county and the city of Lethbridge and, I believe, economic development Lethbridge – although I could stand to correct the record there – through the economic development and trade ministry. Through a CARES grant we were able to fund a study to look at the governance structure for our regional airport and provide us some guidance as a region, provide our municipal decision-makers with some of the lessons learned from other jurisdictions on some of the ways that regional airports have been governed sort of well and not so well, both in Alberta and elsewhere. Lethbridge really wanted to redevelop its airport, and it was a situation where – obviously, it serves mostly people in the city, but the facility itself is in the county, not unlike many regional airports.

You know, that was a good thing, but I do remember many, many conversations over the years, in the 2015 to sort of – I don’t know – ’17-18 period, when municipal decision-makers at a number of different levels, the county and the city and elsewhere, were kind of thinking through how they wanted to govern the airport: ultimately, would it be an airport authority, a commission, or other structure? That is something where the government needed to provide that grant so that they could get the right study and really figure out how it would work for them.

That is actually a piece of work that might have moved quicker had we had a strategic aviation council for some of that – it’s not really handholding – expertise, if you will, for regional centres to be able to find the right model for them. It would have been one place to go, even informally, as a sounding board. You know, as it turned out, we had the CARES program, the regional economic development grant program, that was able to bridge some of that and able to give the decision-makers what they needed. I think that

this would have helped in that, so just on that basis alone, as a constituency MLA I can see where this approach has some merit.

You know, I would hope, too, that this piece of legislation would be paired with an actual, real and substantive approach to economic diversification and some of the financial tools that are available from this government that we have not seen used yet in the pandemic response and in the recession response. For example, our airports have loans. They used to have them with the Alberta Capital Finance Authority, but with that dissolution they're now held by Treasury Board and Finance, so there are some pieces there. I think very careful financing work and overall growth strategy work in the context of what has happened with the coronavirus and what we are expecting the new normal to look like for at least the next year, year and a half: those would be pieces that I would want to ensure that Executive Council is examining in detail.

Perhaps a strategic advisory council could help with that, but I think that's an important piece, both the existing financing mechanisms for EIA and Calgary but any future airport development and, in particular, on that cargo side because the coronavirus pandemic obviously makes that cargo expansion piece ever so much more urgent and important for the health of our airports and, two, for the movement of goods, in particular, because we have seen, I think, real and legitimate challenges with the ground crossing at the border and so on with the United States. Keeping people safe and healthy can often be better accomplished through an air cargo system than it can on the ground. That would be something that I would place with the government to be brought to life through this advisory council, both the government MLAs but also with the relevant minister because we haven't heard enough from them on this.

As I mentioned, Madam Chair, if I do not have a chance to speak to this bill again, I will note for the record that this bill is endorsed by the mayor of Lethbridge, Chris Spearman, and I think that's good. They're looking to expand their airport, and this government should do it. Now that we've funded the study, which we did, to figure out how we were going to govern the place, now they need to fund it, and they should do that thing. I know the Member for Lethbridge-East agrees with me, so I'm just going to say it. You know, I never pass up an opportunity to advocate for my constituents.

The Chair: I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-North.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak in support of Bill 201. The Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act is a timely addition to the legislative agenda from the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I wish to thank my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing forward this important and timely private member's bill. The bill is well thought out, and the member has demonstrated a clear passion for the subject of the aviation and aerospace sector and the economic growth of Alberta. His expertise, foresight, and hard work are clearly demonstrated in this legislation.

Madam Chair, the first sentence of section 3, purpose of council, states: "For the purpose of building on Alberta's rich aviation history and potential for development of a world-leading aviation and aerospace sector." This encompasses so perfectly what so many Albertans want for our province, to move forward as a world leader in each and every thing that we do while building on strong foundations built by those who came before us. This bill is innovative. Actually, if passed, Bill 201 would be the first-ever strategic aviation advisory council in Alberta. It supports economic growth and tourism development, agriculture, among other things. Like the aviation sector, the tourism industry is a key contributor to

our economy. I think many people in this House can agree. We need innovative ideas like this bill now more than ever.

4:50

Madam Chair, because of COVID-19 our aviation and tourism industries are suffering. Aviation has a deep history in our province and, like many industries, has changed over time to suit the needs of Albertans and the sector. Just look at Calgary International Airport and how much it has changed and grown in the last few years. The airline industry has faced challenges in the past but nothing like the one ongoing in the pandemic.

Madam Chair, sometimes we don't realize how important a service is until we don't have it or its ability to serve us is greatly impacted. Beyond taking us on vacation – I look forward to travelling one day – the aviation sector also assists with fire and emergency response, agriculture, and other enterprises. It creates jobs and revenue that many communities depend on. Just last week the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek spoke about how in 2019 Alberta's aerospace and defence industries contributed \$3.25 billion to our provincial GDP. Further, the tourism sector contributes over \$8 billion to our provincial GDP. That's no small chunk of change. The role of these industries in Alberta's economy is very, very significant.

This bill presents an opportunity to help these industries to facilitate and optimize their operations and even find some ways to reduce some red tape somewhere. Bill 201 helps us to move forward in developing strategies to advance our province and not just for the benefit of Alberta but for the benefit of Canada. It's about being ahead of the game because, Madam Chair, when Alberta does well, so does the rest of the country.

