



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

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Day 51

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, July 27, 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 interest 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 outlined by Dr. Deena Hinshaw, please refrain from joining in 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, the only thing that could be better than that national anthem is if a hockey game was immediately to follow, but I understand that that's coming next week.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a number of guests joining us today. There are guests of the Minister of Indigenous Relations: Sherry Cunningham, the treasurer of Metis Settlements General Council.

The Minister of Labour and Immigration has guests in the gallery this afternoon: his chief of staff, Janet MacEachern; her husband, John; and Roy and Annette Kaye. Roy and Annette Kaye are the parents of designer Michael Kaye, who designed the Alberta tartan gown that is now hung in the Royal Alberta Museum.

And last but certainly not least, one of my three favourite P's on the face of the planet, my 13-year-old son, Porter Cooper, is in the Speaker's gallery.

I'd invite you all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has the call.

Bill 32 Provisions on Union Dues Utilization

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP, their union bosses, and ol' Gil are at it again. They're continuing to push their buddies across the aisle to stop this Legislature from fulfilling the promise that our government made to Albertans to restore balance

to Alberta workplaces and give workers choice. With Bill 32 our government intends to do just that.

We've talked about it before, but it is important to remind everyone why the Leader of the Opposition and her cadre of union leaders are so opposed to this legislation. It's because Bill 32 would give everyday, hard-working union members the choice on whether or not their dues will go to fund political campaigns that may go against their interests: union campaigns to oppose pipelines for oil and gas resources; campaigns to support the Venezuelan dictator, Nicolás Maduro; campaigns to support the anti-Semitic Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions, or BDS, movement; and campaigns to support the NDP and their disastrous agenda for Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, in Alberta, should Bill 32 pass, workers will finally have the opportunity to send a message to their unions that these kinds of campaigns will no longer be able to use their dues without their consent. Consent is the key here. The NDP and Gil McGowan know that they're out of touch with working Albertans, and they know that the workers of Alberta won't choose to fund their outlandish campaigns.

Albertans rejected the \$1.8 million campaign that Gil McGowan waged between 2017 and '19, a campaign with the sole purpose of attacking Albertans and supporting the re-election of the failed NDP government. In fact, we know exactly where the public is on this. Polling shows that more than 70 per cent of Canadians and more than 70 per cent of union workers oppose the use of mandatory union dues for these harmful and hurtful campaigns. This is about workers' choice. Workers shouldn't fear where their union dues go. That's why this House must support Bill 32, not for party politics but for Albertans.

School Re-entry Plan and Class Sizes

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, schools can reopen safely during COVID-19, but apparently somebody forgot to tell the government that doing so would take some investment in staffing, in PPE, and other supports. The government has openly mocked the idea of capping class sizes despite the fact that we know that Greece and Norway did exactly that when they reopened. The Minister of Education in Ontario has been clear that he expects classes will only have 15 students in them if they reopen this fall. When British Columbia opened their schools in the spring, they kept classes, at most, to 50 per cent of what they were previously. So why not here? It's because this Premier and the Minister of Education won't make it a priority.

Our Alberta NDP Official Opposition has heard from thousands of Albertans, and, Mr. Speaker, they support a cap on the number of students per class. They're also scared, scared that this government is sending them back to an unsafe situation. Making our schools safe during a global pandemic won't be easy. In fact, it may be one of the most challenging school years our province has ever seen. But why won't the government hire more staff to secure additional spaces? It's because they've prioritized a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway over the safety and well-being of our students and families. They've done virtually nothing to prepare for classes in just five weeks.

We urge them to read our report. We released it last Thursday, and there are 15 recommendations in it that would go a long way, Mr. Speaker, to making things safer. While the government may laugh at the idea of keeping children safe, we are here to fight for these kids and the staff who care for them, and we're never going to stop.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a statement to make.

Jack Lewis

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently in my area and the province we lost a pillar of our community. On May 16, 2020, John William Royal Lewis, or Jack, as he was known, passed on. In his honour I'd like to read selections out of his obituary to commemorate his life for the Assembly.

Jack was a true farmer through and through. He graduated from the Vermilion School of Agriculture in 1951, and he went on to attend the University of Alberta and graduated in '57 with a bachelor of science degree in agriculture. He received distinguished alumni awards from both his alma maters. He was proud to establish a scholarship at both institutions to support and encourage future agricultural leaders. He shared his knowledge and was a mentor to many. This includes teaching the Enoch Cree how to grow potatoes for large production in the '70s. Jack married the love of his life, Laverne, in 1956, and they continued to farm and raise their family.

Lewis Farms would later move to the Spruce Grove area and would eventually include a division in Sangudo as well. Under his guidance the farm originally grew 80 acres of seed potatoes, which was unheard of at the time. The farm now grows 500 acres of seed potatoes annually. Cattle were part of the farm from the very beginning and were originally brought in to eat the cull potatoes. Way back in the 1950s Jack showed cattle in the Toronto Royal with another long-time Edmonton family, the Secords. In large part due to Jack's efforts and skills the farm was honoured with the master farm family award in 1952 and the Northlands farm family award in 1992.

Today the farm is heavily involved in both the purebred Simmental and Angus industry, with genetics being sold locally, nationally, and internationally. This year marked the 35th annual bull sale.

Jack and Laverne moved to Stony Plain in 1992. Jack was a charter member of the Stony Plain Rotary Club and served as a president at one time. Even at the age of 88 you'd still be hard-pressed not to see Jack on the farm on a daily basis, wearing some likely tattered clothes, that big signature grin on his face. He was always happy to chat.

I was privileged to know him, even briefly, and while his loss is felt, his legacy will live on into the future through his children and grandchildren, who are still running the farm.

Thank you.

School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I spent the weekend talking to Lethbridge parents who are worried about their ability to do their own jobs and keep their children safe in schools. I heard from one mom who has a chronic health condition. She and her husband have three kids and two aging parents. She can't risk exposure to COVID-19. She has nowhere to turn for help or guidance. Here's what she says: it seems that the government is openly expecting cases to appear in schools, little being mandated to protect children with regard to physical distancing, mandatory masking, cap on class sizes, et cetera; we feel we have no choice but to keep our children home to continue with online learning although we know they suffer from lack of socialization.

1:40

Here's another Lethbridge mom, who wrote the following to the Education minister: we can have and deserve to have both safe schools and a strong economy; opening schools with such a flippant and underfunded approach to student, teacher, staff, and caretaker safety will absolutely have a ripple effect on working families and, ultimately, the economy.

Mr. Speaker, for Lethbridge, school reopening comes down to two things, choices and humanity. The Finance minister has had six months to figure out how he is going to pay for safe schools so that ordinary people can go back to work and children can go back to structured family life. Instead, the minister spent a billion dollars on potholes, \$7 billion on sweetheart loans to a profitable company for a project that will only get built if there's a Trump White House – nice friends, by the way – a minimum \$4.7 billion in tax giveaways to the already wealthy, and so on. This Finance minister is a well-connected elite himself. He is building an economy for his friends.

But there is a way to build a better recovery. It starts with focusing on the priorities of ordinary people and ensuring that children are safe. At this point this has gone beyond a question of politics. Children's lives are at risk. At this point this is a question of morality and humanity, and the government is on the wrong side of it.

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

Racism Eradication

Mr. Yaseen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on racism and how we must work together towards eradicating it. This involves more than just stating that it is wrong to discriminate against people based on the colour of their skin, their ethnicity, or faith.

Like many visible minorities, I have been a victim of racism, but I have also been welcomed and treated fairly by most. Racism, no matter the extent, is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. Mr. Speaker, if we are to eradicate racism, we need to build meaningful and social connections with others, actively listen, and truly get to know one another. In doing so, we come to realize that we really are the same. We want to be happy, and we want to belong.

Although we still have work to do, I want to acknowledge how far we have come as a province. I was appointed as Alberta's first parliamentary secretary of immigration. By just having this position, our province has made a significant step forward to a more inclusive society. During round-table discussions across Alberta for the Fair Registration Practices Act, which is about foreign credential recognition, I had the opportunity to further understand the personal struggles of newcomers to Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the Charter of Rights guarantees freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of movement. These rights must be exercised with responsibility and accountability. Our institutions must reflect our diversity and demographics based on merit. We need to question and challenge legislation like the religious symbols ban in Quebec as it demonstrates an intolerance for people of faith. We need to ensure that what happened to George Floyd in the U.S. and Ejaz Choudry in Toronto does not happen in Alberta or elsewhere. We need to be better, and we need to do better. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to tackling racism, breaking down barriers, and creating a more inclusive society for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Bill 32

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 32 is bad for every working Albertan. For anyone that works a job, the UCP's Bill 32 makes life needlessly harder. If you work in a union environment, say as a nurse helping COVID-19 patients recover or as a teacher getting ready to go back to school without sufficient pandemic supports or as a front-line grocery store clerk ensuring Albertans can buy the food they need for their families, Bill 32 attacks your union's ability

to act on your behalf, to be your voice at a time when your voice has never been more important and more required.

If your workplace does not involve unions, Bill 32 attacks you, too. It attacks your pocketbook. It gives your employer the power to pay you less: less for holidays, less for your worked overtime. If your employer cuts a deal with this Premier and his labour minister, you might even get paid less than the minimum wage. After all that, if your employer ends up terminating your position, Bill 32 allows them to hold back your final paycheque from you for longer than before. Talk about adding insult to injury. Why would a government enact such one-sided, heavy-handed labour laws? That's still a good question because the members of this UCP government have failed to provide sound reasons for these needless changes. When it comes to granting employers more power and attacking workers' rights in Alberta, the UCP motto just seems to be Never Enough.

The government would have you believe, despite a total lack of evidence, that these changes will somehow help to attract more jobs to Alberta. The government is wrong. A race to the bottom is a race with no winners. There will be no victory laps. Bill 32 should be withdrawn.

Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government recently announced new, exciting changes to EMS services across the province. These new changes replaced outdated regulations to better serve all Albertans. These adjustments will result in faster care for residents by reducing wait times in both rural and urban communities.

Emergency response times have been an ongoing issue for the residents of Highwood. With ambulances and paramedics being held up at hospitals, local wait times have continually increased. In rural Alberta 50 per cent of life-threatening calls were responded to in over 50 minutes. This is not acceptable. I made an election promise to my constituents that I would fight for change.

These updated regulations are a welcome sign to the EMS industry and will be beneficial for all of Alberta. The new changes introduced will mean faster care for residents by maximizing alternate EMS transportation like a stretcher van for nonemergent transfers. This will keep emergency ambulances available for critical situations. Under old regulations only a traditional ambulance could respond to EMS calls, even if it was just transferring a noncritical patient between two facilities.

Mr. Speaker, another important improvement coming from these new regulations is the maximizing of the roles of nurse practitioners with paramedics. Nurse practitioners will now be allowed to work as medical directors to provide real-time medical advice to paramedics during emergencies. Nurse practitioners and physicians will now be able to make important transport decisions like deciding on what type of vehicle is needed and strategically directing the destination of the patient.

Overall, this means greater flexibility to free up resources for critical and urgent care. Rural Albertans and EMS professionals have been calling for these changes for a long time. In EMS minutes and seconds matter, and these critical changes by the Minister of Health will help to improve efficiencies and emergency medical services, which will ultimately save lives.

Cargill Canada COVID-19 Outbreak and UFCW Activity

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, every worker deserves to go home safely at the end of the day, but that was not the case for the workers of Cargill. It was not the case for Hiep Bui or Benito Quesada who are no longer able to go home to their families. It was not the case for Arwyn Sallegue's father, Armando Sallegue. Cargill was the largest

single workplace outbreak in North America. It was our national shame. The provincial government has a distinct legal and moral obligation to step in when the lives of Albertans are at risk. The profits of foreign companies should be a secondary consideration. Cargill is the largest privately owned company in the U.S., and the government of Alberta was dancing to their tune.

It could've been much worse, Mr. Speaker, without the collective action of workers and the advocacy of their union. It was the advocacy and pressure brought forward by UFCW 401 that prevented more deaths. They pushed for a shutdown until it happened. The union did its job and protected workers. The government delayed and allowed the private sector to monitor themselves, which led to the infection of over 1,500 workers and three tragic deaths.

Yet now, Mr. Speaker, the government is pushing through legislation such as Bill 32 to undermine the union's ability to protect its workers. The UCP have launched a blatant attack on working people while profitable corporations and their CEOs rake in billions from the \$4.7 billion corporate handout.

I have a question for all members of this House. Without the pressure brought forward by UFCW, how many more people would have died, and why is this government taking away the power of workers to protect themselves, especially during a pandemic? We owe it to these workers to learn everything we can from this outbreak at Cargill and to prevent it from ever happening again and to always respect the lives and health of workers.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

School Re-entry Plan

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Parents across Alberta have had the weekend to soak in this Premier's school re-entry plan, and they have serious concerns. Danica Marshall has two sons, 10 and 14 years old, who will be going back. She's a science communicator who works in schools and told CBC that there are few schools in Calgary that can even accommodate six feet apart. "I'm concerned that an outbreak will occur in the school." Premier, this all boils down to an utter lack of care and attention into investing to keep our children safe. Why are you failing parents like Danica?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in fact, what we are doing is following the advice of our professional public service and the Department of Education in consultation with school boards, superintendents, the chief medical officer of health, Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services in constructing a plan to ensure that children can safely return to school this autumn. Instead, what the NDP is proposing is an absurd pie-in-the-sky fantasy to build 800 schools, 13,000 classrooms, and hire 13,000 teachers at a cost of several billion dollars over the next 30 days.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not true.

But on the matter of 13,000 teachers, I would have thought that firing 20,000 EAs over Twitter on a Saturday afternoon was impossible, but apparently if there's a will, there's a way. The problem is that when it comes to protecting our kids, there is no will. Here's a math problem for the Premier: 11-year-old Johnny rides a bus with 30 kids then spends all day in class with 35 kids plus a teacher plus an EA, if he's lucky, in a 9-by-7-metre classroom; if he has COVID-19 and sneezes once, how many people are at risk of infection?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, 20,000 EAs were not fired. I will remind the leader of the NDP that in her four years in office every June she laid off the same number of people at the end of the school year. The end of the school year came earlier; it came in March for the operation of our schools. She is now trying to mislead parents in a cynical effort to create fear where instead we should be listening to the advice of our public health officials to create confidence. The NDP is proposing an absurd plan that would have us build 13,000 classrooms in the next four weeks. It's ridiculous.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, our absurd plan is the same plan as Norway and Denmark and all of the places that have actually managed to do this successfully.

Now, the Premier talks about the chief medical officer of health, but here's the thing: anyone with eyes in their head knows that her recommendations cannot be followed in the school setting that exists, and it's ludicrous to think that they can. There is not enough space. Now, Dr. Hinshaw doesn't make budget decisions. She doesn't make decisions about enrolment funding. She doesn't set class sizes. Why won't the Premier admit that it's actually that government, his government, that is disrespecting Dr. Hinshaw by failing to make these proper decisions?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it's regrettable but entirely predictable to see the divisive NDP seeking to undermine the advice that the government has received from the chief medical officer of health which we have followed throughout the pandemic, not only the chief medical officer but in this instance superintendents, school boards, school councils. I understand that they are so angry that they're trying to mislead parents. There is no real world in which we can build 13,000 classrooms and hire 13,000 teachers in a month. It's just made up.

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

Ms Notley: Well, there are real countries all over the world that are investing more. Only here are they doing it with not a single extra cent.

Bill 32

Ms Notley: Now, this Premier is already being sued by doctors, who are under attack, vulnerable youth losing benefits, heck, even by his friends at the justice centre, and next up: Alberta workers. Today we learned that 25 public- and private-sector unions are planning to sue them over Bill 32. The bill ends overtime, lowers workplace standards, makes authoritarian moves against unions by hurting their ability to represent their members. Premier, why are the rights of working people always your number one target?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, last week she described referendums as antidemocratic. This week she is describing empowering ordinary union members to opt out of political activity as being authoritarian. It's the exact opposite. Just as referendums are quintessentially democratic, so is empowering union members to say no to having their union dues used against them to campaign against pipelines. According to one poll 76 per cent of union members in Alberta support that. We listened to them. The NDP's approach on this is authoritarian, and ours is democratic.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it is not democratic to use the authority of this Legislature to try to silence people who disagree with the Premier. That is the opposite of democratic, and he is making a gross mistake if he thinks that Albertans are actually buying what he's trying to sell right now. He's effectively trying to

muzzle hundreds of thousands of public-sector workers right before they go into collective bargaining. To put it another way: the Premier is cutting the phone lines before breaking into the house. Why is he so scared of the voices of working people?

Mr. Kenney: As is so often the case with the NDP, the opposite is the truth, Mr. Speaker. What she refers to as silencing and muzzling – let's get this. What are we actually talking about? A provision in the bill that gives ordinary union members the ability to decide themselves whether or not their forced dues will be used in campaigns that can be against their interest, but what the NDP wants is to force Unifor members to campaign against pipelines by supporting Unifor and the AFL. They want to force Jewish union members of Unifor to campaign against Israel. They want to force Venezuelan refugees to campaign in favour of that regime.

Ms Notley: What the bill does is that it makes it so that workers have no say in their overtime arrangement, and it allows for overtime hours to be averaged over a year. This is going to cost regular, working folks, folks in the construction industry, thousands and thousands of dollars every year, and it's what this Premier wants to do. This has nothing to do with union advertising. This has nothing to do with that. Why is the Premier working so hard to take away overtime from the very people who really are working so hard?

Mr. Kenney: She's got to stick to her story, Mr. Speaker. For the first two questions it was all about union advertising, but now that I've reminded her that those unions advertise against pipelines and force pipeline workers to fund them, those unions advertise against Israel and force Jewish members to fund them, those unions advertise in favour of the Venezuelan social dictatorship and force Venezuelan refugees to fund them, she says that we want to give them no say. The exact opposite is the truth. When they vote against Bill 32, they will be voting against giving those union members a say in how their dues are spent.