I think it's worth noting that under duties of council, point (b) directs the councils to consult with key stakeholders. It is clear that there is ample benefit for our province and bigger cities like Calgary and Edmonton here, but the consultation will complement very well the research done by the committees to really get into the weeds of the industry and focus on the other parts of the province and provide a complete and detailed map for the sector. This bill has the potential to connect Alberta not just internally but throughout Canada and the world.

Additionally, section 6 of this legislation outlines the makeup of the potential members of the proposed council. Individuals from sectors and organizations like airlines and commercial aviation; economic development, trade, or tourism; aerospace engineering; and emergency management, to name a few, will sit on that council. When it comes to appointing intelligent and capable people to advise a council in this province, we do particularly well. Just look at the economic advisory council, the best of the best. How wonderful it will be to have a group of experts to help guide decision-makers on policies to better our province.

Madam Chair, most of us here if not all of us have travelled on an airplane, but how many of us know how to fly it? Well, I think the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland knows how to fly. Experts, expert councils like the one proposed in Bill 201, are important when making informed, practical, and timely policy decisions.

I look forward to voting in favour of Bill 201, and I encourage all members of the House to do the same. I would like to once again thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for his work on Bill 201 and his dedication to betterment of our province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Hon. members, according to Standing Order 8(6) we will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 201.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

Motions Other than Government Motions

Intellectual Property Development

503. Mr. Yao moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to identify and eliminate barriers to the development of intellectual property created at postsecondary institutions, teaching hospitals, and laboratories in order to attract investment, encourage innovation, and ensure these entities have a fair opportunity to share in the profit generated from research conducted at their facilities.

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Six years to get to this point.

What does this all mean exactly? It means innovation. It means economic diversification. It means reinforcing our Alberta culture of risk taking and of entrepreneurship.

Intellectual property is an interesting issue in our educational institutions, with many having very onerous definitions and guidelines which will ultimately allude to the thought that the institution may have major control or ownership of an intellectual breakthrough. This can actually deter students from registering their innovations and breakthroughs as they may not wish to allow the institution to perceivably take or control the innovation. The flipside to this is the thought that an institution that enables the research, the equipment, the facility, and guiding expertise to develop an innovation should benefit from the financial success of an invention that was born at the institution. What, Madam Speaker, is the balance in intellectual property ownership that is created in our universities and other public institutions in regard to the individuals who ultimately make that discovery? That is the question that I'm asking our government to review and decide on.

What is an invention? It starts with imagination. It starts with seeing better ways of doing things. It's about stimulating discussion and provoking questions. It involves identifying challenges and barriers and imagining and identifying solutions. Why universities? It's in these postsecondary institutions where the next generation of our workforce is going to learn, where by rites they will be exposed to things and thoughts and philosophies that may be new to them, and perhaps they will have a slightly different perspective on these, and just maybe – just maybe – they might come up with a better way of doing things.

These institutions have descriptions in their intellectual property guidelines as to the amount of ownership that the universities receive as a result of the patents and trademarks that are inherent with these discoveries and breakthroughs. An example of this would be to review the revenue sharing should a patent be struck. The ownership is heavily influenced based on who actually

commercializes the patent, a university or the creator. Another key aspect is how much an institution receives even though the creator may do all the heavy lifting.

If the creator of a patent commercializes it and were to do it at the University of Western Ontario, the school would get 25 per cent. At the University of Ottawa they get 20 per cent. University of Manitoba would receive 50 per cent of the patent. At the University of Calgary it's negotiated between 10 and 25 per cent. At the University of Alberta it's 33 per cent. The school will get a full one-third of your intellectual breakthrough. At the University of Toronto: 25 per cent. Now, if the university develops the patent, then the University of Ottawa would get 25 per cent. The University of Alberta would get 66 per cent, two-thirds of the patent. In Western Ontario, Calgary, and Manitoba it's 50 per cent, just outright half. University of Toronto: it's up to 40 per cent.

[The Speaker in the chair]

In the 2015 report the office of the Auditor General of Ontario said the province should "revisit and assess the pros and cons of including provisions in selective research funding agreements that would allow [it] to share in future income" from the sale or license of resulting intellectual property and/or to "have the non-exclusive right to use the intellectual property royalty-free for non-commercial internal purposes" where there may be value to do so.

Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that if we want a knowledge-based economy, we need to remove the constraints from scientists and entrepreneurs to allow them to succeed. Ontario's Auditor General certainly identified that this is something that they need to do, review their whole system.

5:00

University spinoffs are increasingly becoming the commercialization vehicle for breakthrough, science-based innovation. Recently graduated PhD students are the logical cofounders and employees of these types of ventures, yet in Canada our IP policies are too often undermining the emergence and success of such science-based ventures.

One major policy change that's urgently needed is the nationwide overhaul of university intellectual property practices and policies, resulting in a new vision for university technology transfer offices, or TTOs. Universities developed these technology transfer offices with the recognition that universities weren't doing a good job of developing intellectual property in their institutions, and despite these offices they still aren't doing a good job.

Educational institutions have become much more competitive in an international world as they each strive to be a destination, a desired place for students to choose. Many institutions have embraced entrepreneurship as part of the educational experience, where they develop a campus culture where innovative thinking is promoted and nurtured.

These schools are also embracing partnerships with private industry. NAIT, as an example, Mr. Speaker, partners with many industrial companies to develop innovative solutions. Not only do these companies invest in the research of our colleges and universities, but they allow students to interact with real-life issues and work with folks who have been dealing with these challenges. It's about as real-life an experience as you can get for so many of our students in our postsecondary institutions. But it means partnering with industry, with our universities, and with all institutions and organizations who conduct research to create a positive feedback loop to power our province, our economy, and our people into the next era. To be clear, Alberta is already a hub of innovation and invention, and this is clearly reflected in our hydrocarbon industry.

My uncle, Mr. Speaker, is now retired, but he was a chemical engineer. He worked for what was then the Alberta Research Council. Some time ago he mentioned to me that everything that they're doing up in my town, Fort McMurray, like the different extraction methods like SAGD, which is steam-assisted gravity drainage, were hypothesized back then. He told me that back then, in the '80s, they experimented with all of these different methodologies for the oil sands. They tried microwaving the stuff. They baked it. They even hypothesized about using nuclear energy to process this product in the ground. Evidently, they didn't have the capacity to test that one out. They also steamed it. Back then, though, they just didn't have the technology to actually perform that. Today we have the ability to force steam down a few hundred metres of pipe, deep into the ground. They did not have that capability back then.

If we take a closer look at the SAGD technologies, the act of heating water and forcing it into the crevasses of the Earth to displace the hydrocarbons, well, that's the basis of fracking. It's the fracking industry that propelled the United States' energy industry over the last few years and gave the U.S. a strong economy as investment dried up here, ironically. What we need to remind ourselves is that this technology was born right here in Alberta. Innovation has great potential in Alberta.

We also have to look at our health system when we're looking at this. A couple of years ago I spoke with a lobbyist group who dealt with innovation and science, and they mentioned to me that Alberta is actually a desired place for businesses in the biomedical sector to do their research. You see, we have a single health system. Despite what people might think of AHS as a big, cumbersome entity, it's actually an organization that is world class. It has a highly educated workforce with high-level professional colleges behind all of those staff. There are also consistently high standards of process and reporting. There's modern equipment, good facilities as well as a decent-sized population right here in this province, and even the patient population demonstrates high levels of education, being able to manage and follow strict routines that are sometimes required with some of these medical regimes.

My point is that there is space for research and innovation here in Alberta. We have proven it with the hydrocarbon sector, and we can continue to build a culture and environment where innovation and research can thrive, and we have an industry that is ripe for it. Diversification in Alberta will lead us to being a world leader in the biosciences world if we let it.

But, again, there are challenges. We struggle with the commercializing of our intellectual property. For this reason, companies take their intellectual property to the U.S., and they take more than just the IP. They take the talented individuals, they take the future prosperity, they take the jobs, and they take them all right south of the border to the United States because we can't get our act together here in Canada.

Enough is enough. We need to bridge the gaps. We need to create a climate where these individuals and companies do not have to move to the United States to commercialize. It's all about taking lessons learned in Silicon Valley.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the motion? I see the hon. the Member for Lethbridge-East or west.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One job at a time. I'm busy enough.

Thank you for the opportunity to stand to speak to Government Motion 503 as proposed by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I admire his pluck, Mr. Speaker, for bringing

forward a motion designed to support Alberta's postsecondary institutions in an effort to diversify the economy and encourage innovation and so on. I think it first bears a quick point that, of course, diversification of the economy, that is to say broadening the economy and broadening the avenues of inquiry and the avenues of being able to generate wealth in the economy and hire people and all the rest of it, is an important piece of work that it is unfortunate that we have seen some stalling on over the last year, not the least of which is because cuts to programs designed to do exactly that, to have the workforce that feeds into some of what the hon. member calls an embrace of partnership and entrepreneurship have now been eliminated by this government.

Furthermore, many of the programs that then go on to be areas of private-sector activity, in particular artificial intelligence and various tech sector, digital media and clean tech initiatives, have in fact been paused due to specific decisions taken by this government in their fall budget, that they introduced in the latter half of 2019.

There is no question, Mr. Speaker, that we support the development of intellectual property, the strengthening of research institutions. I think that that is demonstrated by our action. We don't need to propose motions. We just did it. We did it by stable and predictable funding to both our larger research-based institutions, our postsecondary institutions, and our polytechnic institutions and, furthermore, to some of our research capacity at the Alberta research park and elsewhere. I would be remiss if I didn't also put in there some of the agricultural research that is excellent in this province, or at least it was until there were about 50 people laid off out of that program in Alberta agriculture.

I think that the extent to which this concept of training and inquiry on through to development of either applications or discovery, that chain of events that, ideally, seamlessly integrates the public investment in knowledge-based inquiry and then the capacity or option to move forward with the development of intellectual property for private-sector commercialization or other efforts – there's no question that it requires government presence in this and thoughtful government ways that we are making sure that those programs are appropriately funded.

5:10

It starts, in many cases, with people being able to access a basic business administration or engineering credential. That's why, for example, the elimination of those degree transfer programs at the Medicine Hat College is of such deep concern to those of us who care about how we are actually going to do the doing of economic diversification and broaden the economy, because when you take away that ability for a rural kid to go and get their first couple of years of engineering courses before they're ready to leave home, you are then potentially closing the door of access forever. That kid might go and do something else. So the elimination of those programs in our smaller centres is of huge concern.

You won't be able to achieve these high-minded objectives that are articulated in Government Motion 503 if you don't do the basic work of making sure that ordinary, working-class, lower income kids can go and get a basic education so that they can go on and do something, a bigger specialty or whatever the case may be, after that first couple of years. That's why the cuts to postsecondary education are so deeply distressing, and that's why they work at absolute crosspurposes to the intention of this motion.