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

Minimum Wage

Ms Notley: I wonder when the Premier is going to give shareholders the same right to hold CEOs accountable for the things they say to their detriment. Oh, wait a minute. Never. Now, quote, a UCP government "will retain the general \$15 minimum wage." Mr. Speaker, this promise is in every version of the Premier's platform. He broke the promise once for young people. Now Bill 32 gives the labour minister the power to exempt groups of workers and even economic sectors from the minimum wage. When asked last week if that's what he's going to do, the minister was, well, evasive at best. Can the Premier today commit that he will not roll back the minimum wage for individual workplaces, groups of . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, she says that shareholders may object to a position of a business – absolutely – in which case they can sell their shares. But under Canadian law if they quit their union in an organized workplace, they lose their job. That's the NDP's answer to my friend, a Venezuelan refugee. He better just suck it up and pay for Unifor's pro-Chávez, pro-Maduro campaign. I know why the NDP supports that, because they support that regime, too. I'm sorry. We stand for parents of faith who refuse, through their dues, to fund Mr. McGowan's . . .

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's efforts to distract have just hit a new high there. This is about getting a straight answer to the issue of the minimum wage.

Now, this Premier struck a panel. He stacked it against Albertans. The panel included a whole bunch of representatives from Restaurants Canada. All the workers on the panel worked for Restaurants Canada. One of them was a family member of the board member. Premier, are you going to lower the wages of servers, the people hurt hardest by this pandemic, just to please your friends at Restaurants Canada? Yes or no?

Mr. Kenney: Well, you know the NDP. They hate oil and gas companies, they hate coal mining companies, they don't like forestry companies, Mr. Speaker, and now they hate restaurants as well, the largest employers in the entire service industry, that create hundreds of thousands of entry-level jobs for young people, for single moms. But you know what? Twenty-five thousand of those workers lost their jobs because the NDP raised the minimum wage by 50 per cent in the middle of a job-killing recession, which they helped to create. Those workers are still waiting for an apology from the NDP.

Ms Notley: I will not now or ever apologize for raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour so that hard-working single mothers can potentially avoid a trip to the food bank on the way home.

I am now asking this Premier: did he or did he not mislead Albertans when he told them that he wouldn't touch the minimum wage? Will he protect it, or is he going to go after those hard-working single mothers, who need every cent they earn?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, once again I'll refer the NDP leader back to our platform.

But you know what she did in her economic incompetence and hard-heartedness? [interjection] Oh, she's angry still that she lost the election, Mr. Speaker. You know what she did? I'll tell you. There are 25,000 typically younger Albertans, including single moms, who are still angry with the NDP because they went from a decent job to zero dollars an hour. That's what the NDP did by causing the layoff of some 25,000 people, primarily in the service sector, just one example of the gross economic incompetence of the NDP.

School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding

Ms Hoffman: Alberta mom Joanna Cameron wrote to the Premier and said, quote, you tried to reassure parents across the province that schools can operate safely with little health risk for children and teachers and cited examples from Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, and Austria, but you failed to mention that almost every one of the countries did not see an uptick in child infections because they put a strict cap on the number of students in class. End quote. To the Premier: will you explain to Joanna and countless other parents why you continue to ignore the evidence that capping class sizes to curb COVID-19 works?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it takes a lot of chutzpah for the hyperpartisan Member for Edmonton-Glenora to imagine that she knows more about public health than the chief medical officer and Alberta Health Services. It takes a lot of ignorance on her part to ignore the successful experience of Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and Japan, who continue to operate schools in their normal fashion without outbreaks. It's time for the member

opposite to stop scaring parents and to start listening to the public health experts.

Ms Hoffman: I worked with Dr. Hinshaw, and I have tremendous respect for her and her advice. That's why recommendation 15 in the report, Premier, is for you to actually table it all, not filter it before you communicate to the public what you want to have heard. In terms of Greece, Norway, and Ontario, they all brought in this cap size.

What about teacher Christine Hutchinson who wrote asking: are teachers expected to take on additional custodian duties in addition to their roles as educators to ensure that spaces are cleaned regularly? Premier, there are 50,000 teachers, including Christine, who are supposed to act as teacher, custodian, and now doctor, too. How is that fair?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, once again, the schools are funded at their highest level in history. They are the most expensive schools in Canada on a per capita basis. This government is adding \$120 million in operational funds to the school boards in addition to a quarter of a billion dollars in capital improvements, which include upgrades that help in the COVID environment. The school boards have \$300 million in reserves that they can use in part to hire additional janitorial services. We would expect all the staff in any workplace to help to tidy up, just as we do around here.

Ms Hoffman: To tidy up? Premier, we're talking about keeping kids safe. We're talking about making sure classrooms are sterilized. We're talking about kids' and teachers' lives. Step up and do your job.

Lisa Rondonsky wrote, quote, as a former supporter of the Premier and your party I'm appalled by the complete lack of consideration for Alberta's teachers and students as we move forward this fall; after watching your government pour money into the oil and gas industry over the course of this pandemic and zero dollars invested in improving the safety for Alberta schools, it speaks volumes about your government's priorities, end quote. To the Premier: will you answer Lisa's inquiry? Why won't you step up and invest in our kids? [interjection]

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I haven't even said a word, and the NDP leader is already heckling. That's her regard for the civility of this place. By the way, a moment ago she asked if I've ever been into a classroom. Of course I have. In fact, my dad was a teacher and a principal. [interjection] Oh, she just – you know what? Here's the reality. They just said no money. A hundred and twenty million dollars in additional operating support, a quarter of a billion dollars in additional capital infrastructure. They're angry with the advice of our public health officials, that we are following carefully to ensure the safe reopening. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Grande Prairie has the call.

NHL Hub City of Edmonton

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, hockey is back. The NHL is resuming, and the playoffs are going to be happening right here in Edmonton, including the Stanley Cup final. Yesterday Edmonton saw hundreds of NHL players from the western conference entering the downtown bubble where they'll be quarantining before the playoffs begin. The selection of Edmonton as a playoff hub is a large marketing advantage for our province, but there are other advantages as well to being a hub city. Can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism tell this

Chamber how many jobs the playoffs are expected to create right here in Edmonton?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It's true that the selection of Edmonton as a hub for the NHL will be a fantastic marketing opportunity for our province and our capital, but it will also be a driver for the creation of between 1,500 and 1,900 jobs in Edmonton. The majority of those will be in the accommodation and food services sector, which has been hit very hard by the pandemic, along with health care, arts, and entertainment. We welcome the NHL to Edmonton and the jobs they are creating here and now.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has the call.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given the enthusiasm for hockey in Alberta and certainly in my home constituency of Grande Prairie, it's great to see that the NHL will be hiring Albertans as we host the playoffs. Given that the playoffs will take place over months, putting the spotlight on Edmonton and bringing a big advantage to the city, and given that this will also bring Alberta to the forefront of the global stage, benefiting Albertans through economic activity in many sectors across the province, can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism speak to more of the economic benefits Edmonton will gain from hosting the NHL playoffs here?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member. Edmonton and Alberta are going to be the focus of global attention, and that will bring great advantages beyond the beautiful sights and scenery of our province as well as job creation and economic activity. Sectors across the economy will see activity and sales, providing a much-needed morale and economic boost to our provincial economy. My department projects that hosting the playoffs will add around \$40 million to our provincial GDP and between \$47 million and \$69 million in sales for businesses, with the majority of that in Edmonton.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given the obvious advantages that the playoffs will provide to the province and to Edmonton in particular in job creation and economic activity and given that though we have launched our economic recovery plan, our first priority will always be and remain the health and safety of Albertans, further given our commitment to public safety as we relaunch and the tremendous work of Albertans to flatten the curve and keep each other safe across this province, to the Minister of Health: can you tell us what measures are being taken to ensure we are keeping the public safe during and throughout the playoffs?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are very happy to receive from the Edmonton Oilers group and then from the NHL, including submissions from the players' association as well, a plan that they had. The ministry, including Dr. Hinshaw, then worked with them to be able to refine the guidelines that they were proposing to us. That included Dr. Hinshaw's condition that the

teams act as a cohort. That means that they're isolated from the larger community here in Edmonton and monitoring themselves throughout the process. As well, we made sure that the teams and the NHL have, outside of AHS, the ability to test themselves.

School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding (continued)

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, this Finance minister has had six months to figure out how he's going to pay for the capital costs of extra portables and space, the operational costs of extra staffing in schools. Instead, he found a billion dollars for potholes but nothing for capping class sizes for kids; my kids, other Albertans' kids. I spent my weekend on the phone with moms who are worried about their children in crowded classrooms. I am going to channel their frustration with this Finance minister's choices. Here is their question: how can this Finance minister, a wealthy, well-connected elite himself, justify all kinds of money, billions in fact, for other well-connected elites, but he . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier. [interjections]

Order. You are allotted your time. I encourage you to use it wisely. The Premier is allotted his time, and he can use it now.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to respond to the Member for Lethbridge-West. Her so-called plan for school reopening involves creating 13,000 classrooms, building 800 new schools, hiring 13,000 new teachers in the next month. This is not about spending more money. That is about a cloud-cuckoo-land fantasy. The NDP plan for the schools reopening is not a plan to reopen the schools; it's a plan to keep them shut.

The Speaker: I reiterate to the member that you're welcome to be as frustrated as you'd like, you just need to do it in 35 seconds. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

2:10

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Finance minister and this Premier have had six months to bring forward a decent and thoughtful plan for how to pay for investment in education so that we parents can get back to work. A decent, thoughtful, empathetic plan. But given that this Finance minister hasn't done that but has found \$4.7 billion to give away to profitable corporations, why does this government have billions to build an economy for well-connected, wealthy insiders, but not a dime to keep children healthy so that ordinary people can go back to work? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I thank the voice of empathy opposite, Mr. Speaker. I would point out that \$120 million is a lot of pennies in additional operating spending. A quarter of a billion dollars is a lot of pennies when it comes to capital spending, but let's talk about reality. What the NDP is proposing as a reopening plan, capping classes to 15, would require that 800 new schools and 13,000 new classrooms be built in the next month. Here's the point; here's the truth: they don't want the schools open. They want to keep them closed, and that's what their plan represents. Shame on them.

Ms Phillips: Given that as a parent, Mr. Speaker, I can reliably report to this Premier that I want my kids in school, but I don't want them to put their grandparents' health at risk when they do so and some empathy here would be great for the parents that are so worried about their own children's safety, will the Finance minister or the Premier – sure – agree that refusing to pay for safe schools is now far beyond a question of politics? We have now moved to a

question of basic morality and decency, and this government is on the wrong side of it.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, once again, this government is providing an additional \$120 million in operating support for the school system, a quarter of a billion dollars in capital support, including to address COVID-related issues, releasing \$36 million in school board reserves to help pay for additional costs. Of course, if the chief medical officer of health comes forward with additional recommendations to ensure the safe operation of schools, this government will implement those and fully fund them. But the NDP does not have a plan to reopen the schools. They have a plan to keep the schools shut, because we cannot build 800 schools in the next month.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted.

But I would also provide a cautionary note to members of the opposition that if you're using unparliamentary language or calling individuals inside this House names, that would be inappropriate and unparliamentary even if it is not on the record.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a question.

Bill 32 Overtime Pay Provisions

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When the UCP government promised to stand up for our oil and gas industry, Albertans assumed that they would stand up for more than just the corporate shareholders and defending higher corporate dividends. This government's heartless Bill 32 will hurt the men and women working in the field to keep our oil and gas industry going during this pandemic. Bill 32 lets their bosses take their overtime, cut their pay, and lets it happen without the workers' consent. Can the minister of labour share why he's taking away the voices of oil and gas workers when it comes to their overtime?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our focus is on restoring balance to Alberta's labour laws, reducing red tape, and getting Albertans back to work. The allegations made by the other side, that we're eliminating overtime, are simply incorrect. We are making changes to averaging arrangements. These were in place prior to the previous ill-thought-out bill that the government put in place, which put in a significant number of rules and made it more difficult for nonstandard schedules like 14 days on, 14 days off. This bill reduces those rules so we can get Albertans, including those in our oil patch, back to work.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, Bill 32 allows employers to decide if – if – overtime is paid, and given that many oil and gas workers are exempt from workday and overtime rules and given that Bill 32 gives their employers the ability to dictate without consent how their overtime hours will be arranged over a full calendar year and given that this Premier promised during the election that he would not touch workers' overtime, it looks like another broken promise. Minister, why are you attacking the overtime of oil and gas workers? Why don't you value the work they do for all of us?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is simply incorrect. The rules around overtime for those working regular-schedule hours don't change: over 8 hours a day, 44 hours a week. For those in special agreements and special arrangements, such as we are changing, that used to be in place under the compressed work week, the 44 hours per week on average remains. That was in

place prior to Bill 17, that the previous government put in place. They kept it in place, and we are keeping it in place with the changes we are making. We are reducing the red tape for employers because we want to get Albertans back to work.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the minister left out a word: special imposed arrangements on average across a year. Given that the NDP government valued the contribution of workers, which is why we made sure workers had a say in their overtime and contracts, and given that Bill 32 could result in workers in the oil and gas sector receiving zero overtime pay even if they are working hours above eight in a given day and in the more dangerous conditions created by COVID-19 and given that the minister also stands by a \$4.7 billion corporate handout that has not created a single, solitary job, Minister: you've decided that a pandemic was the best time to silence the voices of workers and slash overtime? Really?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as indicated before, the suggestions that they're making about overtime and that this bill will eliminate it are simply incorrect. Our focus is on restoring balance for Alberta labour laws, reducing red tape, and getting Albertans back to work. The NDP passed labour legislation that tilted the scales towards their union allies and imposed costs on job creators, driving billions of dollars of investment and jobs out of this province. We are reversing this. Bill 32 is a key component of that. We are going to get Albertans back to work.

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

School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding (continued)

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has announced a plan for re-entry into schools for this fall. While I think that it is a well-thought-out plan that will help our students to learn in the best possible environment, and studies have shown that students perform best in the classroom, I've received some concerns from some of my constituents about what happens when a student is in between a COVID test. To the Education minister: if a student or a teacher develops any symptoms and is required to take a test, are they required to stay home until that negative test result is in?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day before school students and staff are expected to complete a screening questionnaire. If they feel unwell, they are required to stay home. If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, a public health team will investigate to determine when symptoms developed and will support the school to minimize transmission. Parents will be notified if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed at school, and public health officials will contact those who were in close contact with that person. We have processes in place, and we will do whatever we can to ensure a safe return to school.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the safety of our students and teachers should be our number one priority and given that some of our constituents who are parents are concerned about the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and given that these parents are starting to help their

children prepare for back to school in September, can the Minister of Education please explain how the government is communicating information so parents and students can be prepared for a safe return to school, and will there be an online option available?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education has the call.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a mother and a grandmother I certainly understand that parents may seem concerned. We have developed a re-entry tool kit to prepare parents and students for what to expect in the new school year. The tool kit includes videos for our students, explaining some of the health measures, a guide for parents, facts, links to health guidelines, and a self-screening questionnaire. We are doing everything we can to prepare our students and their families for the upcoming school year and look forward to welcoming them back this September.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that our government has promised an additional \$15 million to help with COVID-related equipment such as touchless sinks, towel dispensers, and hand sanitizer stations as well as other infrastructure that will aid in COVID support such as touchless doors and given that some schools have more of these upgrades to make than others, especially in rural Alberta, to the Minister of Education: how is this money being divided up, and who will be responsible for the installation process of these amenities?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of Alberta's recovery plan we announced \$250 million of accelerated funding in capital maintenance and renewal funds for our schools across this province; \$15 million of this \$250 million was utilized for COVID-19-related infrastructure upgrades. My department worked with each school division to identify work-ready projects, and we anticipate that the majority of them will be completed by October. This funding will help support hundreds of projects and will create about 3,750 jobs across Alberta.

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

2:20

Mask Policies

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's time for the Minister of Health to step up and show some leadership. Municipalities are struggling with mandatory mask policies, and they're making decisions in the dark without the benefit of expertise and information that is in the Ministry of Health. They're doing this because this minister has decided to duck his responsibilities. It's a cowardly decision and one that does not befit any minister during a pandemic. To the minister: why are you shirking your responsibilities and making municipal leaders accountable for mandatory mask policy decisions that they should not be forced to make?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all have a personal responsibility to reduce our risk of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19. To quote Dr. Hinshaw, though, you can't enforce your way out of a pandemic, and the vast majority of Albertans don't need to be told to do the right thing. End quote. Medical experts strongly recommend that Albertans wear a mask in situations where distancing is not an option for them, and we support that. We've backed up that advice by providing two distributions of a total of

40 million masks, including 2 million masks in particular to the city of Calgary to help them and their transit riders.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that COVID numbers are rising and given that the Minister of Health has all the expertise and information at his disposal to determine whether localized mandatory mask policies would be helpful or necessary and given that during this pandemic we've already seen him take such geographically distinct action and given that this minister has over 80,000 health professionals at his disposal to help make the best decisions, why has this minister taken the cowardly action of downloading responsibility to municipal leaders when it's literally in his job description to make the tough decisions to keep Albertans safe during this pandemic?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I find it incredibly disappointing that the Official Opposition continues to attack the medical advice that we're getting from our chief medical officer of health, Dr. Hinshaw. They continue to attack the independence of Dr. Hinshaw, calling her advice to us political. I won't stand for it any longer. This is a time when we need every legislator in this room to be able to stand up and encourage Albertans to listen to our medical professionals and to listen to their advice and listen to their guidelines, not to attack their independence. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West knows that it would be unparliamentary to say: no; we are attacking you. I would encourage him not to do that in the future.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister has spent months attacking the credibility and independence of doctors in the province of Alberta and given that St. Albert Mayor Cathy Heron recently stated that devolving responsibility to municipalities would lead to a lot of confusion and poor buy-in and given that this Minister of Health oversees a ministry with \$20 billion worth of resources, expertise, and information and given that ducking his responsibility to make important health decisions puts lives at risk, sows confusion, and jeopardizes the economic security of Albertans, to the minister: why won't you step up, do your job, show some leadership, and personally make the tough decisions on mandatory mask policies?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, our leadership is going to be listening to our medical professionals, listening to the chief medical officer of health. It's what we've done through our response to this pandemic. It's what we're going to continue to do. We're not going to attack her independence. We're not going to question her independence. We're not going to sow questions among Albertans about the guidelines and the medical advice that she's providing this government. It's shameful that this opposition continues to do that with her medical advice.