I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo really believes strongly in this. He's done his work, and he said that he's been very patient in getting this to the floor of the Legislature, and I commend him for that. The fact is, though, that it's pretty darn hard to actually see substantive, living proof of that

desire on his part to actually see something real if the dollars aren't there to make it real.

Now, in my community of Lethbridge we have recently, over the last year, opened up an extension to the University of Lethbridge. It is the largest expansion to the University of Lethbridge since its building in the late 1960s. The Science Commons is now perched on the top of the coulisse. It is an architectural extension to the Arthur Erickson original university hall. I'll admit that I had my doubts when it was first going up, but now I don't mind it. I think, actually, the architects did do a good job of integrating that late 1960s Erickson with the early 21st-century, new science building.

Now, it was interesting. When the science building opened up, the Premier showed up. This is a place where there's a whole bunch of research that goes on in neuroscience, a lot of commercialization activity, and a lot of new intellectual property. They're doing really cool stuff there on brain science, on Alzheimer's research, all sorts of things like that. The other thing they do really well is integrate with the school districts and with the broader public – right? – and there are also entrepreneurial spaces integrated into that space. It's a great physical manifestation of the spirit of this motion, and – you know what? – it cost money to build it. It was part of our diversification strategy, that we wanted to make sure we had that scientific capacity across the province, not just in the two major cities. You know, when the Premier showed up to open the place, everybody was really excited. Really excited. And you know what he said? He said that it's a good thing you got this now because you're not going to ever get one again.

And that just – you could see people, the scientists, the people who were doing exactly this type of work that is articulated in this motion, people were just deflated. They were like, you know, "I'm trying to build something here; I'm trying to involve grade 12 students in some of this really complicated, well, actual brain science," Mr. Speaker, "and make this accessible to the community, to others." And, you know, this idea that it wasn't ever going to really happen because of the dollars or wouldn't happen again and it was based on some kind of, you know, sort of oversized largesse and that it was not necessarily the right public policy call, that really bothered people in administration and throughout the university community because it made them feel that they weren't really worthy of the investment, and they are.

The ability to attract investment, to diversify the economy, to create intellectual property that ends up then broadening the type of jobs that people can do here in the province of Alberta is an important goal, and that is a worthy endeavour. The people of Lethbridge who are in our scientific community and our university community and our school support staff, they deserve to actually be valued for that work.

I'll just conclude, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to Motion 503. I would encourage the government side to actually make this motion real by actually funding our postsecondary institutions so that we can all have an opportunity to succeed in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in support of Motion 503. For those just tuning in, I'm going to read the motion for reference.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to identify and eliminate barriers to the development of intellectual property created at postsecondary institutions, teaching hospitals, and laboratories in order to attract investment, encourage innovation, and ensure these entities have a fair opportunity to share in the profit generated from research conducted at their facilities.

I want to thank my colleague the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for bringing this important issue forward.

Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that technology is not just an industry. It is the future of every industry, and it must be the future of government. For Alberta to reach its fullest potential, we will need to harness the expertise and the entrepreneurial spirit of innovators and inventors across our province as they seek to commercialize new technologies. Alberta has a lot to be proud of in technology. From our oil and gas industry leading the world in responsible production of energy resources to the world-class artificial intelligence and machine learning expertise at the U of A's Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute, we have a strong foundation of talent and significant research and development that will set the stage for future commercialization success stories.

Mr. Speaker, before I was elected as an MLA in 2019, I spent most of my 15-year career as a venture capital investor. I worked for a number of venture funds where I invested tens of millions of dollars into dozens of Alberta-based technology companies, and I helped them to attract further capital, to commercialize their technologies, and ultimately to export their expertise around the world.

I'd like to share with this House a practical example of an Alberta-based technology success story. Circle Cardiovascular Imaging is a company based in Calgary that specializes in building diagnostic tools for cardiac medicine. I first met their CEO, Greg Ogradnick, approximately 10 years ago, and since that time Greg has led that company to become the first company in the world to successfully harness the MRI imaging modality to develop tools for cardiologists and radiologists. These tools, Mr. Speaker, materially increased the productivity of these specialists, allowing them to serve more patients in the same amount of time and improving patient outcomes. In the years since, their tools are now used by over 1,500 hospitals in over 40 countries around the world. They recently closed \$16 million of financing from venture capital funds to build on their existing expertise and to expand into the development of neurological imaging tools. This is an extraordinary Alberta success story in the technology space, and there are so many more.

So what does all of this have to do with my colleague's motion? Well, to make that connection, let me start by sharing my five-point investment criteria that I used when considering prospective investments as a venture capital investor. First of all, Mr. Speaker, it was all about people. Who are the best qualified to be solving the problem at hand? Who's the best of the best? Who has the most credibility, the best skills, and is best positioned to lead their company and their project to fruition?

Number two: what's the market? Who would buy this? Who would pay for this? Why would they use this? Why would they need this? How much would they pay for this? Does it really solve a real-world problem, or is it just a research project for research sake?

Number three: what's the competitive landscape? Who else has expertise in this field? Who could compete with them? Who could potentially catch them even if they got a head start?

5:20

Number four, intellectual property. What do you actually own? What's protectable? Do you have patents, or are you working towards patents? Do you have trade secrets? Who owns all of this IP, and does this IP protect your competitive advantage?

And fifth, Mr. Speaker, my criteria was traction. In other words, how much revenue have you brought in from real customers of your product and technology?

Taken together, these five criteria helped me to identify the best prospects for investment, and I'd like to revisit the one most important and most relevant to Motion 503, and that is intellectual

property. As an investor I ran into numerous occasions where I had found a company that met all of my criteria. They were a great fit for my fund, and I was excited to invest, but when I got into the detailed due diligence, I found that their intellectual property was developed at one of our local postsecondary institutions and that that postsecondary institution had certain rights to the technology.

Now, I'm not opposed in principle, Mr. Speaker, to our academic institutions having a stake in the commercialization of the technologies that are birthed by their students and faculty, but here's the problem. The terms of their claim to the intellectual property were so onerous and complicated that they rendered the company uninvestable by our fund. The IP policies of an Alberta postsecondary institution literally killed the deal between a private venture capital fund and a promising Alberta entrepreneurial venture. I wish I could tell you that this was an isolated incident, but I cannot.

Furthermore, I have heard from some PhD students who have been told by their supervising faculty to wait until after graduation to commercialize their research because of the IP policy, the intellectual property policy, of their school. What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that we have bright, promising inventors and innovators who are being stifled and stalled by a broken academic policy. These innovators might never realize their vision or reach their fullest potential because someone else in the competitive technology world might surpass them and commercialize a competitive product or technology sooner because they didn't face such restrictions from their academic home.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, our postsecondary IP system is broken. It does not encourage commercialization of research done in Alberta, and we need to do better. I believe the future of our postsecondary IP system should look something like the following. First, it should encourage commercialization of our IP as soon as possible. This should be mission number one. Let's turn our research into job-creation and investment-attraction magnets that would be the envy of other jurisdictions. Number two, we need to eliminate barriers to private investment into these R and D projects. And number three, we need to recognize the academic institutions' role in creating an environment that facilitated the intellectual property development in the first place.

If we get this right, it would have a significant effect on attracting investment into Alberta-based research and development projects, ensuring more of the research conducted in Alberta will actually be commercialized in Alberta. This would result in more jobs, more investment, a bigger and more diversified economy. Considering the economic challenges that Alberta is facing today, Mr. Speaker, now more than ever we need to get this right, and I'm proud to speak in favour of my colleague's motion, Motion 503.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Carson: You're a mind reader, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise on Motion 503. I suppose I will start by stating that I do plan on supporting this motion. I think overall it makes sense. I do have a few questions about the intentions of it overall. Of course, it goes on to talk about – and it's been mentioned a few times – eliminating barriers for development of intellectual property created by postsecondary institutions, hospitals, laboratories, and other organizations in order to share more in the profit of these facilities.

Now, when the introduction of the motion happened earlier today, the member went through a list of different scenarios of postsecondaries across Canada and how their profit-shares work. I'm not entirely sure about the point that he was trying to get across,

so hopefully we'll have some opportunity to clarify that in terms of what the actual intention is of this motion. Is it to ensure that students are having more opportunities to share in the profit, which seems to be where most of the conversation has revolved around from the government members today? Is it to ensure that postsecondary institutions have more opportunities to share in that profit, which maybe didn't sound as much the point coming from the member? Maybe it's both. That's an important clarification that I would like to find out.

The member mentioned that even in his own jurisdiction of Alberta, there are certain institutions that are working to create their own policy about profit-sharing and profit that's generated from intellectual property. I'd be interested to find out through his discussions, whether it be with those institutions or stakeholders in the field, how they feel what's in place already at institutions in our province or other provinces is benefiting those institutions and the students themselves and how we might create a program that reflects that.

I recognize that this is a motion simply to show that you want to see this direction moved forward on. I would hope to see that the government actually takes heed of this motion and moves forward, because it's been laid out by members in the NDP. We've heard from the Minister of Finance, specifically saying that, you know, economic diversification is a luxury that we can't afford at this time. Thankfully, I think that that messaging has maybe disappeared, hopefully, but really the proof is in the decisions that this government makes. On one hand we have the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo coming forward to share that institutions need to have more opportunity to share in that profit, and on the other hand we're seeing a continued attack on the ability of institutions to even function in the first place.

We can look at some of the changes that the postsecondary or Advanced Education minister has made specifically around funding to these programs, even looking at Grande Prairie Regional College with a 9 per cent cut, Keyano College with a 9 per cent cut, University of Alberta with a 9 per cent cut. Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, these cuts are going to hurt the opportunities for these institutions to benefit from the research that is or isn't happening within each faculty. That's a conversation that I hope the sponsoring member of this motion is having with the Minister of Finance, Minister of Advanced Education, minister of economic development and trade, essentially every minister that he can get the ear of.

My next question, similar to my first one I suppose, is: what consultations has this member in creating this motion done with postsecondary institutions, and where do they see themselves fitting into this proposal? We look to other decisions that this government has made: the elimination of the STEP program, something that our NDP government brought back once the previous PC government had got rid of it because the statistics show that it was a beneficial program. There were opportunities for these students to go out into their field of choice, that is relevant to their programs in most cases, and learn from on-the-field or on-the-ground opportunities, to learn this job, but also potentially even commercialize the skills that they are learning in those institutions.