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

Support for Postsecondary Students

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First-year students at the universities of Alberta, Calgary, Lethbridge, Mount Royal will be paying up to \$2,000 more for living in apartment-style residences this fall. Institutions say that this is to keep the dorms safe during COVID-19, which is perfectly fine, but where is this government to help students out? Handing an unexpected \$2,000 bill to students is just

plain wrong. The UCP government needs to follow B.C. and Ontario to make additional emergency financial aid available to students. Minister, will you do the right thing and provide additional resources to postsecondary students?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to talk about some of the things that we're doing to help students during these difficult times. Of course, we've given students deferrals on student interest payments to help them during this COVID-19 challenge. As well, we've announced an increase to the apprenticeship award to help unemployed apprentices get back to school and find new opportunities. We'll be doing this as we seek to strengthen and improve our postsecondary system, making sure that we always have, of course, the students and the students' interests at the center of our decision-making.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that some students may not have a choice, but they must live in a student residence and given that they were likely planning their very tight budgets at one rate for residences, and now they face thousands of dollars more in costs and given that emergency financial aid distributed through universities is something that almost all other provinces have allocated additional funds for because of the pandemic, Minister, is it too much to try to work through with postsecondary students? Explain to these students why you won't throw a dollar of support their way during this unprecedented global pandemic.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member opposite wasn't listening, but I just talked about some of the financial elements that we've introduced to help students during these challenging times. Let's not lose sight of what's most important during these uncertain times. Students need job opportunities so that they can help pay for their studies and account for their expenses, and we're doing that with our ambitious recovery plan to help get individuals back to work and restart our economy. I know the members opposite don't want to see that, but we are interested in stimulating economic growth, building, and diversifying. Again, that will help our students when they have job prospects.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that due to this government's heartless cuts to student grants, some of the most financial vulnerable families are left with \$6,000 less while budgeting for increased tuition costs and given that thousands of students have signed a petition asking for the government to reverse the heartless cuts, Minister, 10,000 signatures on multiple petitions asking you to put on a tuition freeze and thousands more asking you to reverse cuts to student grants. How many more petitions must there be until you start advocating on behalf of our students?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, we are advocating for students, and we are advocating with their best interests in mind. At the end of the day our students need to know that they have certainty over job outcomes, and that is why we are taking action to ensure that our students graduate with the skills and competencies that they need to find rewarding careers. That is our focus. We want to ensure that we set our students up for success, and we will.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Addiction Treatment and Recovery

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The business community in Edmonton's Chinatown continues to face social issues like

homelessness and addiction unseen to the extent in the rest of the city. These issues have been compounded by the placement of three supervised consumption sites within only a few blocks of each other. The business community feels that they weren't properly consulted on the placement of these sites. While they want to see people get healthy, they don't believe it should be at their expense and their safety. To the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: what are you going to do to listen to the Chinese business community, who was closed out of consultations under the previous government?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the other member for advocating for the Edmonton Chinatown community. Our government struck an expert panel, and we listened to 19,000 Albertans, including the Edmonton Chinatown community. We consulted with those that the previous government ignored. They heard the input; it was loud and clear. The current system, as it is, is a system of chaos. We're going to clean up the mess that the NDP left for us. We're creating new funding for detox, funding new treatment, and funding recovery. We're going to get Albertans out . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that only some users have sought help beyond the supervised consumption site for their addictions and that many of the users have been stuck in place with the Chinatown community with no support to seek a full recovery and that supervised consumption sites cannot stand alone as the sole pillar of focus in the fight against addiction, to the associate minister: what is your plan to help move people beyond supervised consumption sites and into recovery and treatment long-term, particularly in the Chinatown area, so that those suffering from addiction will be able to move onwards towards life and recovery?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Great question. Our government focuses on recovery. We focus on building a full continuum of care to open up the accessibility for Albertans who can get out of addiction into recovery. Just two weeks ago we announced \$25 million to build five recovery communities throughout the province. That, by the way, is a 30 per cent increase to the current capacity. We announced the first one in Red Deer. Just last Saturday we announced the Blood Tribe for the second one and Lethbridge county for the third one. We're rapidly building capacity. We're helping Albertans get out of addiction.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that many of the businesses in Chinatown have a great number of customers who are uncomfortable or afraid to enter the community with the increase in the drug activity and that both those businesses and their customers have a right to feel safe along with the community's residents and that the recent review of the consumption sites found that in Edmonton one police officer observed an addicted individual with needles and drugs injecting himself only a few feet away from grade 4 and grade 6 students where they were playing and that police services are having difficulty dealing with the situations

that are arising, to the minister: what solution do we have to assist in making this important community feel safe again?

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

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that important question. We're providing resources to the Alberta law enforcement response teams to make sure that we can go after organized crime, which is putting drugs on our streets. On top of that, we're working closely with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to expand the reach of drug treatment courts. We've already doubled the capacity of the one here in Edmonton. We've doubled the one in Calgary. We've opened up a new drug treatment court in Lethbridge and Red Deer, and there are more to come. Drug treatment courts give people that are suffering with addictions the opportunity to recover. It's a tough process for them – it holds them accountable – but it works, and it saves lives.

2:30 School Re-entry Plan and Hands-on Learning

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, more than 740,000 Alberta students are expected to go back to near-normal learning in the new school year, and this is being done despite not a single additional operating dollar being offered by this UCP government. Students learning music will suffer a great deal, likely without additional supports. We know, for instance, that singing can spread COVID-19. To the Minister of Education: have you sought out assistance or feedback from the Alberta Band Association or other music educators on how to assist teachers and administrators? If not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our comprehensive school re-entry plan is designed to bring our students and our staff back in a safe matter. There are guidelines for all of these particular issues, even the one the member opposite has spoken about. Unlike the NDP, we have a realistic plan, which has been developed with the input of the chief medical officer as well as the education system. What I think they're really upset about is the fact that the ATA does not support their fantasy plan. In fact, Jonathan Tegtmeyer, the ATA spokesperson, said, and I quote: the hard cap of 15 students . . .

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

Ms Goehring: Given that students learning arts or drama, auto mechanics, shop – you name it – typically interact with each other directly and given that social distancing in these types of classes could be extremely tough and given that the province has provided no specific guidelines or funding for personal protective equipment for students and staff in these types of settings, to the minister: are these types of classes supposed to be cancelled? Where can educators turn to for help? We can't find anything you've done to help them so far.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the ATA dismissed the NDP's fantasy plan. In fact, Jonathan Tegtmeyer, the ATA spokesperson, said: "The hard cap of 15 students proposed by the NDP is probably unachievable. Availability of teachers and classroom space would be an issue." There's only one plan that's been approved and endorsed by health care experts and the education system, and that's the one I introduced on June 10.

Ms Goehring: Given that the province is currently seeing some of the highest rates of COVID-19 infection in the country and given that there are obvious gaps, massive gaps in this UCP government's school reopening plan and given that one area that's so essential to many students that is being completely ignored is for those teachers and students taking classes in music and the arts, to the minister: will you provide more guidance for music teachers, art teachers, and many other teachers who rely on hands-on learning to prepare our students for success? When? The clock is ticking.

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. All of that is in our re-entry plan. As I've said on many occasions – I'll be happy to repeat it again – our education system has an additional \$120 million being allocated in the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, there's \$250 million in accelerated capital maintenance, which includes an additional \$15 million used for COVID-related expenses. There's an additional \$363 million in reserves that are usable for school divisions. I continue to work with school divisions and address their needs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has a question.

Antiracism Strategy

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is failing Albertans: it's economic relaunch strategy is a failure, they failed to appoint marginalized communities to its panel, and they have been silent on how to fight racism in Alberta. A quick Google search of the Alberta government's antiracism response shows only initiatives started by the previous NDP government. One of those initiatives, the Anti-Racism Advisory Council, does not seem to even be meeting now. To the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: why are you disregarding consulting the council, and why has your website on the council not even operated in over a year?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that the member may be mistaken. As he knows, the council has actually met twice and, in fact, will be having two more meetings over this summer. They've been asked to be broken into subgroups in order to bring forward initiatives, in order to be able to really help out with a lot of the work that's going on in this province right now. In fact, I would have to suggest that many of the initiatives that have been brought forward by Justice, by the Ministry of Children's Services, by the Ministry of Community and Social Services have been way above anything that the NDP did. They started this, they didn't finish it, and now they're trying to find out where we're going.

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

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it has been two years since the last Taking Action Against Racism report was first released under the previous NDP government and given that a large part of the report highlighted the need for community grants to support grassroots initiatives and research into collecting race-based data to better understand racism in Alberta, to the Premier: why should Albertans trust that you're addressing racism in this

province when all your government has done was roll back what the council had recommended two years ago?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, I am actually very, very grateful for this question. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that when the action against racism document came out, it actually took the NDP a year and a half to do it? In fact, it was in the newspaper at that time – and I'm happy to table the document – that it took them a year and a half. Do you know that the former Minister of Education said: "It fell off the radar. We're not quite sure what happened to it"? Interestingly enough, our platform commitments are actually very – the action against racism document is very aligned with our platform commitments of making sure that we're honouring professional protocols in this province and making sure that we're working with our immigrants there.

Mr. Deol: Given that one of the council's recommendations within their 2018 report, page 18, clearly outlines the need to fight hate propaganda and hate-motivated crimes in Alberta and given that one of the Premier's closest staffers, his speech writer Paul Bunner, is a well-documented writer and producer of racist anti-indigenous propaganda, to the Premier: why is it that funding to support initiatives like the decades-old Alberta Hate Crimes Committee has been cut but Paul Bunner is still being funded by my tax dollars? When will you fire Paul Bunner?

Mrs. Aheer: I'm just curious. Is Gil McGowan going to get fired, Mr. Speaker, from – as I understand, he has to have a part in actually creating policy by the NDP, and I believe that he actually called our families nutbars for wanting to send their children to religious schools and also referred to our caucus as I believe it was Nazis. I believe it was also one of their members that referred to our Minister of Municipal Affairs as white supremacist. I'm not quite sure where they're going with this, but one thing I will say is that hate cannot prevent hate; only love can. This is the way that we go. We work with all our beautiful communities to make sure that we make a difference.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River is rising with a question.

Postsecondary Education Review

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people of Peace River prize our education highly. We understand that not only for personal growth it's important, but for a growing economy in Alberta, we need to have a successful education system preparing Albertans for the future. Recently the Minister of Advanced Education made an announcement on a new review, Alberta 2030: transforming postsecondary education. To the Minister of Advanced Education: can you tell members of this House what the main objectives of this review are and how you plan to accomplish them?

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

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the important question. Indeed, during these difficult times, as we move forward with Alberta's economic recovery, it is essential that we remove unnecessary duplication from our system, develop stronger partnerships between postsecondary education and industry, and as well ensure that we are building a highly skilled and competitive workforce. Our students expect that upon graduating, they are able to find rewarding and successful careers, and our review is oriented to help achieve that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that this is the first review of its kind in over 10 years and given that students graduating from high school in my constituency and across the province will be attending Alberta's polytechnical institutes, our colleges, or universities and given that highly qualified individuals are in huge demand in constituencies like mine, the economic engine of Alberta in the rural north, can the minister please explain to the members of this House what problems you're trying to solve and how you plan to do that?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education has the call.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of challenges we're trying to address, of course, with this review. We know we have a lagging postsecondary participation rate in the province. As well, we have a system that lacked strategic direction for well over a decade, including, of course, under the tenure of the former government. Previous governments left our postsecondary system without an overall vision. This review will help establish a vision and strategic direction for our postsecondary system so that we can be clear about where we're going and have a clear understanding of how we're going to get there.

2:40

The Speaker: Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that this kind of review is obviously going to require stakeholder input and consultation from students, faculties, and postsecondary education and given that past governments have failed to consult on everything from agriculture to education and given that advanced education holds so much important strategic value for Alberta's future generations, can the minister please tell this House how he plans to consult with Albertans?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member. We will indeed be building this vision of the future of postsecondary education together with our stakeholders and with all Albertans. Over the next few months key stakeholders within the postsecondary world can look to have an opportunity to engage through one-on-one interviews, through round-tables, workshops, or even looking at a number, of course, of online mechanisms to solicit the input and feedback of students, faculty, and Albertans at large. I can assure you that as we engage during this important work, we will do so with extensive consultation.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose has a statement to make.

Rosemary Imlah

Ms. Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with great sorrow to bring to the attention of the House the passing of Rosemary Imlah after a courageous battle with cancer. Rosemary was a familiar figure to many in Flagstaff. As clan chieftain for the Flagstaff Scottish Club, Rosemary was a pillar of the popular

Robbie Burns nights and the two clan gatherings hosted by the Flagstaff Scottish Club in Sedgewick over the past two years.

In 1956 Rosemary's soon-to-be husband, John, immigrated to Canada from Scotland, with Rosemary joining him just two years later, in 1958, at the young age of 20. Since immigrating, she maintained her Scottish heritage with great pride and passion. Rosemary joined the Royal Canadian Legion in Sedgewick, where her son Grant was already a member, and it was through the legion that she became involved in the Robbie Burns nights. Rosemary was extremely honoured to be named clan chieftain of the Flagstaff Scottish Club and represented it at the first and second Gathering of the Clans Highland Festival in 2018 and 2019 in Sedgewick. Her passion for her Scottish heritage was embraced by her son, daughter-in-law, grandson, and granddaughter, all who are involved with the club.

Now, on a more personal note, Rosemary and I became fast friends. At every event she had a place for me beside her. In fact, just over two weeks ago I met with her and presented her with a certificate in recognition of her achievements. My heart aches at the news of her loss. However, I know she is now at peace and is reunited with her husband, John. She will never be forgotten, and her legacy will live on forever. [Remarks in Gaelic]

May her soul rest in peace. [As submitted]

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has a notice of motion.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of several motions. First, I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 33, to be put on the Order Paper in my name.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 30, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 34, to be put on the Order Paper in my name.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 30, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 35 to also be put on the Order Paper in my name.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 36, also in my name.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 37, also to be put on the Order Paper in my name.

Be it resolved that a special sitting of the Assembly be held on Thursday, August 27, 2020, for the purpose of receiving and holding a debate on the government of Alberta's 2020-21 first-quarter fiscal and economic update and that on that day

(a) despite Standing Order 7 there is no daily Routine;

(b) despite standing orders 8 and 29 the only business for consideration under Orders of the Day is a special debate on the 2020-21 first-quarter fiscal and economic update, during which the order of debate and the time limits on speaking are as follows:

(i) the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance may table the 2020-21 first-quarter fiscal and economic update and make the first statement not exceeding 30 minutes;

(ii) immediately following the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance's statement, a member of the Official Opposition may make a statement not exceeding 10 minutes;

(iii) immediately following a statement by a member of the Official Opposition under subclause (ii) and for a period not exceeding 60 minutes

(a) members of the Official Opposition may ask questions on matters relevant to the 2020-21 first-quarter fiscal and economic update and the statement made by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, and

(b) the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance or any other member of Executive Council may respond to those questions;

(iv) immediately following the expiry of the 60-minute period referred to in subclause (iii) and for a period not exceeding 20 minutes

(a) private members of the government caucus may ask questions on matters relevant to the 2020-21 first-quarter fiscal and economic update and the statement made by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, and

(b) the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance or any other member of Executive Council may respond to those questions;

(v) a member who asks a question or a member of Executive Council who responds in accordance with subclause (iii) or (iv) is limited to a period of two minutes at one time to ask that question or to make a response;

(c) officials of the government may be seated in the Assembly during the debate to assist members of Executive Council, and

(d) despite Standing Order 3(1) and (4) the Assembly commences its sitting at 10 o'clock a.m., and the sitting concludes immediately after all statements and related periods for questions and responses have concluded, at which time

(i) the debate is considered concluded without decision, and

(ii) subject to Standing Order 3(8) the Assembly will stand adjourned until the commencement of the 2020 fall sitting.

The Speaker: I look forward to researching just how many August sitting days there have been here in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of two tablings, the sum total being the over 37,000 petition signers on the hands off my CPP petition that has been running and has been talked about a number of times in this Chamber. I will add them to the baskets.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

Mr. Getson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of tablings. It's for Jack Lewis, actually. I don't think I could have done him justice, so I would love the ability to table this so his name can be recorded for being such a pillar in our community.

Thank you.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of correspondence. Today I'm just tabling 30 personalized letters, but there have been thousands of signatures of deep concern regarding the government's so-called plan around school re-entry this fall. People here are asking questions about what happens when somebody is sick in a school, how they are going to make sure that they're safe, and about school overcrowding, just to name a few. There are many, many more. These are just some of them today.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have copies of an article from CBC entitled [Northwest Territories] Ignored in Alberta Monitoring Suspension Despite Agreement: Leaked Emails, "Deputy environment minister says territory was not informed, consulted," July 13, 2020.

2:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:12 I believe the hon. the deputy Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order, 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member", and (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." Right at the time, moment that you had mentioned, the Premier had repeated something he had said earlier, which was that the opposition doesn't "have a plan to reopen schools" and, in fact, that the opposition wants to keep schools closed. It's the wanting to keep schools closed which is impugning a motive to the opposition that is not correct.