We see Motion 503 saying that we need to create more opportunities for fair opportunities for profit generation, but on the other hand we see the government's direction doing quite the opposite. I would look even to some of the discussions that were had, I believe it was when the 2019 budget came through, and the discussions that were being had from the tech sector's point of view. We saw other provinces like Quebec, like Ontario focusing their budget on creating more opportunities for tech-focused talent streams in whatever industry it might have been, whether it was

digital media or interactive digital media or the video game industry, whatever it might have been, other provinces moving to create more opportunities within these fields for government to support them, recognizing that whatever the number might be, for every \$1 we are seeing an exponential amount of dollars coming out on the other side. That goes the same for Alberta Innovates. Once again we see this government, well, private members from this government essentially pleading with this government to do the right thing, but on the other hand the ministries and the ministers are doing the exact opposite.

Now, I also look to – there's quite a bit of research that has been done since the government decided to cut many of these programs. One of the most important programs or package of programs that this government decided to cut was the five business tax credits that came in under the NDP government. We saw that the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investor tax credit were creating opportunities for local companies. On the other hand they got rid of these tax credits in favour of an across-the-board tax cut for large corporations. Unfortunately, that does not help these companies that are trying to get themselves off the ground in the first place. It does not give these companies the capital leverage that they are going to need, and unfortunately we've seen many companies close their doors because of that. Many companies that were just starting in our province, leveraging funds from those tax credits, unfortunately, once again, had to close their doors because that capital, the ability to gather capital simply disappeared under this UCP government.

5:30

Now, specifically, there was a program, if I can find it here, that was offered by Alberta Innovates that was specific to moving along research from institutions and from research within industry, that was ensuring that that research was used to create more economic opportunities, and it was just another victim of the budget cuts of this UCP government. Unfortunately, that seems to be the path that this government wants to take.

You can say all the nice things that you want about creating more opportunities for students and for these postsecondary institutions, but on the other hand, when you have the Advanced Education minister attacking these institutions, telling them that they're going to have 10 per cent of their budget cut, telling them that they need to restructure all their faculties, there's not a whole lot of opportunity for them to take the time to see how they can create more profits. But, I mean, really, they're going to have to at this point because the government has really just gone down a path to undermine the value of these institutions and undermine their ability to create budgets for their students.

When institutions look at what is proposed in here, I imagine that they will be advocating, if something like this is brought forward by the government, that they have more opportunities to keep the profit for themselves because of the massive reductions that this government has made to their programming. They're going to be talking less about ensuring that students potentially are getting more of the value – I'm sure that's an important part of that conversation – but they are also going to be trying to ensure that the institution itself is able to hold on to more of that value because they can no longer afford to offer the programs that they were once offering.

Now, just going back to the piece around Alberta Innovates and this government's decision to cut \$76 million from the Alberta Innovates budget, that led to 125 job losses, possibly even growing, the specific program that I was talking about was the InnoTech Alberta program, which was a wholly owned subsidiary of Alberta Innovates, and its mandate was to facilitate the commercialization of applied research in the province. On one hand, once again, Mr.

Speaker, we have a government saying that they want to ensure that research and profit-sharing opportunities are available to institutions and those students and industry across the board, but they're doing the exact opposite in their vision and in the decisions that they're making.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I do plan on supporting this motion. I think that it is a common-sense motion. In case anyone didn't understand where I was going to leave my support, I do plan on supporting this. I would like clarity on exactly what this member might believe is the right balance for profit generation for these institutions between how much each stakeholder is going to have in that.

Once again, I would be interested to find out what consultations this member has done on this issue because the member opened with a comment saying that he's been waiting six years for this.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our postsecondary sector is crucial to the success of our province. The trial and error inherent in research and development is vital to solving the problems of tomorrow today. We need to be utilizing the ideas and creativity from the postsecondary sector to its fullest potential, which means cutting the red tape that prevents innovation and bold growth in this sector, and I am proud to stand today in support of Motion 503 and in support of the potential that our postsecondary institutions hold.

We are lucky enough to have two institutions in Lethbridge that meet the needs of many different types of learners. Lethbridge College first opened as Lethbridge community college in 1957 and has grown to serve over 4,000 students per year in recent years. In over 60 years Lethbridge College has served southern Alberta through its main campus in the city of Lethbridge and through its regional campuses in Claresholm, Vulcan county, and the Crowsnest Pass, offering programs in preparatory studies, trades training, and the university transfer programs in over 50 fields. The value of Lethbridge College cannot be understated. The graduates of Lethbridge College's applied bachelor degrees, two-year diplomas, apprenticeships, and one-year certificates have gone on to significantly contribute to Alberta's economy.

In addition to academics Lethbridge College has experienced repeated success in the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference through its golf, basketball, soccer, volleyball, and cross-country running teams. As an alumni myself I know first-hand how important a solid education from a local college can be to launching a successful and sustained career. One of my daughters, Jordi, is currently completing a baking apprenticeship there, and I could not be more proud of her choice to pursue a hands-on education in an area that inspires and motivates her.

In 1967 our community welcomed the addition of the University of Lethbridge. The University of Lethbridge has become one of the leading research institutions not only in Alberta but also in Canada. Serving over 8,000 students per year, University of Lethbridge offers both graduate and undergraduate degrees in four faculties and three schools. Beyond research, the university is home to 15 centres and institutes, among them being the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience, the Health Services Quality Institute, and the Small Business Institute. These institutes go beyond traditional academia, and they transcend disciplinary boundaries, allowing for enhanced collaboration between faculties.