The Official Opposition has a plan to safely reopen schools based on successful reopenings around the world and as a result of receiving concern from parents and teachers. Now, there's lots to be said about the merits of said plan, absolutely, and I believe you would agree, Mr. Speaker, that that would be a matter of debate, but it is absolutely language likely to create disorder in this House to state that the opposition doesn't want schools to open, when so much time and effort has gone into a plan that would allow schools to safely reopen and support parents and teachers. It is particularly that unavowed motive, 23(i), on which I rise on this point of order.

The Speaker: Well, I hesitate to provide the Government House Leader the opportunity to respond, given my suggestion that members take into consideration page 639 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* with respect to prolonging debate and using a point of order to do so and how that would not be appropriate, but given the circumstances I think it's fair that the hon. Government House Leader has the opportunity to provide

some submissions, although I am almost certain that debate is going to be extended.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, you got ahead of me there, which I appreciate. This is clearly, first of all, a matter of debate. I was going to point out your ruling of the other day, where you referred to the House of Commons practices at 639. I'll just quote one portion. "A Member may not direct remarks to the House or engage in [a] debate by raising a matter under the guise of a point of order."

You cautioned the Official Opposition and all members of the House about that type of tactic last week, Mr. Speaker, and I will point out that this is exactly what is taking place here again. The hon. deputy Opposition House Leader did not like the debate that was taking place inside the Chamber, but there was a debate. The NDP have a plan. The Premier pointed out that from our experts' perspective, their plan would require 800 new schools, 13,500 new classrooms, and 13,000 teachers in 30 days. From his perspective, he pointed out, that means the NDP clearly have a plan that means kids could not go back to school. Now, the NDP disagree with the Premier's assessment. That's a debate.

I would point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that there was a fairly healthy debate about that issue inside this Chamber during question period, as there should be, but the NDP continue to use points of order to try to extend debate when they're frustrated with the answers or in particular when things are pointed out about the NDP's record, which frustrates them. Again, I think all members of the House should be cautioned not to use points of order in that way.

The Speaker: That caution has occurred. This is not a point of order. It is a matter of debate, and prolonging such is more than frustrating to the chair. This matter is dealt with and concluded. It is not a point of order.

We are now at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading Bill 204 Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to speak before the Assembly, before my fellow mates here in this House. I'm pleased to rise to move second reading of Bill 204, the Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 204 is a simple act. It simply repeals the NDP's ideological Voluntary Blood Donations Act, which in itself was a very simple bill. The Voluntary Blood Donations Act only allowed Canadian Blood Services to remunerate for blood and plasma donations, and the ideology behind this isn't as noble as one would expect. If it were about ethics around compensating people for their plasma, the government would've banned all these products from coming in from around the world because that's how this product gets made, and that's where this products gets made. They would have banned these medications that are made from remunerated plasma donations. If it were about the ethics of supposedly taking advantage of a more vulnerable population, then the opposition should know the value of performing a service here in Canada,

where we can influence that. Again, they'll accept the product collected and processed from others but not from Canadians.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

In fact, if you listen to the voices that are opposing my private member's bill, my simple repeal, Madam Speaker, you are hearing an echo from the 1990s, when the Canadian blood scandal was discovered, and the Krever commission identified the issues and the solutions. The opposition talks about the safety of the blood supply. They talk about cannibalizing donors. They talk about the evil, big, international, greedy corporations, who are developing medications that we purchase for Canadians. This fearful rhetoric is really unbecoming of the House, and I hope that the opposition clarifies a lot of their comments.

You know, I would even challenge a woke university like Wilfrid Laurier to dissect this entire private member's bill and the entire proceedings, including the stakeholder consultations. They could even study the Senate hearings on this very issue from 2017, when Senator Pamela Wallin tried to get this to become a national bill. I'd love to see if those students could identify the partisan and biased politics that seep into a health issue. That's a real shame here.

You would see a pattern of special-interest groups that do not discuss or acknowledge the differences between what a blood collection service like Canadian Blood Services does to ensure that these products are available in our surgical suites, in our emergency departments, in our operating rooms – these are life-saving products that we need – and the difference between these products and the things that come from these plasma-based therapies, these medications.

Numerous unions, including CUPE, Unifor, and, interestingly enough, even, like, the New Brunswick Nurses Union, have published articles and written letters on their websites that are opposing paid plasma. Again, an interesting thing to note is that their arguments for a safe blood supply are from the 1990s, over 20 years ago.

What the opposition to my bill does not speak about is the approximately 50,000 Canadians that rely on these plasma therapies and medications to live. They need these therapies to maintain some semblance of reasonable health. They never talk about the research and innovation that's going on around the world as we discover more things from plasma-based medications. They don't mention the thousands of issues with the blood disorders and immunodeficiency issues. They don't mention that the demand is growing for these products 5 to 10 per cent annually as they discover new ways to make plasma into medication, and that's a shame.

Now, Bill 32, by my good friend from Calgary-Varsity, would dictate that union executives would have to make their members aware of issues like this prior to funding them, and I would ask that these unions that are investing in an organization like BloodWatch evaluate that because BloodWatch's mandate is to ensure a safe blood supply for Canadians, and I have never met anyone who disagrees with that. I have never met anyone who is not in support of a safe blood supply. That's the thing. You look at the underlying issues, and it's nothing about the safety that you're arguing about because your arguments are weak in regard to safety, okay? Let us be clear about that, all right? I mean, do members of these groups know that they're funding a group who is still looking for challengers? I see no challengers to Canadian Blood Services. I see no one who's questioning their methods and what they do.

You know, if we think about the – Madam Speaker, we are in second reading now. We did our consultations with stakeholders, and one thing that we found is that – again, if they were to be reviewed,

as I have meticulously done, their arguments are invalid. They are from the 1990s, every one of them. They use fear and they posture and they try to intimidate. It's very disappointing.

The most interesting things came from Canadian Blood Services. Admittedly, when I met with CBS privately, they didn't really commit to me either way. They simply said: well, we just need more time. When I asked, "More time for what?" they just said: we need more time. They would not clarify to me until they met in the committee meetings that they have serious concerns about this, but there are some interesting comments that he made. He said – and this is Dr. Sher; he's the CEO of Canadian Blood Services – that he recognizes and acknowledges that

all countries, in both the public and the commercial sectors, need to collect more plasma.

He also mentions that the approach to this issue by Canadian Blood Services

is based on diversification, risk mitigation, and cost efficiency, and recognizes and enables roles for both the public and the commercial sector.

Finally, he mentioned that

having plasma therapies sourced from both the nonremunerated and the paid plasma sectors is not contradictory, and it is certainly not hypocritical. It is prudent risk diversification.

3:00

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Yao: There we go.

Ultimately, he just asks for time for it to be reviewed and researched, and to be clear, he's right. His organization has only had 20-plus years of government support and a virtual monopoly to debate these issues, and now he wants to round up all the Health ministers and have a discussion about this. Why he didn't do that three years ago I don't know. And why he's concerned about a bill that is only replacing something that was put into law a couple of years ago: you know, that's very interesting as well.

Again, in typical fashion, the organization exposed themselves as a bureaucratic institution that does not emphasize the patients. It's only about justifying their worth to Canadians. You know, perhaps they could review their policies on donations from gay people. Would that strike a nerve with anyone across the way? I mean, I assume that everyone across the way wholeheartedly supports Canadian Blood Services and all they do. This is an organization that's so adept that it doesn't need to move very quickly on things, including issues like that. Why don't we get them to challenge that one, provide that scientific information that dictates: this is why gay people don't donate blood? All right?

This is an international issue. It's like the environment, something else you don't understand. The Member for Edmonton-Glenora says that her bill did not discourage companies from coming in to start up plasma collection. You know, Prime Minister Trudeau says: "C-48 and C-69 don't impair the oil sands. Shell, come on in. Put in the billions of dollars to develop. We can't guarantee you can access the product, but come on and invest your money." No. That's why Total – they're out of France – and Shell, the premier organizations of the oil sands, left us. It's about confidence.

Again, this is an international issue. The world is being supplied by five nations, and the other 190 nations are not providing any plasma. In fact, they're just purchasing it from these other five nations, and they are like Canada. They're too self-centred and morally upright to consider what it takes to create this product. They won't have that discussion, they don't care to understand where it comes from, and they won't make the decisions, but they can turn a blind eye and give someone money and accept that medication for

their patients. You know, there's a lot of hypocrisy here. I guess it's kind of like the folks that like to eat meat but don't want to know where it comes from. It's just one of those things.

You know, Madam Speaker, this bill is about giving patients treatments that they require to live, and all opposed members need to wake up and see that our supply will drop if we stay the course. Currently our domestic supply of plasma is running the risk of dropping to under 9 per cent by 2024. Again, what we see is growth in other areas in the plasma industry as they discover more needs for it. Again, that growth is happening at 5 to 10 per cent annually. Last year we suffered a major shortage, in 2019, the summer where our immunoglobulin supply was compromised. There wasn't enough product out there, and as a result we had a lot of Canadians who suffered a lot of hardships.

Immunoglobulin patient Kate Vander Mere – she is someone I spoke to – had to drive two hours when her regime changed because she couldn't access the medications that she so desperately required. She had to drive a couple of hours every time she had her treatment to survive, and that's on top of balancing . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise in this House and speak to the importance of Canadian Blood Services and voluntary blood donation for blood components as well as whole blood in the province of Alberta. This was something that was brought into play, as the member just said, in 2017, and it was done in response to what was happening in our country. That was that there were money-for-blood companies setting up in a number of different places across Canada, and they were expressing interest in Ontario, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, New Brunswick.

As a response, folks who were involved in fighting for a safe blood supply and an adequate blood supply were starting to organize and folks who were really focused on advocating for this because many had experience through the tainted-blood scandal a number of decades ago and became active in response through the Krever commission. This includes card-carrying members of all political stripes, including senior advisers to the Stephen Harper government, who were folks who were advocating as members, founding members, of BloodWatch for a voluntary blood supply in the country of Canada.

At the same time as we were making a decision about how we wanted to proceed, Ontario stepped up, and Ontario said that they were going to ban money-for-blood companies setting up in the province of Ontario, American-style donations in the province of Ontario. That wasn't something that was just supported by the governing party or one majority party. It was supported unanimously by all MLAs, or MPPs, as they are in Ontario, including many Conservative MPPs who spoke passionately to this matter.

It also happened to take place in British Columbia slightly after Alberta. In British Columbia this was brought forward, and definitely there are folks in the various parties there who are members of a variety of different political persuasions. Again, it passed unanimously in British Columbia.

So this is something that other provinces have been able to show isn't a partisan issue and shouldn't be a partisan issue. Unfortunately, that hasn't been the case here in Alberta. We continue to hear folks pushing for an American-style blood model even though organizations like BloodWatch, who I have tremendous respect for, continue to be called names by the bill sponsor, and their motivation continues to be called into question.

Again, many members of BloodWatch include card-carrying federal Conservatives. One specifically advised Stephen Harper when he was Prime Minister of our country. So this isn't something that should be questioned around the motivation for wanting to ensure that we have a strong Canadian blood system, something that is, I think, a national treasure and something that we should all be very proud of.

At the same time, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan decided not to put in legislation to stop money for blood. Blood that has been collected through these organizations in those two provinces: it was made clear in the committee and through other reports that we've seen through the media that that blood has gone to Europe, not stayed in Canada. So definitely expanding into this area does nothing to strengthen donations for Canadian patients, Canadian patients who, I heard the member say, we all care about deeply, and certainly I can tell you that I do. I'm very grateful to everyone who donated blood in this province, that helps all patients who require blood, but specifically I'm thinking about my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Riverview, who went through a number of blood transfusions in her battle with leukemia and living with leukemia and keeping her well.

One of the things that we heard in committee: when Canadian Blood Services was very clear that passing this bill that's being proposed here today would threaten our supply and that it would threaten the security of the Canadian blood supply, one of the pieces that was made very clear is because of vertical integration. For example, we have people in Alberta that donate plasma, platelets, whole blood, a number of different blood components. One of the things we were able to do by having one blood-collection agency here in the province, that being CBS, is that when the pandemic hit and there was a need to have more whole blood, CBS was able to say to their donors who typically would donate blood components: can you please consider donating whole blood at this time instead of donating one of the components? Even plasma: they were able to funnel people towards donating what was most in need.

One of the presenters who was invited by the bill sponsor said that she understood that there would be concerns around this happening in other parts of the blood supply, for example, whole blood. She didn't think that there should be financial remuneration for donating whole blood. She was specifically speaking to plasma. But what the bill sponsor fails to tell all of us is that his bill is about repealing the whole bill. So this isn't about plasma. This is about money for blood, full stop, whether that's platelets, plasma, whole blood.

3:10

It's about creating an environment that Americanizes our donation system here in the province of Alberta and, in turn, threatens the ability for CBS to be able to meet its objectives. While they aren't there yet, they do have a very aggressive plan on how they're going to increase plasma donations, and the heart of that plan is here in the province of Alberta. I am so proud that Edmonton continues to be the number one donation site for blood and blood products in the country of Canada year after year after year.

One of the pieces that they've done in response to the increased demand for plasma and the medications that plasma is fundamental to providing is that they've created a plan that has a number of new donation sites across Canada, and one of the ones that I want to highlight at this time is in the city of Lethbridge. This is an initiative that millions of dollars have been invested in, and dozens of jobs have been created, but also that plasma is going to serve the needs of folks in Lethbridge and right across our country. It was made very clear in the committee's considerations that CBS's overall plan for increasing capacity around plasma will be put at jeopardy if this

bill moves forward. One of the things that that means is that the jobs in Lethbridge, the investment in Lethbridge are at risk if members of this House choose to support this bill going forward, which not only impacts plasma but impacts our entire blood supply. Again, that piece of vertical integration I think is so important for all of us to consider.

At this point I have to say that I am incredibly disappointed that the member has chosen to take his one opportunity – as he said many times, as a private member this is his first bill that's seen the floor of this House. I talk to folks in Fort McMurray and I talk to folks across this province, and very few have said that this is their number one issue. In fact, the only ones who did were the ones that I went out and sought feedback from specifically, saying: you might have a special consideration on this, and I'd like to know what your feedback is. Most people want to talk about jobs. Most people want to talk about COVID and our response to COVID. Most people want to talk about education and back to school and what we're going to do to make sure that kids and staff are safe. Most people want to talk about health care overall and what we're doing, and most people are very proud of the fact that we have a Canadian health care system and don't want to see it Americanized.

For the member to take this precious opportunity as a private member, in being fortunate enough to be given one of the bills through the random draw that happens every year, to try to drive a political vendetta, because he didn't support this bill when it came forward the first time, I don't think that serves the folks of this province or, specifically, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to the best of the member's abilities. I know that the member has a number of areas that he could have brought legislation forward on, that we probably could have supported unanimously in this place, that would have helped us see more investment in jobs, the economy, pipelines, health care, or education. I think that these are the areas that I am most excited for private members to bring forward bills on, not using this as an opportunity to try to discredit a national organization that was founded by folks who themselves were either recipients of tainted blood or the loved ones of folks who received tainted blood, who are fighting so hard for the security, the safety, and the capacity within CBS for all of us to meet our demand.

Blood: It's in You to Give. Really, this has been a long-time tag line for Canadian Blood Services, and it's something that I believe wholeheartedly. To continue to push for bringing in money-for-blood when even folks who were brought forward to testify at the committee by the bill's sponsor say that they don't think it should be for all blood, that they think maybe it should be for plasma – what the member is doing here is reversing the bill completely rather than just carving out the piece around plasma, which, again, I don't think is wise. The member is proposing to repeal the whole bill, not just the piece that he is speaking to here in the House today. Again, that vertical integration is so important, to be able to say to donors, long-time donors or first-time donors, that this is what would benefit the people of our country the most. I think it's short sighted.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour today to rise in this House and support the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo on his private member's Bill 204, the Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act. Back on May 17, 2019, Canadian Blood Services warned of an imminent shortage of take-home immunoglobulin, or Ig, one of the most widely used medications made from human plasma. This need, then an amber issue, has only

been amplified by the effects of a global pandemic. This is also not just an Albertan issue nor just a Canadian issue. There's actually a global shortage of plasma.

For those of you who don't know, immunoglobulin helps strengthen the immune systems of patients with a variety of genetic conditions that weaken the body's natural defences against viruses and bacteria. Canadian Blood Services is the national blood authority that is responsible for buying and distributing plasma-derived products within Canada. People don't understand that Canada already participates in purchasing blood products through intermediary means. Shouldn't we as Albertans be playing a valuable role in increasing this supply? By increasing the supply and incentivizing donations, are we not helping vulnerable members of our society receive the care that they need? There is a connection.

Madam Speaker, on July 20 the Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills heard from stakeholders concerned with the issues of incentivizing the donation of plasma. Research done by Dr. Peter Jaworski was heard that day. His research concludes that there is a correlation between the number of paid and the number of voluntary donations. This is a complementary system that only benefits Albertans and Canadians alike.

Madam Speaker, both sides of the House can agree that this is not a partisan issue. This bill would broaden our horizons and provide Albertans access to the care that they so desperately need. Shortages of conventional drugs are a persistent problem in Canada, but a shortfall of immunoglobulin should be different because its producers rely on human donors. Why, then, do we continue to put all of our eggs in one basket? Or will we give Albertans who rely on plasma products the best opportunity that we can?

We need to understand that an increase in the global supply equals an increase of Albertans' access to that supply. It is kept safe through the Canadian Blood Services and can be continued under the very same safe guidelines for all participants. This area does need governance. I understand that and agree with the members of the opposition. It needs to be reviewed. It needs to be safely worked through with legislation but not totally blocked, as it is right now.

Canadian Blood Services is committed to opening three plasma donation centres across Canada – three – including one in my riding, as we just heard, in Lethbridge. This is a great start, but unfortunately Canada only collects about 13 per cent of the plasma necessary to meet the internal domestic demands. That's right, Madam Speaker: 13 per cent, a very, very small amount. We make the remaining demand up from importing plasma from countries that support pay-for-plasma donation. If we move away from this, will three donation centres in Alberta be enough?

We have seen how unforeseen circumstances can wreak havoc on trade. Our borders can be closed at a moment's notice. That is why a long-term, sustainable solution to this plasma supply problem would be by supporting this bill and allowing compensation for donation so that we can continue to increase the supply to that global need. The only countries that are self-sufficient in plasma around the entire world are those that pay. Paid plasma in the United States is responsible for 60 per cent of the medication used to make up plasma-based medicines in the world, 60 per cent from one nation.

The argument we keep hearing from the members of the opposition is that our single public voluntary system has served Albertans well for decades, but has it? It has not grown to meet supply. From consultations with stakeholders it has remained clear to me that Albertans are in need for plasma and plasma-based medicines. Alberta and Canada need to know that they will not face shortages in this life-saving medication that they need.

If we look towards building a safer, more self-reliant Alberta, we must look at how we can stand up if our borders were to be forced closed due to unforeseen circumstances. We must not be reliant on the whims of other countries, and we must not be forced to compete for those products at auction to the highest bidder. We must help with the supply if we are to meet that much-needed demand. Madam Speaker, the combined compensated and uncompensated model has already proved to work in countries such as the U.S.A., Austria, and Germany. Repealing the Voluntary Blood Donations Act will give Albertans a chance at becoming self-sufficient safely and soon, which is what we need.

I myself would encourage all members of this House to support the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo in supporting his bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

3:20

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to private member's Bill 204. I always appreciate the contributions of the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, the incredible depth of thought that he puts into crafting his arguments, the careful attention to consistency of thought, and, of course, most of all, the deep respect he always shows in bringing those forward in the House.

Now, the member, when he was speaking, spoke of ideology, and he spoke of hypocrisy, saying that because we're willing to accept products that are produced from the U.S., why would we oppose such products being created here? This is an argument we're hearing echoed from many members of the government. Indeed, the Member for Lethbridge-East just stood and talked about how last May there was a shortage of plasma. He says: are we not, with this legislation, with this repeal, helping vulnerable people receive the help they need?

Well, I can answer that question for him, Madam Speaker. No, he's not, and the government is not achieving that with this repeal. He talked of a complementary system that would supplement supply, an increase in global supply, meaning an increase in Canadians' access. He talked about how borders being closed at any time can cut us off from supply and how we must not be forced to bid at auction for needed supply. But this bill does not guarantee that in any way. It does not make that provision. It does not provide that protection. Indeed, the member himself admitted that this is an area that needs governance, that needs review, that needs legislation. Yet all we have is this mere slip of a bill that reflects the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo's own vendetta in ideology.

There is an utter lack of thought behind this bill. There is an utter lack of effort. If this member truly wanted to bring forward something that would actually address this problem, he would bring forward actual solutions. He would bring forward actual protections for that collection. He would bring forward something that guaranteed that paid plasma collected would actually be here in Canada. Right now there is no such guarantee, Madam Speaker. Until there is such a guarantee, all of their words ring hollow and all of their claims are without merit. It will not do a thing to improve the supply of plasma in Canada, and he can offer no guarantee that it will. Indeed, we know that that is, in fact, currently the case, that the majority of plasma that is collected here in Canada leaves Canada and does not come back, paid plasma, through Canadian blood services or resources.

Now, Ms Kat Lantaigne, the executive director of BloodWatch, which this member refers to as an extreme advocacy group – I'm

sure he'll stand up and provide us with his full conspiracy theory, perhaps on how they're funded by George Soros. That's the level of debate that we seem to get from this government when it comes to anybody who chooses to disagree with them. Bloodwatch.org is, in fact, a nonpartisan organization that advises on blood policy, cofounded by tainted blood survivors. They said clearly, when they had the opportunity in front of the committee, that repealing this bill does not in any way mitigate our dependence on the U.S. supply chain. It does not secure in any way, as I just said, any more plasma for patients in Canada.

That was echoed by Curtis Brandell, the president of the Canadian Hemophilia Society. He likened it to 3M respirators, saying that if, well, we just simply put those up for sale to anybody in the world, there's no guarantee that they remain here and are available for people in Canada. Indeed, the only way that we're going to ensure, he said, that there's more domestic supply is if somewhere in this bill you actually compel the private companies that are paying for plasma here in Canada to sell domestically within Canada, within Alberta. This member did not see fit to include any such provision.

Now, there is perhaps a suggestion that the government intends at some point to bring forward actual regulation or legislation. I would suggest that if that was the case, then maybe this member could have had a little patience and waited to bring forward a bill that actually completed the job instead of this half measure. If he wants to actually solve the problem, then, Member, solve the problem. Through you, Madam Speaker. What he has brought forward is simply tearing the doors open for private profit on the collection of plasma, with no guarantees that that will actually benefit anybody, not unlike this government's Bill 30. This government seems to have an obsession with finding ways to increase the opportunities for American-style private profit in the middle of our public health system and provide next to no – indeed, in Bill 30 they also strip away protections of the public system. That this member brings forward just simply this repeal bill with no thought to the effect or no thought to actually making sure this would actually benefit any Albertan or any Canadian says all we need to know about this government's view.

Indeed, as Mr. Brandell noted, there is one company currently operating in Canada, Canadian Plasma Resources, and all of the plasma they collect is shipped off to a single company, Biotest, in Germany. All of that medication that is produced by Biotest then goes off to other places in the world for medications. "At this point Canadian Blood Services" – this is a direct quote from Mr. Brandell – "doesn't have any contract with Biotest, so none of that medication has come back to Canada."

This member says that he wants to make more plasma available in Canada. This bill does not do that. This bill does not guarantee that. The member cannot in any way say that he is making that possible. He can say, "Maybe," but there is no guarantee. There is no provision. This member wants to throw the doors open for more plasma to be collected, shipped out of Canada, and to never come back. If that is not the member's intention, then perhaps he should amend his bill.

As Mr. Brandell said, indeed, they're not increasing the supply at all. In fact, they're depleting the supply. Indeed, as Canadian Blood Services is attempting to build up the public supply, because Canadian Blood Services does guarantee that what they collect stays here in Canada – this is in no way, what these members are proposing and what's being achieved by this bill, a complementary system. It adds nothing. It makes no contribution to the Canadian supply. Again, if that is the member's intent, they could very easily put in a simple clause here requiring that any plasma purchased from Albertans must be sold to or remain in Canada or that those

products that are developed with it must come back to Canada. Either they cannot, in which case there is no point in bringing this forward because they are doing nothing to assist, or they will not, and then one has to ask: what is their point? What is their reason?

Indeed, even one of the government's own witnesses, Ms Whitney Goulstone, the executive director of the Canadian Immunodeficiencies Patient Organization, admitted that there is growing, mounting pressure for global supply. Asian markets are demanding more. In 2018 patients reported product being unavailable for pickup in the U.S. and the U.K. These members want to throw open the floodgates to pay people for plasma here and ship it out of Canada, with no guarantee that it will come back, at a time when there is increasing global demand, when we have public models, like Héma-Québec, that are building capacity here in Canada, when we have Canadian Blood Services opening opportunities here.

A plasma centre that's opening the doors in Sundre this summer: they needed 500 donors, it was noted at committee; they got 1,000, Madam Speaker. They're expecting similar outcomes here in Alberta. This government likes to talk about how generous Albertans are, how willing we are to give, how we go above and beyond for no personal reward. It's one of the excuses they like to use for not providing proper public funding for many services, but apparently they don't believe that's true for plasma donations.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I will be voting against Bill 204. If this government truly, if this member truly wants to solve the problem, then let them do some actual homework and present an actual bill which takes some actual steps to introduce actual regulation to actually solve the problem rather than this grandstanding piece of personal grudge. Right now I see no effort having been made by him here to actually address the root problem, which is, unfortunately, the case with so much of the legislation that's brought forward from this government, a lot of hollow grandstanding and not an awful lot of attempt to fix the problem.

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to join debate on Bill 204? The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise in the House today and speak to Bill 204, the Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act. I want to first begin by expressing my gratitude to my hon. colleague the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for all his hard work on Bill 204.

My hon. colleague had previously mentioned that a secure supply of plasma is a cornerstone of a modern, 21st-century health care system. He is indeed correct. Our government ran on a promise to cut red tape and to improve health care in our province, and Albertans elected us to bring those positive changes to health care. This is one of those positive changes. Bill 204 would repeal the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, a bill passed in 2017 by the previous NDP government, which banned everyone except for Canadian Blood Services from paying for plasma and other blood products.

Whitney Goulstone, the executive director of Canadian Immunodeficiencies Patient Organization, CIPO, stated that this past summer Canada experienced its first-ever immunoglobulin shortage, and she called upon our government to reverse the Voluntary Blood Donations Act and enable Albertans to contribute to the Ig supply. Immunoglobulin is the main product used from human plasma, which at this time can only be voluntarily donated with the Canadian Blood Services.

Madam Speaker, it would be a disservice to neglect to mention that Canada imports 84 per cent of its blood plasma. With

restrictions like the Voluntary Blood Donations Act we're becoming increasingly reliant on imports from countries that remunerate those who give their plasma; 90 per cent of the world's plasma comes from the United States, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. We know from the law of supply and demand that low supply and high demand increases price. We saw it happen with personal protective equipment and sanitization products in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the same thing is happening with plasma. The dependence on a small number of countries, five, to be exact, creates serious health risks. This is especially true in light of recent studies that use convalescent plasma as a possible treatment for patients fighting COVID-19. There are significant shortages of plasma, especially here at home. Health Canada states that demand for immunoglobulin increases 6 to 10 per cent every year. The demand cannot be met without remuneration, and that is abundantly clear.

Voluntary remunerated plasma collection, otherwise known as VRPC, means that individuals are paid either in cash, through reimbursement, or in-kind to give plasma of their own free will. Incentivizing the donation of plasma will increase Canada's contribution to the global supply that we are so heavily reliant on. The five countries we currently buy plasma from all have large stockpiles due to an increase of individuals donating, and they pay those same individuals for doing so. It doesn't make sense to purchase products from foreign paid plasma but to refuse to allow Albertans to contribute in the same way.

It is certainly interesting that the NDP members are reacting without looking deeper into the facts. It comes as no surprise since they have shown time and time again that they are not focused on facts but on emotions and political games rather than debating merits on a bill on the basis of facts. I will, however, present some facts so that the members opposite can educate themselves on the merits of this bill.

It appears as though the NDP members are intentionally trying to mislead the public by saying that this bill will Americanize our health care system. This fallacious claim contradicts the very evidence that they are presenting themselves. On July 15 the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood stated that Bill 204 "is basically the selling off of blood. You could argue again: privatizing of blood services. Right? There's this continued pattern from this government of moving away from the public good." It is truly interesting that the member believes that because both Austria and Germany, two leading countries in health care, the latter of which has the oldest universal health care system, established in 1883, allow remuneration for plasma donation. German citizens and legal residents of Germany are entitled to free, medically necessary public health care. However, Madam Speaker, despite having free universal health care in Germany, monetary compensation is permitted not only for plasma donations but for whole blood donations.

I'd also like to point out that the former Health minister, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, stated, "the UCP wants to bring in an American-style blood donation system, just like they want to turn our public health care system into a corporate-driven, American-style, two-tiered system." Surely the member is aware from her research when she wrote the Voluntary Blood Donations Act that in Austria all citizens and residents are entitled to free basic health care and that plasma donations are remunerated. It is certainly interesting that the NDP are believing their own fallacies.

On the issue of Americanization I must observe that Canada is already heavily reliant on plasma of American donations. If anything, Bill 204 would de-Americanize supply. Madam Speaker, I won't spend any more time on discussing why the NDP are wrong. After all, the evidence speaks for itself. The reality is that plasma is

used to save lives. It's used in our medication, health research, and treatments among others. This bill is a step in the right direction, one that allows Albertans to contribute to the global supply of a product that patients in Alberta and across the country rely on.

Madam Speaker, my whole family, and in particular my father, is extremely proud of the fact that I'm speaking in support of this legislation. As I stated previously, there are many people who require medications made from plasma and are alive today as a result of it. This is not an Americanization of our health care system like the NDP are trying to make it out to be. Any attempt to discredit this bill by using fear tactics perpetuated by the NDP is a disservice not only to our democracy or to debate but also to the continued development of Alberta's health care system. It's quite simple. The reality is that this bill will save lives.

I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to put politics aside, stop the fearmongering, and vote in support of this bill, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 204? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to join debate on Bill 204. Of course, we know that this bill is really a very thin document. It's just a repeal of a previous bill that was passed by our government regarding the Voluntary Blood Donations Act. There is really no vision here. It's just stopping something that was done before. You know, it would've been nice if the government had seen fit to actually share their vision instead of just saying: no, we don't want anything in this bill. Instead they don't. They don't do anything. All they do is say: we want to repeal this bill.

You know, that's obviously a pretty limited view, and I would say: "Why are they doing this? Who's going to benefit?" Like, that's an important question whenever you're looking at policy, to understand who benefits. Asking that question is key because that often helps you understand what drives the decision. I guess, I think: "Will Canadians benefit from this? Will Albertans benefit from this?" Certainly, from being part of the private members' bills committee, I sat through many presentations, heard discourses on both sides regarding their views, and it doesn't. It doesn't benefit Canadians or Albertans. That's what I see.

What it does benefit is the commercial plasma industry. It's going to benefit big business. We know that we want to make sure, of course – I think no one would argue on either side of the aisle – that our blood system, our plasma donations, other kinds of blood products are safe, for sure. That's one of the key issues with the repeal of this bill because it does open us up to being vulnerable.

3:40

Certainly, two of the presenters, Curtis Brandell and Kat Lanteigne from BloodWatch, actually wrote an opinion editorial in the *Edmonton Journal* regarding some grave concerns about the industry. I'm just going to read from that document. It says:

Controlling our plasma collection as a public resource means Canada will eventually become less dependent on the for-profit blood industry. An industry which profits off of poor and vulnerable populations. An industry which is known for predatory and unethical business practices. Countries around the world have launched large-scale domestic plasma collection strategies to become self-sufficient.

That's what we're doing here in Canada with the Canadian Blood Services. We're moving so that we are collecting more plasma. We all agree, again, not only that we want a safe supply but that we want to increase the amount of plasma we have in Canada. There's no doubt that we need more. It's so important that we do that in the most prudent way possible, and, as I've just said, the people who

are really experts in this area have grave concerns about the, you know, corporate plasma industry.

We know that this law that was passed, that is being repealed in Bill 204, had broad support from the public because it protected the donor base in our province. Since then the Alberta government, which is part of the pan-Canadian provincial coalition that funds Canadian Blood Services at arm's-length, approved a national plasma strategy. So, you know, some time ago people already understood that more needs to be done, and it needs to be done on a national scale. That is already under way quite significantly, and I'll talk more about that in a moment.

As I've said, of course, the most important issue that we all can agree on is that we want to increase plasma collection in Canada so that we can be more self-sufficient. Working with our national organization, Canadian Blood Services, is the best way to guarantee that plasma is collected for Albertans and Canadians. It's the very best way because we can be assured that the plasma that is collected will stay in Canada and will be for us here. Of course, we know – and we know that from the presenters at the private members' bills committee – that there is no guarantee of that with the collection privately, the paid collection. It goes to international companies in Germany, for example, fractionators there, and they don't sort of guarantee that it's coming back to Canada. They're taking it, and they're sending it away. That's, you know, a key issue because we want what was collected to be used in Canada. We want to make sure that our system is strong. Canadians being paid to give it to these private companies does not secure that, so anything that you hear from members opposite saying that it does is false. We heard that time and time again from the presenters at the committee.

Of course, what we want to do is make sure that there's an increased supply here in Canada. We know that Canadian Blood Services has a strategy for expansion of plasma collection. First of all, I just want to say that here in Alberta, here in Edmonton, here in Edmonton-Riverview, the riding that I have the honour to represent, we have the busiest location of blood collection in the whole country. We do a tremendous job here in Alberta already, and we're moving to open a site in Lethbridge in the fall for specific plasma collection. So, of course, Canadian Blood Services does understand that we need to expand that. There are two other sites, too, one in Kelowna and Sudbury, that are also going to be expanding, so they will be making sure that they're taking donations of plasma. I mean, this is the beginning of the strategy, and I think that they realize the issues and they want to make sure that Canadians and Albertans have plasma for the needs they have.

We know that private blood plasma brokers don't help Canada's supply chain. They deplete it by taking qualified donors out of our public system. Those people who may donate to us are now going to be donating for people in other places internationally. That plasma is not secured for us here. We know that a hundred per cent of private collection of plasma is exported and does not increase supply in Canada. I'll just reiterate this because it's such an important point. You know, I asked this question of the presenters. This question was asked several times, and each time it was asked – "Will that blood help Canadian supply?" – it was like: "Well, no. It goes into the international market, and we don't have any opportunity to have that come back to us." We're losing our good donors that could increase the Canadian system and so depleting our own donors here. That's not a good idea. That's not a good idea. We want to help Alberta and Canada increase their plasma supply.

Of course, whenever, you know, anything important is done sort of that impacts our nation – our provinces, of course, have their jurisdiction; the federal government has its jurisdiction – certainly working collaboratively and understanding how one area's rules

impact another is key to sort of a well-functioning country. Alberta just acting on its own to allow private companies to come in will create a bit of havoc in our country as a whole because there are different rules in different provinces. You certainly as a nation want people from Newfoundland to Northwest Territories to B.C. and all the places in between to make sure that Canadians are all treated fairly and equally. I certainly stand strongly as someone who believes in the federation of Canada and want very much to make sure that there is sort of a process that's fair across our country.

Of course, Canadian Blood Services, this arm's-length agency who does exceptional work to make sure our blood supply is safe and make sure that we have the supplies that we need, is of course tasked with leading this. They spoke very clearly – very clearly; they weren't on the fence at all – against this motion to repeal the earlier bill about voluntary blood supply in Canada, in Alberta. They said it will cause tremendous difficulty for them in terms of them being able to ensure Canadians have the supply they need.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to debate on Bill 204? The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise here today and speak to Bill 204, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for tabling this very important piece of legislation. Bill 204 is an important step in creating a more functional, reliable, and safer health care system that will allow Albertans to reduce our reliance on foreign donors for important medical supplies.