With over 150 degree programs the University of Lethbridge truly offers our best and brightest an education that is as innovative and cutting-edge as our graduates are. Proving its competitive presence in the postsecondary market, the University of Lethbridge

was recently ranked fifth in *Maclean's* 2020 university rankings. Two of my daughters currently attend the University of Lethbridge and have chosen to begin their careers with a Lethbridge-based education. My eldest daughter, Jessie, is pursuing a degree in marketing, and my daughter Abby balances her studies in psychology and anthropology with her contributions to the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns rugby team.

Mr. Speaker, I'm taking the time to set the stage and introduce these institutions to this House because I firmly believe in Lethbridge College and University of Lethbridge's potential to contribute to our economy and our future as a province. Lethbridge is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to the provision of degrees, diplomas, and certificates. We need to enable the capacity of Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge to attract investment and push beyond the expected norms of a postsecondary institution. Both institutions already have a strong track record in attracting and securing research dollars and grants while also securing strong private donations. This leading Canadian university and this leading Canadian college need to be recognized for their full capacity to contribute to the workplaces of tomorrow. Academia needs to be an accelerator for innovation, not an inhibitor.

Some of us think of postsecondary education as book or classroom knowledge instead of real-life, hands-on learning. I think it's time that we challenge that perspective and begin to think about the potential of our postsecondary institutions from a different perspective. Innovation happens every single day at these institutions. Granted, innovation may look a bit different between a first-year bachelor of science nursing student and a third-year welding tradesperson, but the halls and classrooms throughout Lethbridge College and University of Lethbridge are full of creativity and exploratory thinking.

There are a few examples I'd like to share of our own brand of Lethbridge-based innovation. A new approach to collaboration is being introduced at the University of Lethbridge STEM Fusion Conference. The STEM Fusion Conference creates opportunities for students, faculty members, and industry leaders in science, technology, mathematics, and engineering to collaborate and share ideas. Additionally, students at STEM Fusion were introduced to different career pathways and networking opportunities. Faculty members benefited from discussing patent and intellectual property regulations with industry leaders, while those from industry were able to tap into new talent and new ideas.

Students from the University of Lethbridge have also competed in iGEM, an annual synthetic biology competition involving teams of high school and postsecondary students from around the world. iGEM projects are interdisciplinary and prompt students to think about real-world issues that science and technology can potentially solve. In 2018 the university's iGEM team developed a way to deliver small molecules to targeted cells. The team was successful enough to compete at the iGEM competition in Boston, Massachusetts, and took home a gold medal for their project. In 2019 the university team again found success at the International Genetically Engineered Machine world jamboree. The team worked on developing a form of insulin that could be taken orally, making it more affordable and easier to administer than traditional injections.

Lethbridge College is also leading the way in providing opportunities for pushing the boundaries of traditional programming. During Lethbridge College's interior design technology showcase interior design students have demonstrated how they utilize virtual reality to benefit their industry.

These examples demonstrate that the creative thinking that will lead the economic stimulation and success is already all around us, Mr. Speaker. We've only begun to empower it and enable its true

potential. The private sector and private investment are not to be feared when it comes to innovating throughout our postsecondary institutions. If an individual or a team creates an idea, product, or project that could have a positive impact on our community and our province, they should be able to pursue support for it.

5:40

Ideas and dreams can only travel so far. Tangible support and the permission to pursue research findings to their fullest extent must be implemented to keep these projects from remaining trapped on the blackboard. These ideas have the potential to change the world we live in and change the future of the world we come to. Protecting intellectual property through the elimination of barriers to its development is a necessity to facilitating the growth and expansion of innovation throughout our postsecondary sector. There are tremendous opportunities to be seized and great minds to be encouraged. To fail to recognize and protect these ideas is to fail to protect the ingenuity and innovation itself.

Mr. Speaker, in the tradition of the University of Lethbridge I leave you with their motto: *Fait Lux*. From Latin *fait lux* means let there be light. Let there be light for our academic institutions, and let this light be the reignited torch of innovation and competition, that will lead our province to prosperity and security for decades to come.

Thank you.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate on Motion 503. Of course, as many speakers have already identified, it is about "[identifying] and [eliminating] barriers to the development of intellectual property created at post-secondary institutions, teaching hospitals, and laboratories." That's sort of the first part of it.

I mean, it sort of surprises me that there is strong support for this motion. You know, I think it's a good motion, and I certainly, along with my colleagues on this side of the aisle, do support it, but it does kind of fly in the face of what is currently going on. It's like: does the government know what one hand is doing with the other parts of it? I mean, to hear the Member for Lethbridge-East talk about the glowing importance of postsecondary: does he know what we're experiencing here in Alberta currently with the devastation of the severe cuts to postsecondary?

You know, at the University of Alberta alone – and this is an institution in my riding here in Edmonton – over 1,000 people have lost their jobs. That's not just because those jobs were outdated or something. It's because this UCP government dramatically cut funding to postsecondaries. I mean, this Motion 503: sure, it's great to support the intellectual property. Certainly, people who work, who are professors, researchers at postsecondary institutions benefit from that, but, my goodness, Mr. Speaker, they're being devastated by this government with their severe cuts to post-secondary.