Now, the NDP's introduction of Bill 3, Voluntary Blood Donations Act, was fuelled, in my mind, by ideological beliefs that government intervention needs to be the be-all, end-all when it comes to finding solutions for this area. The vision here is to really make life-saving plasma more widely available. Repealing Bill 3 can only result in more supply, and any other conclusion and any other outcome is simply speculation. Bill 3 was a myopic bill driven by rigid, partisan beliefs and a severe phobia of private-sector investment. Ironically, Bill 3 didn't even achieve the basic purpose which it set out to do. While banning paid plasma donations in Alberta, it failed to address the issue of Canada's reliance on plasma from compensated American donors. Yes, Madam Speaker, the reality is that we still buy plasma from American donors, yet we can't do that here.

Blood plasma is used in thousands of operations and saves lives every day. It is used to provide pharmaceutical products, medical therapies, and to treat trauma, shock, and burn victims. Our country is so reliant on the United States that we receive 80 per cent of our supply from there. So to simplify the problem for everybody here, Madam Speaker, we need plasma. We have a huge base of donors, we have the technology, we have the skills, we have the expertise to collect it safely, yet we still need to buy it from somewhere else. Considering the state of the world, of affairs at this moment, this is a scary statement. Countries all across the world are battling the COVID-19 pandemic and are worried about the state of their health care system and their economy.

3:50

Now, we could speculate about any number of events that have the potential to negatively impact our health care system, and Canadian patients who rely on plasma would be the ones to suffer most. But let's not speculate for a moment. Let's look at facts; let's look at real-world situations. Did we forget a similar example that happened just a few months ago? Back in April, Madam Speaker, Canadians saw first-hand how fragile our health care system and our foreign supply chains can be. This is not an implausible situation. Did we forget when U.S. President Trump ordered

manufacturing giant 3M to cease production and delivery of N95 masks to Canada? Are we so naive as to believe that other countries will continue to send us life-saving supplies if they themselves need them more? We need to create a reliable domestic supply.

Madam Speaker, Bill 204 aims to repeal the poorly thought out Bill 3. Bill 3 does nothing to diversify the global supply and continues our reliance on foreign donors, which puts Canadian patients at incredible risk. Considering the importance and the medical significance of plasma, it is crucial that Alberta continues and contributes to the supply of this product. It is incredibly hypocritical to be lamenting the idea of compensating plasma donors when we already do so, and we're already heavily dependent on the same system.

The NDP argues that repealing this bill is a safety concern and says that compensating donors is wrong. This is a moot point, Madam Speaker, because the vast majority of our plasma comes from places where donor compensation is the norm. The U.S. compensates its donors for plasma. Other jurisdictions do so as well. What makes them any more competent than us? As much as the NDP bashes the American health care system, the reality is that what they seem to think is that importing plasma from America is a safer alternative to donations made by Albertans.

Support for paid plasma donations is not a fringe or a radical idea. It is, in fact, the opposite. The majority of Albertans see past this fear and believe that compensation of plasma is morally appropriate; 63 per cent of Canadians and 65 per cent of Albertans support compensation. One of the loudest critics of Bill 3, believe it or not, was then Liberal leader Dr. David Swann. I want to quote Liberal leader Dr. David Swann because I think he has it right here. He said, "Systems allowing for paid plasma donations have had success in other jurisdictions without any of the adverse effects that the NDP are raising as justification for this bill," in speaking about Bill 3. The reality of this situation, Madam Speaker, is that there isn't a country on Earth that is completely self-sufficient in plasma supply through an exclusively volunteer-based donor system.

Donating plasma is an incredibly altruistic act. It helps to save lives, and I encourage all Canadians and all Albertans to donate when they can. But the reality is that there are costs, there are risks, and there are fears associated with donating, and compensation would help to mitigate some of those issues that may be holding some of those donors back. Not all clinics are open on weekends, so many donors have to take the day off work and potentially the next day if they're not feeling well. Bill 204 would allow these clinics to compensate Albertans that took time out of their busy schedules to potentially save lives. It would also allow those clinics to operate on weekends if they had the demand to do so. David Page, the national director of health policy at the Canadian Hemophilia Society, has once said, quote: for some people an incentive of being altruistic is enough, but it's not enough for enough people in terms of plasma; we would love to have everyone donating freely and without compensation if that were possible, but it is not. End quote.

It is important that we are pragmatic in situations like this because Canadians are known for their generosity, but we need to generate a supply large enough to provide for all Canadians in need. Currently we're only able to source 13 to 14 per cent of our plasma needs domestically, and demand is on the rise, as many of my colleagues had mentioned earlier. Health Canada has closely studied this issue and already tightly regulates all matters within this jurisdiction. I can see no justification for being opposed to the changes being proposed by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Repealing Bill 3 is not only an important step in this right direction, but it'll have the added benefit of opening up a wider

conversation on the issue and raise awareness among all Albertans. Madam Speaker, this is legislation that will allow Albertans to contribute to the global supply and make Alberta less reliant on foreign sources. We cannot let hysteria block this potentially life-saving bill. I therefore encourage all of my members in this House, on both sides, to support this bill when the vote comes.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of this afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 204? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to private member's Bill 204. I'm always happy in this House to debate bills that are brought forward by private members, and I think it's important that private members who do bring measures forward for debate do so knowing that they are bringing forward the most pressing matters before this Legislature that they possibly could given the representation of their constituents and the province in general.

Now, with respect to this matter, of course, it's an important matter. However, in terms of the issues facing us today, right at this moment, in the middle of a pandemic, one wonders if indeed this measure was the most pertinent one that the hon. member could have brought forward, especially coming from an area that is so directly affected by loss of employment. During the pandemic it's exceedingly tough right across the province, but right now his constituents and those all across Alberta are very, very worried about our children going back to school and doing so safely. Of course, it's a debate that's going on in this House – it was quite active during question period this afternoon, Madam Speaker – as to how that would be done safely, as to whether or not we believe that would be the case. This private member's bill, that we're talking about right now, doesn't necessarily reflect the important issues that we potentially could have otherwise been discussing right now.

However, be that as it may, the blood supply in Canada, of course, is an important issue. I will tell this House that this past week I donated whole blood for the 37th time, and I'm not saying that to crow about it. In fact, I'm mentioning that to rather condemn myself because if indeed I had been voluntarily giving to the maximum that I possibly could over the time frame that I was eligible to donate – given that one is eligible to donate blood starting at age 18 and given my current age, it's about 44 years of eligibility. You're able as a male to donate once every 56 days, a slightly longer period of time between donations for women, but roughly six times a year you're able to donate whole blood. If indeed I had taken advantage of all those opportunities, Madam Speaker, I would have donated 240 to 250 times so far rather than simply the 37 times that I've donated right now. What that tells me is that there is a whole lot of blood out there that Canadians could be donating.

4:00

We've heard from many speakers across, from the government side of the House, stating that, indeed, no jurisdiction in the world can reliably obtain the plasma, the whole blood donations that are required to meet demand simply by relying upon voluntary donations. Therefore, automatically the presumption is that we need

to pay for blood donations. Well, what we're missing is a real good analysis of whether that in fact is the case.

I would posit, Madam Speaker, that given even the one simple example that I've made, where there's been approximately 200 donations sort of left on the table over the course of my donation eligibility period, multiplied by the number of Canadians who are eligible to donate, we would be supplying a good part of the world with plasma if, indeed, all of us voluntarily took advantage of the opportunities we have six times a year to donate our blood and not to be paid for it.

It begs the question, Madam Speaker: what is indeed the fix that is needed to encourage Canadians, and not only Canadians but people globally, to exercise what I think is a civic responsibility to donate blood so that the individuals across the planet who require those blood products and the products that are derived from plasma will have a safe, secure supply without ceding control over the supply to multinational corporations, who will suit their own purposes in determining where that supply goes?

That is something I think is really needing more explanation and more exploration and proper analysis. I think we hasten too quickly to jump to the conclusion that a paid donation system is the only answer to the global shortage of blood products. I think fairly simple mathematics would bear out that there is no shortage of actual supply given the number of available eligible donors in any given country, Canada included. It's a matter of there not being a very well-expressed need for the supply that's required.

It's an education problem that we've got in the country, and I think that's something that we as a country nationally should be addressing very much more than we have to ensure that our blood supply is seen as a critical element of our health care system and that we have in fact a duty to donate our blood. That education, I believe, to ensure that Canadians realize what in fact a demand there is for whole blood and blood products and a more detailed analysis of what happens to blood and plasma and how it's manufactured into medicines, that type of analysis is something that most Canadians are totally unaware of.

I believe, honestly, that if, indeed, Canadians were really properly informed about the need for a much greater volume of blood donations voluntarily given – as members opposite have already stated, we Canadians like to look after ourselves. We respond to a need for helping each other out when it's properly explained. Once it's fully and properly understood and once the collection system is more widely available beyond the larger centres it already exists in right now through Canadian Blood Services, my honest belief, Madam Speaker, is that we would be able to supply ourselves more than readily with the blood products we need, and we'd also be able to contribute to the global supply and sell our excess blood products on that market that the government members so willingly want to supply with the paid donations from Canadians.

That's the major thought that comes to mind when I'm trying to put myself in the position of Albertans listening to this debate. They're wondering aloud how, indeed, we can't be supplying ourselves with blood products when, in fact, there's certainly enough blood flowing in our veins should we know what the demand is and be willing to donate on a timely basis in a routine way from an early age to late adulthood. The supply certainly wouldn't be a problem. That's what we're talking about here, Madam Speaker, the supply of plasma, the supply of whole blood products and how best to increase it so that it meets the demand and we don't end up with a critical shortage.

If, indeed, this piece of legislation did anything to actually increase the blood supply and the plasma supply in this country, then it may lend some credence to the legislation. However, all it

does is simply erase the legislation that was passed by our government to ban paid donations. In fact, it goes nowhere to guaranteeing that plasma collected under a paid scheme, that the government wants so dearly to put in place, would stay in Canada and serve Canadians.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I know that there was a member from the Hemophilia Society, Mr. Brandell, who was recently giving testimony at our private members' bills committee, talking about this very issue, and he indicated in response to a question from one of the members that there'd be a higher donation percentage in a paid scheme. Mr. Brandell said:

there's definitely a higher percentage of people that are donating because, of course, you're paying people to donate their plasma. The problem is that you lose the control over where that plasma goes. If you look at those jurisdictions and you have a look at the amount of plasma that is actually retained within their own blood system and the amount of plasma that's shipped overseas, you'll see that the amount of plasma actually drops off.

So the goal that the government has, Mr. Speaker, of increasing the plasma supply by instituting a system of paid donations is, in fact, false logic, and the opposite actually happens.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak to Bill 204? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, followed by Edmonton-Rutherford should time allow.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and provide some comments on Bill 204. As it's been stated by my colleagues, this is a repeal of Bill 3 from 2017, a straight repeal, a pretty simple piece of legislation. Bill 3 was passed into law in 2017, and at that time it was opposed by the United Conservative Party, the Alberta Liberals as has been stated, the Alberta Party, and the lone PC independent as it was not seen to be conducive to a stronger health system. I didn't have the pleasure of holding this chair in 2017, but I do recall the debate briefly and on the news, and it seemed to be a lot about: isn't Albertans' blood good enough to be paid for if it is in other jurisdictions? I do recall some of that debate at the time.

Being a layperson and not familiar with a lot of how this works, I had the pleasure to sit on the private bills committee and listen to the six stakeholders in the debate. I guess the first thing that took me aback was in our first presentation, a technical brief from the ministry. They made it clear that as it sits today – we've heard some numbers that are similar or close – the projection was that as of this year 87 per cent of plasma products would have to be purchased or outsourced from the international community, mostly the United States. What I recall thinking was even more troubling was the trendline as it was also made clear that they expect that to go up by a per cent a year for the next four years. So by 2023 the ministry suspected that we would have to import 91 per cent of these plasma products.

At the onset it provided a definite trendline of what direction this is taking. We definitely have a need for these products. As has been stated, I believe that Canada is the second-highest purchaser of these products per capita, so this is something that we consume on a large scale per capita.

4:10

I just wanted to take note. A few of the members opposite have commented on maybe the motives of the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for bringing this important private bill forward and were making claims that perhaps it wasn't a pertinent issue with all that's going on in the world today. I know that if you sat in this committee and listened to these patient-based stakeholder

groups that were begging for this to be repealed – you know, just for everyone in the Chamber, it takes 1,200 plasma donations to treat one patient with hemophilia for a year and 130 plasma donations to treat one patient with primary immune deficiency for a year. So you get a sense of the weight of this issue for those 50,000 or more Canadians that are living with them.

A few of the other points that I kept with me through the private bills committee was the reliance of the globe on the United States to supply these products. Even though the United States is only 5 per cent of the global population, they provide the world with 70 per cent of these plasma-based products. There was a general sense that Canada and Canadians and especially those living with these debilitating lifelong diseases that need these products wanted to be part of the solution, be helpful. They felt that there's an overarching supply issue that they wanted to be part of and that this bill would help with that, that the voluntary bill from 2017 stopped them from doing.

As it sits now, 90 per cent of the world's plasma supply comes from a few nations – specifically the U.S., Germany, Austria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic – and all of these countries allow for remunerated plasma donations. The uncompensated donation rate to national agencies in these countries is higher than in countries that don't allow for remuneration. I remember thinking that that seemed kind of counterintuitive in the private bills committee as well, and there were a few anecdotal tales that perhaps having a paid stream for plasma could potentially lessen the voluntary whole blood donations.

As we fleshed it out through the different stakeholders, we found that that was actually incorrect. The stakeholders that did provide hard data, like Dr. Peter Jaworski from Georgetown University, they had found that with paid plasma donations, for every hundred paid plasma donations, they found eight to 10 more voluntary whole blood donations. I think the question was asked of them: well, that doesn't really make a lot of sense. He said: well, it's about awareness. He said that this needs to bring awareness campaigns to donation in general, and he said that that statistic has been found around the world when they bring paid plasma programs in.

A few other things I wanted to clear up, just because I did have the opportunity to sit on this committee and listen to the stakeholders. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora had made a statement previously that by repealing this entire bill, this was going to bring forward I think she said Americanized paying for whole blood donations. I was in the committee, and I asked that question of a couple of different stakeholders: is that in any way a realistic outcome? They all said: absolutely not. That wasn't the case before 2017. That isn't the case anywhere around the world. In fact, the U.S., while they're supplying 70 per cent of these plasma products to the globe, they concurrently have a robust volunteer system for whole blood that serves their people well.

A couple of other things I wanted to clear up that have been brought forward today by the members opposite. The statement that none of these products were being purchased back by Canadian Blood Services: I found that kind of interesting. Canadian Blood Services is going out to purchase these products. What we found out later – I think it was our last stakeholder – was that some of the companies that do operate and do this fractionating and upgrading of these products have attempted to sell to Canadian Blood Services a couple of different times at below market value and have been denied each time by Canadian Blood Services. They didn't provide any more details than that. Perhaps it could be to keep this narrative going that by allowing for paid plasma services, you're not really helping the situation here for Canadians. In truth we don't know what the potential is for this, but we know that it has to help. There's

no way of looking at this bill and the problems that are facing the supply of plasma products around the globe that it can't help.

As I said, I didn't have a lot of background in this before the group, but as a layperson, when I listened to the ministry's briefing and then the stakeholders, I found myself asking a few questions before I decided that I wanted to support this bill and the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I wanted to know: is it safe? One group, BloodWatch, that was one of their concerns. I was satisfied that that was debunked by Canadian Blood Services, by every other group. They all said that this is entirely safe and that it would be ridiculous to say anything other than that.

The other question I wanted to ask myself was: will it jeopardize the voluntary whole blood donation system that we all know and love in this country? That was, frankly, debunked, too, and found to be quite the opposite, that it would actually maybe encourage more whole blood donations by bringing awareness.

Lastly, I wanted to ask myself: will it help the overarching supply problem globally? Will Albertans get to feel like they're helping the overarching problem? Yes, I believe it does, and it will also provide opportunity later within the province for – who knows where it'll take us, but it'll be in a positive place.

Back to the question from 2017: is Albertans' blood as good as our neighbours'? I think it is, and I think no matter how you look at this bill, it is helpful and thoughtful, and I thank the member.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would like to provide some remarks.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this private member's bill and to speak to some of the concerns that I have. I first want to say that I am absolutely in favour of blood donations. I think it's an extremely important part of being a member of a civil society, that you would take the time to donate blood. In fact, I had donated 47 units, either whole or plasma, by the time I was about 30 and would have continued to do so throughout my life, but, unfortunately, I, along with thousands and perhaps millions of Canadians, have a blood-type protein that tends to trigger tests by a blood service. When they do the more sophisticated tests on the blood, of course, they realize that it's perfectly fine, but they had to eliminate a significant number of us from their services because it was too expensive to do the secondary test. If your blood happened to trigger the first test, then you were just told: please don't donate because it costs us too much to check you out before we actually use your blood.

That speaks to what I think is the underlying issue here. I don't like this bill because I think it's lazy, and the reason why I think it's lazy is that there is much that could have been done in this bill to address the actual underlying issues of blood in this province. But what this government has chosen to do through their private member is simply to retract a previous bill without putting any effort into looking at: what are the problems that you don't like with the previous bill, and how would you resolve any of those problems? There's not a single attempt to identify a problem and problem-resolution process. It's simply an attempt to withdraw a bill that was not liked on purely ideological grounds.

I'm very discouraged to hear speeches such as the one given by the Member for Camrose, written by the boys in short pants in the backroom, that really spent all of its time to just disparage people on our side of the House rather than addressing the issues that are inherent. I think there are fundamental issues that could have been dealt with here in this bill, and I'm going to take whatever time I happen to have left to talk about some of the things that could have been done had they put in the effort to try to do things.

4:20

The first one that I want to speak about is the fact that blood is essential in terms of health care for a great number of people in our society, but blood is not always necessary once we have learned the mechanisms that occur within blood that allow us to provide medical services. Many treatments started with blood and have now moved on to manufactured products. Not all of them have, which is why we still need blood, but the point of the matter is that if we were to take money and appropriately apply it to research facilities, many of the medications that are now created through blood and the processes that are resolved through blood donations could be done through other mechanisms where we wouldn't have to depend on a blood supply.

That would require that this government actually support universities and support research that's done at universities in order to create these alternative practices. Why they did not choose to do that and simply to rescind the bill without any thought about, "How we are going to provide the necessary outcomes to resolve the problems that we see?" is very infuriating. This notion that somehow what we'll do is just increase the amount of blood that's available by paying people to donate it, this trickle-down blood services philosophy, consistent with their economic philosophies, which have been previously also demonstrated to be false – you know, it's just really unacceptable that this is an ideological move and not an actual move to resolve a problem.

I would certainly like to see that they could have done things as simple as saying: if blood is purchased here in the province of Alberta, it should remain in the province of Alberta. But they didn't do that because that would be focused on the well-being of Albertans and not on the well-being of international corporations, who will certainly sell to the highest bidder because they have to recoup the cost that they put into giving money to people for donations.

My frustration with all of this is what wasn't done in this bill, and I find it just maddening that the time wasn't taken to make sure that appropriate money was put in to actually resolve the underlying problems, whether it be the research problems, whether it be the delivery problems here, keeping the blood here in the province of Alberta, or perhaps even providing more money to Canadian Blood Services to open a significant increase in blood donation sites, as they have promised to do over the last little while, opening up three new ones across the country.

It's been suggested on that side of the House that that just isn't sufficient. Fine. If that was the issue, if that was your analysis that three is not sufficient, then why aren't you paying for another 10 or 12 here in the province of Alberta? Why aren't you saying that every city in the province of Alberta should have a comprehensive blood donation system so that people, no matter where they live – if you're in Medicine Hat, if you're in Grande Prairie, or if you're in Fort McMurray – could be donating blood and having it available to people in the province readily?

That blood would also be available for our research institutions at our great universities throughout this province so that we could move on from this complex problem of obtaining blood in order to provide medical services to actually resolving problems that are medical in nature either through blood or through products that are designed through our research and understanding of what it is that blood is doing. I would very much like to have seen some effort – some effort – being put into resolving the underlying problems instead of these ideological arguments slamming our side for putting in a bill that they don't happen to like from their ideological point of view.

I certainly would love to be standing here in the House supporting a bill on blood services that did some of the things that could possibly be done to resolve the problems.

I would love to go back to being a blood donor. Had I continued at the rate I started in my life, in the first 10 or 12 years of my blood donation eligibility, I'd be well into the 200 or 300 or even 400 donations by now. I am sad that I haven't been able to contribute in that way to the province of Alberta. I'm sad that the reason why I couldn't is because there was a lack of resources given to Canadian Blood Services to properly test the blood of myself and thousands of other Albertans so that they could check to make sure that that blood was okay before they took the donation. That's the only reason I haven't donated, because there was a lack of funds given to Canadian Blood Services. Had those funds been there, there may be dozens or thousands of other people, perhaps, who would have received even potentially life-saving therapies. I would really have liked to have thought that my contributions would have been available for those purposes.

I also just want to express my concern that the solution that seems to be presented all the time by the people on the other side of the House is that money is the resolution of all problems, that we simply pay more money, that rather than actually spending time to look at how we actually create community in our society, "How do we bring people to a place where they will contribute and they will be part of the resolution?" is not even part of it. It's not even a subsection of the bill. It's not that they're saying: let's have paid donations, and let's do these other five things that will actually improve the blood donation system in this province. Then I'd be excited about it. You might even convince me that I should just relax about the donation part of it because we're building a system that's going to take care of Albertans, and we have a multipronged process of ensuring that we have success. If that were happening in this bill, I'd be a lot more excited about it. But right now I can say that this bill really does almost nothing, and that makes me very disappointed.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to provide comments on the bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a number of weeks since we celebrated the World Blood Donor Day, and I've noted over the last couple of days that we've had a lot of radio ads about blood donations. You know, apparently blood services right now needs about 13,000 more donors to sign up, and I would encourage everybody to do that.

Blood donations are incredibly important, but we're not here today to talk about blood. We are here today to talk about plasma, and that's a whole different story than blood. Blood plasma, as most people will know, is the straw-coloured part of the blood that contains proteins and antibodies, also known as immunoglobulins, which I won't try to say more than once fast because it's a mouthful, clotting factors, antibodies that fight infections, et cetera. Plasma is incredibly important for research and for producing medicines, and we know that it's also used for a lot of treatments for patients, including recently for patients with COVID-19. We also know that there's been a reduction in plasma donations during the pandemic for obvious reasons. People were staying home and were otherwise not able to go and make donations, so at the same time as our need was increasing, our supply was reducing.

But even before the extraordinary circumstances of COVID-19 there was a lack of donations, and Alberta has been dependent on the United States and Germany for our plasma supply. Mostly it's

been the United States. To me, the opposition talks about how they're worried about us, through this bill, having an increasingly Americanized system for plasma. I would say that when we're relying on the United States for the large amount of plasma that we are relying upon them for, that sounds a lot to me like an Americanized system.

4:30

Only 13 and a half per cent of plasma is coming from Canada because we've got paid blood donations that are banned in Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, and here in Alberta. It's only going to get worse if we don't do something about it. Thankfully, my esteemed colleague from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has introduced Bill 204, and it will help us take action on an issue that we need immediate response on.

The previous speaker indicated that this bill doesn't address a problem, that it doesn't put money towards resolving a problem. Well, I would say that when we're that dependent on foreign sources of plasma, yeah, in fact this bill would actually put money towards solving that problem.

Previously the NDP's bill, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, prohibited payment to an individual who donated plasma, with the exception of Canadian Blood Services, and it stopped Albertans from contributing to the global plasma supply. In a recent interview the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo stated:

A secure supply of plasma is a cornerstone of a modern twenty-first century health care system. The repeal of the Voluntary Blood Donations Act will help patients by making our plasma supply less dependent on international supply which can be unreliable [at the best of times].

You know, from what I can tell, the experts actually agree. John Boyle, the president of the Immune Deficiency Foundation, stated that recognizing plasma donors for the heroes that they are and educating the public on the need for more donations is important.

Furthermore, this bill ensures that our most vulnerable community members are not forced to go without the medicine they need because of ideology or misinformation. These are issues that are all too apparent in the debate over paid plasma.

Kate Vander Mere, founder of Plasma for Life Canada, a patient group that prioritizes dignifying patients, says that the negative impacts of shortages, the anxiety over supply, and the guilt in seeing other patients suffering through shortages weigh heaviest on her and the patients she deals with. Vander Mere's story is one of a young mother. She raises three children, all while trying to recover from each intravenous infusion that she receives, a story not unheard of as many have suffered because of our apathy and because of the Voluntary Blood Donations Act here in Alberta.

The collection of unpaid plasma is estimated to be two to four times more expensive than plasma collected with remuneration. Something has got to give, Mr. Speaker. In 2017 Canadian Plasma Resources offered all of the Canadian plasma they collected to Canadian Blood Services at a projected price of \$166 per litre. In comparison, Canadian Blood Services had a plan to collect 600,000 litres of international plasma, costing \$247 million, through 2024. This worked out to \$412 per litre, or more than double the price of procuring plasma within Canada. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada imported 84 per cent of its plasma, with the percentage set to hit 91 per cent by 2024.

According to Dr. Peter Jaworski, who I had the pleasure of seeing testify before the committee the other day and who is a Canadian professor teaching at Georgetown University, global demand will increase by 6 to 10 per cent each year for the foreseeable future, with numbers only expected to increase even more with an immense reliance on nonremunerated blood donations already. With a mere

5 per cent of the world's population responsible for more than half of all plasma collected globally, shortages will occur, running up health care costs and leaving our patients vulnerable to supply disruptions. In his research Dr. Jaworski argues that relying predominantly on five countries to supply 90 per cent – and I'm going to run through those countries. Germany, the U.S., Hungary, Austria, and Chechnya: those are the five. We rely on them for 90 per cent of the world's total plasma supply. That's what's inflating costs, and that's what's sabotaging those who need access to plasma immediately.

Our government always seeks to provide the best care possible to all Albertans because we owe them that. That is why I stand in support of this bill in addressing a problem that has gone unanswered for too long. Mr. Speaker, our government seeks to bring people together rather than divide. With this bill in place, our government will allow more Albertans to come together by supporting each other through a system that acknowledges and rewards supportive behaviour. It is about time that we allow Albertans to be compensated for the time and resources they invest in donating plasma to increase the global supply. I believe that this bill is simply in the best interests of all Albertans, and I'm so happy and honoured to stand in support of this bill today in the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to offer some comments in the debate here on Bill 204. I want to thank all of my colleagues, both my friends here in the opposition as well as members of the UCP caucus, for their comments, and I want to say, first of all, that I agree with some of the comments that my colleague from Calgary-Glenmore made in her speech. We do have a blood and plasma supply problem that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, a recent report in *The Lancet* indicates that Canadian Blood Services has seen a 30 per cent reduction in the number of donations that has been made to that service by Canadians during the pandemic, so I want to join in all of the calls that all of my colleagues have made to Canadians to donate blood and plasma as much as they can.

I will say, though, Mr. Speaker, that I am forbidden from donating blood myself. Having been a resident of the U.K. in the '90s, I am considered to be at risk of exposure to mad cow disease. So far, so good, but anything can happen, and I'm keeping my fingers crossed that the worms don't start eating my brain any time soon.

Where I do disagree with the colleagues from the UCP backbenches who have spoken on this is with their emphasis on the fact that it seems to be okay to buy plasma from Canadians because currently we are buying plasma from American suppliers. Their argument is that by expanding an immoral practice to Canada, we are going to reduce the suffering of Canadians, and I want to suggest that perhaps, Mr. Speaker, we should be considering alternatives that reduce suffering of Canadians and also don't prolong suffering of the people who are trapped in the cycles of poverty, that are indicated as some of the primary suppliers of blood to these U.S. services.

I would refer all members to a story that was run by an organization called ProPublica. It was coauthored by a television station in Germany, ARD. They looked at the plasma supply in the United States, and they identified that there are 800-and-some plasma collection stations across the United States, but they're, oddly, concentrated along the Mexican border. The reason is that these companies lure poor Mexican migrants into their collection systems to pay them between \$20 and \$40, based on how much they

weigh. So lighter donors get \$20, and heavier donors get \$40. They lure them into their collection facilities to collect blood, and then they go back home to Mexico.

This article very disturbingly identifies one patient named Genesis. Her only source of income is her plasma donations to these companies that are set up on the American border to lure her into the United States. There are very poor controls over the number of times that she crosses the border to give blood. Technically she's only allowed to give blood and plasma two times a week, but the companies freely admit that they actually don't know how many times she has crossed the border to give blood. You know, you can go to one donation centre one day and then to another donation centre the next day. In fact, there is strong evidence to suggest that people like Genesis are giving blood more often than is healthy or recommended, because she in that article freely admitted to lining her pockets with bottles of water so that she met the 110-pound threshold to donate blood and plasma on that day.

4:40

I ask members if we want to set up a parallel system here in Canada where we are purchasing blood and plasma products from people who are similarly disadvantaged. I can expect that members opposite will say: well, what about Germany and Austria and Hungary and the Czech Republic? Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the data, but I have lived in Germany for a couple of years. I know that Germany is a draw for many poor migrants from across Europe and around the world, and I would suspect that the companies that pay to collect plasma in those countries as well overwhelmingly draw from the poor migrants who are seeking to improve their economic fortunes in those countries.

Why is it that the members opposite – I correctly identify a problem, in my view – are proposing the expansion of a grossly immoral system? I think it's shameful, Mr. Speaker, and I think that there is a better way. We don't have to relieve Canadian suffering by profiting off and taking advantage of the suffering of the poor and vulnerable from around the world.

In a column that ran in the *Times Colonist* newspaper in 2018, when the British Columbia government considered banning paying for blood and plasma donations, they identified that one of the issues with Canadian Blood Services' ability to provide plasma is the fact that we don't have any facilities here in the country. Canadian Blood Services asked for approval to spend almost \$900 million on improving their facilities to create plasma products here within Canada. That apparently would get Canada to 50 per cent self-sufficiency when it comes to blood plasma donations and the ability to supply the need for blood plasma here in our own country.

Now, perhaps if we doubled the number, we could reach full self-sufficiency with respect to blood plasma. A billion dollars to Canadian Blood Services, which is a trusted organization that collects voluntary blood and plasma donations from Canadians: that's a small price to pay, I would submit, given that the alternative that the opposite side is proposing is profiting off the misery and suffering of thousands of migrants and other vulnerable people from around the world who don't have any other options but to sell their blood and plasma to these multinational corporations who seek to profit off them.

I urge all members here in the House to not only vote against this bill because of the immoral foundations upon which the blood plasma market is built but also to urge the government to consider some other options for a better way to secure the blood and plasma supply here in our own country. My colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford highlighted some of the needs: to improve research and development in the medical field to limit the demand for blood

plasma products or perhaps extend the ability of the existing plasma supply to meet our needs.

I would encourage members opposite to push members of Executive Council over there to look at some of those things that could be done, perhaps address this issue that Canadian Blood Services raised a couple of years ago with the need to invest in creating new blood plasma collection sites and processing facilities right here in our own country. They've correctly identified, in my view, the risk that Canadians are in when we are relying on a global supply that could be disrupted at any time. Why aren't we working hard to look at these nonmarket solutions that would secure Canadians' blood plasma supply? I don't understand why the default response from members opposite is to see who can make a profit off somebody else's misery and suffering in order to make changes in the health care system.

I hope that in the remaining time, Mr. Speaker, some of the members opposite get the chance to address some of the points, and I certainly look forward to listening to why they think that profiting off the misery and suffering of thousands of vulnerable migrants and other people who are trying to make a living in the United States or Germany or Austria or the Czech Republic or Hungary is an acceptable way to provide a safe and secure blood plasma supply here in our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. There are approximately four minutes remaining prior to the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo closing debate.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'll have to be brief, then. It's the way it is, the way it goes. I just wanted to rise and add to this debate how important I think it is that, of course, we support increasing the blood supply here in Alberta so that patients are healthy.

I just want to actually do a shout-out to the Ansar Youth Association of Edmonton. They're a group of young Muslims that every 56 days organizes members of the Muslim community or the community as a whole – anybody can go; you don't have to be Muslim – to actually go to Canadian Blood Services and donate blood. I've started regularly donating along with the Ansar Youth Association in order to help out where I can. I just want to applaud them for being conscious of this, that it's an important thing that we need to do, and I want to encourage all Albertans to get out there and donate blood every 56 days if it's possible for them to do so.

The other thing that I want to highlight, though, is the fact that, from my understanding, this bill is actually going to decrease the blood supply for Albertans and Canadians by allowing international companies to come to Alberta, and the exported blood will decrease control for Canadian Blood Services on the supply of blood. This is what I find – well, other than the number of issues that have been highlighted by my colleagues here on the opposition side, it's one of the things that I'm concerned about. Of course, you know, the members from the other side try to paint it as a really rosy situation. I agree with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford that perhaps more thought should have been put into this private member's bill, because simply repealing a bill that our government put in place – I don't know. It just seems like – well, I guess there's no other way to put it than the way that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford put it – a very lazy approach. It would have been a lot better to analyze this in a more concrete way to see: what are the defects of the current legislation?

You know, this is the way that I believe we should be approaching changes in legislation in this House. Like, I know that

we can get hyperpartisan in here. I understand that. A lot of times we accuse each other of being ideological, but never have I seen such an ideological approach to a piece of legislation than this one. I find that it would have been a lot better for the member to actually analyze the bill as a whole, reach out to stakeholders, and actually consult on the particular aspects that he wanted to see changed.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate, I would now like to invite the hon. the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to close debate on Bill 204 at second reading.

4:50

Mr. Yao: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's an honour and pleasure to speak before this House, before the members, on my private member's bill. First off, I want to thank the opposition for fulfilling what I thought they would. It's all on record: a lot of rhetoric that meant nothing, a lot of accusations, a lot of questions that had no basis to them. They talk about blood from Mexicans, yet they're willing to buy that blood from those Mexicans. They're accepting of that. That's where I find this confusion.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the hyperpartisan political bill that was in place was the original Bill 3, the blood donations act. This is the same act that was tried to be pushed through the federal government by Senator Pamela Wallin, which was defeated by a Liberal Senate, to be clear, and was followed by lots of communications from Health Canada on the safety of our plasma and blood sector. You know, the members across the way said that I was wasting my time and put no thought in, that this was a lazy bill. Their original bill was a lazy bill, and it damaged a lot of people, see? Again, what the members across the way did not demonstrate is that thousands of patients rely on this. In particular, to me, what the members across the way don't also realize is that it's patients like this that drove me into politics. I have two.

One is Michael Jean. It is because of Michael Jean that I am in here today, standing in this House, because if he was not ill in that hospital, I wouldn't have run across his dad and followed a path that led to us trying to fight for our health system. See, Michael Jean had lymphoma, and he required a test. The test was out of the United States, and our health system, Alberta Health Services, took too long to decide whether to pay for that test. By the time he was finally approved for that test months later, he was too weak. He died a week later after finally being diagnosed with lymphoma.