You know, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, who's brought this forward – in his own town of Fort McMurray Keyano College has lost 93 jobs, so they are impacted by that. So it's kind of like: which hand is leading? This is, I'd say, a pretty small move forward compared to the significant step backwards by the values of this government. Contrary, as I said before, to what the Member for Lethbridge-East just said, I don't see this as a government that's a champion for postsecondary institutions. They're devastating them.

Certainly, in my riding, actually, there are many institutions that do significant research, so this is quite important to them. The

University of Alberta is in Edmonton-Riverview. The Cross Cancer Institute is in Edmonton-Riverview. Certainly, we know that the University of Alberta, for example, is one of the top three leading research institutions concerning artificial intelligence, which is really, you know, obviously, the wave of the future. We have such cutting-edge, top-level researchers there, yet I know that they've been devastated by the cuts the UCP made to their budgets. So it kind of boggles the mind somewhat here.

I know that the Cross Cancer Institute benefited greatly from all of the grants and investments from Alberta Innovates also. I mean, my colleague earlier spoke extensively about that. They've been really decimated. They would hire top-level researchers across the country, across North America and even internationally, and they had an amazing set-up. All of these PhDs from all over the world would come and do, you know, groundbreaking research at the Cross Cancer Institute to address all sorts of different kinds of cancers that, of course, devastate and challenge us as individuals and families and society, and now that's no longer possible.

Whatever research is still continuing – of course, there's still important research going on – is greatly diminished because of this government's decision on cutting important funding to organizations like Alberta Innovates and their severe cuts to postsecondary institutions. It is kind of a bit confusing, for sure.

Another area that's also in my riding – we were all very excited about it, and there was certainly a lot of cutting-edge research that was going to come out of it – is the superlab. That's a laboratory, so I understand that that's part of this Motion 503. That was going to be, certainly, state-of-the-art leadership in labs. Of course, you know, as soon as the government was elected, they stopped that. There were already shovels in the ground. Because it's in my riding, I drive past it regularly. It was already starting to be built, and there were contracts signed. I know that the government lost millions of dollars on sort of a choice regarding how that needs to go to the private sector instead of seeing, really, what a tremendous opportunity that was to move Alberta so much further ahead. Researchers at even the University of Calgary were glowing about how excited they were about the work that the superlab would be doing. Of course, that is cut now, too.

Another organization that's in my riding is the film and audiovisual association. This is an organization that is sort of like an umbrella organization that supports people doing all sorts of videos, interactive media, digital media, and they relied heavily on the Alberta investor tax credit, Alberta Innovates funding. I think that their innovative work would have been some of what this motion is meant to support, but due again to significant cuts by this government, you know, many of them had to pack up and move away.

I remember not long ago sitting in my office with a filmmaker, and she said: I don't want to leave Alberta; I want to stay here, but it's making it impossible for me. She was thinking about moving to Manitoba because there were some supports there. She was pretty frustrated because she was in the middle of creating the film that she was working on, and all of a sudden this came down, and it became very difficult for her.

I mean, certainly, Motion 503 does do something that's important to support researchers to develop and protect their intellectual property. But guess what? We're in a situation here in Alberta where many researchers have done what this filmmaker had to do, pack up and leave, because our government has cut funding.

You know, I talked about the U of A, over a thousand jobs lost; Keyano College in Fort McMurray, 93 jobs lost. Overall there are about 3,500 jobs, even more; each day it's increasing. I mean, if the government really wants to support research in this province, if they want to make this a great place for people to develop and learn and become world-class leaders – absolutely, artificial intelligence and many other parts of our universities have leading-edge researchers that many people respect – well, then they need to invest in postsecondary. They don't need to cut postsecondary.

5:50

This motion does a small step forward, for sure, but there is, you know, a huge step back that has been created by this government, so it's like, you know, who's talking to each other? Don't they see the incongruence in what they're doing? I mean, another thing that we know in Alberta about investment and postsecondary education – and this isn't true only in Alberta; it's true everywhere – is that . . .

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt; however, the time allotted for debate of Motion 503 has elapsed, and I will call on the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to close debate. He has five minutes to do so.

Mr. Yao: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My Motion 503 is about opening the conversation and getting postsecondary institutions to reconsider their policies which may deter that culture of innovation, with the underlying thought that it's universities that take too much ownership of intellectual property.

I just want to say that I'm so surprised and so happy that the members of the opposition are supporting this motion because I thought you guys would be the other way. I thought you guys would be saying: by Stalin's grave, we're going to fight this, because the ownership should be to the institution fully and completely, and the individual should have none. Wow. Thank you, guys, for coming around. I really, really appreciate that.

We have to recognize that there's no investment in this. This is a policy change, but what this policy change does is that it invites industry and invites private individuals to work with our post-secondary institutions to research, to develop, to innovate, help our economy grow, help our people grow, and make Alberta the pinnacle of this great Confederation that we call Canada and continue to lead the way.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I simply wish to say thank you for the opportunity to introduce a motion in this House. That's what I meant: it took six years to get to this point. You're young, southwest. You'll have plenty of time to get a motion through. For some of us this could be our last kick at the can here.

I just want to say again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the honour and the privilege to be here and to speak before this fantastic audience. Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 503 carried]

The Speaker: I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, there's been some tremendous debate from all sides of the House, and I appreciate the good work done here. With only six minutes left to get into the next thing, I'd like to move that we adjourn and come back at 7:30 tonight.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:54 p.m.]

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