The second patient – and the members from across the way will remember this because I was asking to please help this other patient – is a good friend of mine. His name is Bo Cooper. He's the son of my good friend Rob Cooper, who I worked with in the fire department. I also worked with Bo when he was with the fire department for a very short little time. Same thing: he had leukemia, and he required a CAR T-cell therapy that was only available in the United States. I asked the Health minister at the time: I know it's a million bucks. I told her I would never chew them up in the House again if she'd pay for that, and she couldn't. I recognize why she couldn't; it was an experimental thing at the end.

It's funny. A year later there was another patient who had the same thing, and that time we were able to get that person to Ontario to get the testing done and stuff like that. Then the third patient, before we ended last term, was actually approved for the full therapy from this CAR T-cell. So I was able to see the evolution of this medical innovation and how it saved Canadians. That's what I hope to do today.

See, what the members across the way don't understand is that this is an international issue. This deals with plasma. They keep on

referring to blood, but this is about plasma, and it's an international issue. It's like the environment. We rely on all human beings, all people to donate to this field so that companies – and, yes, they are all international companies. None of them want to come to Canada because there are too many provinces that won't allow them to access the product. The truth of the matter is that if we can get those biotech companies, those pharmaceutical companies to come here, if we're collecting enough plasma, perhaps – perhaps – they will consider building their fractionation facilities here, perhaps they will start doing the research and development, and perhaps they will work with our fantastic universities and our health system and come up with these medications and these therapies and these treatments and these tests so that they can help Albertans.

But you don't get that, and it's sad that you go back to your ideology regarding labour, really, in the end. It's sad, and it's disgusting. I'm so disappointed by this opposition, that you could not be a better opposition than that, that you could not mention the patients once, that you could not support the patients once in this. There are over 50,000. We introduced you to two that represented so many groups. Did you talk to any of them? No. That's what's so disappointing.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is about us trying to do the right thing. Yeah, there was a short-sighted bill. You're absolutely right. There was a bill that was put in with no thought. There was a lazy bill, and that was the original Bill 3, the bill by this previous NDP government, who are now the opposition. That was the lazy bill. That was the bad bill. That's the bill that impaired thousands of Canadians from getting their medication, that contributed to the overall decline in the amount of plasma available in the world. That's the thing: you guys can't understand that this is an international issue. It deals with all human beings. It's unfortunate.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say: thank you very much, and I hope that everyone will support this private member's bill.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:55 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Jones	Sawhney
Allard	Lovely	Schow
Amery	Luan	Schulz
Dreeshen	Madu	Sigurdson, R.J.
Fir	Nally	Smith
Getson	Neudorf	Stephan
Guthrie	Orr	Walker
Hanson	Rehn	Williams
Horner	Rowswell	Wilson
Issik	Rutherford	Yao

Against the motion:

Dach	Loyola	Schmidt
Feehan	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Gray		

Totals:	For – 30	Against – 7
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[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a second time]

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has the call.

Unpaid Internships

509. Mr. Nielsen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to introduce a bill to expressly ban unpaid internships in order to support youth employment, strengthen fair pay, and improve labour standards and working conditions in Alberta.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, it is possible for a member in this House to go an entire time serving in here and never get the opportunity to present a private member's motion, which, of course, is why I'm so excited to rise this afternoon to present Motion Other than Government Motion 509.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that no Albertan's work or labour should be exploited, taken advantage of, or undervalued in any way. To do those kinds of things would simply be wrong. This is especially true for youth, Alberta's future leaders. Policy debate around unpaid internships has not been a prevalent debate in this Chamber, and it's not often seen on the front pages of our newspapers. It is more commonly discussed in the United States and the United Kingdom, but Alberta and Canada are by no means perfect in supporting our young people, and in Alberta it's unfortunately getting worse. We have seen nothing done by the UCP government to support young people. This inaction, now exacerbated by COVID-19, has made the work environment and financial future for youth worse, leaving many at risk of being exploited by unpaid internships.

Youth have paid a heavy price as of late: the elimination of the student temporary employment program, a reduction of the minimum wage, and ruthless cuts to funding of postsecondary education as well as rising costs of student loans, all, of course, to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate handout that hasn't created any jobs for them. Mr. Speaker, youth need a plan that would actually support them now and into the future. This motion today calls for legislation that includes the banning of unpaid internships to be part of that plan. By banning unpaid internships, youth will be provided certainty that they actually have the support of this government. With the minimum wage going down, many youth are already expecting to make less. The current climate for youth employment provides a way for youth's labour to be taken advantage of. That's why it's important that as an Assembly today we make a clear statement that we will not allow that to happen here in Alberta.

Now, to be clear, there is nothing wrong with youth seeking more experience. Volunteering and practicums are a useful and beneficial way to gain that experience. Universities, colleges, and technical institutions all provide many opportunities for that experience, which often include some pay. Many of those, mind you, have had to be cancelled because of the cuts to postsecondary education. But where there are explicit and targeted attempts to save costs by exploiting and taking advantage of free labour, we must say no to this, Mr. Speaker. Believing that just because someone is young, they should be able to do it for free is simply wrong and unjust. Just because someone is young does not mean that they do not have to pay expenses in their own lives. Going to university is expensive. In fact, it is more expensive because of the recent changes by this UCP government. There are also costs to the basic necessities such as food, rent, and transportation. Youth have bills to pay and therefore should be paid for their work and labour.

Statistics now show that the economic fallout and the loss of employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic hit young people, especially women, the hardest. In February there were roughly 285,000 Albertans under the age of 25 working. By March that number fell to around 231,000, a decline of 18.9 per cent. That drop was even larger among young female workers: 23.4 per cent, or roughly 34,000. By the end of April the employment rate for Albertans under the age of 25 had fallen by nearly 20 percentage points, with young women seeing their rate cut in half, falling from 55.9 per cent in February to just 30.3 per cent in April. It should be noted that the sectors that young people are predominantly employed in are retail, food services, and sales. All of those areas were affected by social distancing guidelines.

Mr. Speaker, young people need to know that they will be able to get substantive, meaningful work experience in order to have the best shot at gaining quality, meaningful employment later on. Young people are already graduating into so much uncertainty, not just this year but for the next few years to come. By not doing anything to stimulate and support youth employment and lowering the minimum wage by \$2 an hour for youth under 18, which doesn't and hasn't worked, we will likely take a bad problem and make it even worse.

In these uncertain times so many Albertans are desperate for opportunities. It is understandable why youth would negotiate lower wages for themselves just to get that work experience. However, youth should not be able to negotiate their wages to zero dollars an hour. It's easy for postsecondary graduates to get caught in a cycle of doing free work. This creates a poor working environment for more than just the unpaid interns; it creates a culture that anyone's work could just be replaced with free work. Employers should foster a workplace culture that values employees.

I know that a common argument for supporting unpaid internships is that it will often lead to a full-time job later. I think it's great that workplaces want to seek out new talent and then bring them aboard full-time to their organizations later. However, if a workplace is going to invest in the future, they should truly invest in all their employees and pay them fairly.

Not paying our youth has further-reaching societal impacts as well. Are food banks meant for recent graduates who are working full-time? I think we can all agree that the answer to that is no. As members of this Chamber during these motions we have an opportunity to call for how we want Alberta to look in the future. We have an opportunity to tell Albertans what we believe the government should prioritize. I hope that all members in this Chamber agree today that young people in Alberta deserve to be paid fairly.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the chance to present Motion 509 to the Assembly. I would urge all members to support this motion and thus support our young emerging leaders here in Alberta. I certainly look forward over the next hour to listening to the discussion on this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before the Assembly is Motion Other than Government Motion 509, moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. We will go to the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Schow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today to speak on this motion, Motion 509. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore is right. It is a privilege to draw a private member's motion. I was fortunate enough to do so in the previous session. I drew I think it was 506, and to my delight that motion, about diversifying the economy in southern Alberta, was passed.

I'll tell you that these are great for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it happens on Monday. Now, some of you don't know it, but Monday is my favourite day of the week.

Mr. Nicolaides: What?

Mr. Schow: Absolutely. My favourite day of the week.

Mr. Nicolaides: How come?

Mr. Schow: Primarily because Monday is like New Year's Day but once a week. You get a nice refresh. Some people hate Monday. I know Garfield hates Monday, but I love Monday, not the least of which is because I get to debate private members' business like this motion here in front of me.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Now, I read the motion: urge the government to introduce a bill to expressly ban unpaid internships in order to support youth employment, strengthen fair pay, and improve employment standards and working conditions in this glorious province of Alberta.

5:10

Now, our government is committed to encouraging youth employment and equipping young Albertans with the skills they need to attain that employment. Alberta's Employment Standards Code does not define internships. What it does do, however, is broadly define work, Mr. Speaker, as "providing a service." It also defines an employee as someone employed to perform work who is entitled to wages. With this in mind, under the government's current definitions any internship or other work experience program outside an approved educational program should be paid already.

Now, an exception to this exists within the present code, and that is when an individual in question is part of an educational practicum. These practicums cannot be in the same realm as a standard internship. In many cases such as health care these students are not fully qualified or certified to perform the duties on their own, Mr. Speaker. These students require the direct supervision and sign-off of someone who has already received their education and is licensed to take responsibility for the duties being performed. These practicums are an extension of the classroom and a means to learn the vocation that they are studying within a hands-on setting that cannot be done in a classroom. It would be inappropriate to require those doing practicums to be paid by the employer for their work when they are not fully qualified to do that work independently. This would require employers to pay not only the individual doing the practicum but also the preceptor for doing the job together.

My fear, Mr. Speaker, is that implementing this motion could result in fewer spots than would otherwise be open for practicums and that youth would suffer as a result. Now, I would never want the youth in this province to suffer an inability to find work experience, and I find it terribly discouraging when I hear the words repeated over and over by the members opposite: exploit, exploit the workers. I know that in the United States of America – I have a lot of American friends; I did my master's degree down in the United States, in Washington, DC – unpaid internships are all over the place. Now, in Canada their occurrence is a little more scarce, but in the U.S. they're all over the place.

But I also do believe in the principle that you can't get a job without experience and that you can't get experience without work. So while I want to ensure that workers are not being exploited as the members opposite have laid out, I also want to make sure that we have the necessary skills going forward in the workforce to fill the jobs that need to be done.

There is a case that, I'm sure, comes to many minds while discussing this topic, those apprentices working in the trades. Trade apprentices are only doing the work which they have been cleared and certified to do and have already received their practical, hands-on training for. This is how trade schools are designed, Mr. Speaker. For these reasons, I don't think it would be appropriate to use the way trade apprenticeships work as a comparison for this case.

The minister of labour already has a policy in place to review disputes that come up between employers and employees in the case of internships. This is done on a case-by-case basis. As it stands, unpaid internships are not a widespread problem, as I had mentioned. Even with the higher unemployment rate we have experienced in recent years, this has not become a significant area of concern. Again, we don't want to be exploiting people – I get that – but I don't think we have that problem here in Canada.

There are some sectors where we do not have control, and these fall within federal jurisdiction. It is encouraging to me that the federal government is set to bring forward legislation amending the Canada Labour Code. This is expected to be effective September 1 of this year and will limit unpaid internships to those that are part of educational programs, which was already in place in this amazing province that we have here in Alberta.

With all this in mind, I believe our government is already addressing the primary concern of this motion and that the federal government is covering areas under their jurisdiction. I see little point in urging the government to introduce a bill for work that it is already doing, Mr. Speaker, and I understand and appreciate the concern of the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

I will be voting against this motion, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to do the exact same. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak to Motion 509? Edmonton-McClung, go ahead.

Mr. Dach: Absolutely. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this important motion before the House, and thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for bringing it up. I know that there may be members in this House who will recall a very heart-rending and tragic incident not too many years past involving a young man who was seeking to gain entry into the world of radio and television arts and was involved as an intern at a local radio station and, while so doing, would do significant hours while also undertaking his role as a student. This went on for some time, and as a result of, it's postulated, exhaustion and lateness of the hour during his internship time frames, while driving home he was involved in a motor vehicle accident and was, tragically, killed. It brought into question many of the rules around the internship issue here in the province of Alberta.

I bring this up because I happen to have known the young man and his family, and it was a very, very devastating blow to their family. I know that it's something that they still feel now, to this day, as somebody in their prime of life, late teens, early 20s, so very much interested in getting into the radio and television arts that he was willing to devote his time as an intern in unpaid work, which led to perhaps an overcommitment on his part and an untimely death due to, it's postulated, exhaustion on the roadway and a motor vehicle accident.

It's not without cause that we bring these matters up, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about rules that should surround internships, and those that govern them should reflect the fact that these should not be used as a way to basically allow a company or an organization to obtain free labour, which has happened in the past. This is one of the things that we're hoping to avoid.

Now, there are typically a few types of occupations which have historically had this type of an internship offered, and radio and television arts was one of them. I know that that particular tragic incident certainly snapped a lot of heads to attention in that realm, especially here in Alberta, and led to some real thought-changing processes in some of the radio and television stations in the province.

Now, I had some experience working, actually, in a television station in my young working career, but it actually was in paid work. It was a STEP program job, one of my early jobs, and was a \$5-an-hour STEP program job at QCTV community programming. I was a master control operator, putting programs on the air using video tape machines, gaining work experience. Unfortunately, of course, that program was cancelled by the Conservative government previous to our government, and then subsequently, after we reinitiated it, the Conservative government currently has killed that program again.

That was a system of paid entry into the world of work which subsidized the employer and allowed an individual young person to gain work experience and allowed them, as it allowed me, to help pay for their early education, and in so doing, it allowed me to know and learn a little bit more about a different area of work that I otherwise wouldn't have had any experience in. At least it was paid. Unfortunately, it's been eliminated by the current government.

5:20

However, where these internships are not paid, you'll find that it's possibly because of the language around the legislation that governs them and governs what defines an internship. It's been said in the past that the clarity of the language and the circumstances are less than ideal.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I think that's one of the things that the Member for Edmonton-Decore is attempting to get at when he so clearly states that we should not allow the legislation in this province to permit an unpaid internship to exist, to make very clear that these unpaid internships are not something that our labour legislation should allow, either expressly or clandestinely by not having very clear language defining exactly what an internship would be.

I think that it's clear, as mentioned by the Member for Cardston-Siksika, that certainly educational practicums and so forth are exempted, and that's certainly not something that this proposed motion attempts to address. The motion actually is looking to address a blatant practice of seeking to gain unpaid labour by way of designating an individual's work as an internship. That's something that I think the workforce has been asking for for some time, and I know that there are other examples that could be provided beyond the radio and television arts world of work. I know that when I trained as a teacher, I did practicums. I trained as a nursing orderly. I did practicums and didn't expect that to be paid. It was part of the educational component of what I was training to do at the time.

But that's not, as I said, Mr. Speaker, what this legislation is aimed at. This legislation is aimed at an express attempt by employers to avoid paying for labour. I think that's something that all Albertans would support and would expect, that if they're sending their young son or daughter out into the workforce for the first time, they're not sending them to a place that's going to get them to do work but not pay them for it. That's something that has happened in the past in this province, and I believe that nowhere in this province should we expect free labour to be given to a company just because the company believes it can get away with defining the

employment as an internship rather than what it actually is, and that would be a course of employment.

The time frame that we're in right now, of course, is one which demands that we do everything possible to encourage our youth to engage in the workforce and to make it as easy as possible for them to do so. Certainly, allowing a company to take advantage of a worker who so desperately wants to get into the workforce at this point in time, where there's so much unemployment right now, is a risky thing to allow. The legislation should be extremely clear, and this Legislative Assembly should adopt this motion to ensure that it is clear to employers that an internship is not something that can be convoluted to be interpreted as a job that you don't get paid for.

I hope that members opposite understand how explicit this motion is and that it's certainly not attempting to eliminate the long-standing practice of allowing practicums to exist and allowing work experience to exist. But it is certainly aimed at those employers who would seek to take advantage of a young worker who would dearly love to get into a certain industry – some of them are very attractive, and there's a lineup to get in – such as the radio and television arts and, in so doing, get a lot of unpaid work done by so-called interns, who are, really, actually performing work that's beneficial to the company to gain work experience that might benefit them in their later working careers.

I'm grateful to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for bringing forward this motion. I think that if I was a young person looking to get into the workforce right now, I'd be very grateful to the member for bringing this forward. I know that in many industries where typically a young person would take advantage of this, they'll think . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, followed by Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak today on the motion from the Member for Edmonton-Decore, Motion 509, that calls on the government to "introduce a bill to expressly ban unpaid internships in order to support youth employment, strengthen fair pay, and improve labour standards and working conditions in Alberta." I'm not in favour of this motion, primarily because it is based on a misconception of what unpaid internships are and the standards that already exist around them. Unpaid internships can best be described as the application of classroom learnings in a workplace setting. As such, they are more so an extension of the classroom. In some cases academic institutions officially recognize this connection and offer credits for internship experience.

I want to quote from a 2017 column written by a representative of Community and Social Services. I found this column very helpful in clarifying some of the misconceptions around unpaid internships. The column says:

Employers need to be very careful about offering unpaid internships. Simply calling a position an 'internship' does not exempt it from Employment Standards . . .

Accordingly, an internship may be unpaid only if the internship solely benefits the intern by providing [him or] her with training or skills without the employer benefitting from the intern's actions [or] efforts.

It goes on to say:

Alberta's Employment Standards Code considers an "employee" to be anyone employed to do work who receives or is entitled to wages. Work is defined as providing a service to the employer.

Accordingly, if an intern is doing work for an organization, they're entitled to the minimum wage. To say it more plainly, it is already illegal not to pay someone for the work they perform.

Exceptions to this are when a student is engaged in certain types of approved formal training, as I stated previously.

In light of this, I don't believe that expressly banning unpaid internships will do anything to support youth employment. In fact, I think it will have the opposite effect. I fear that it will create confusion for community organizations over the nature of work they're allowed to recruit volunteers for. It will create confusion for employers when considering if they should create opportunities for practicum students. Ultimately, it will give youth fewer opportunities to learn and gain practical experience for their eventual entry into the job market.

It's for these reasons that I will not be supporting this motion, and I encourage everyone in the Chamber to not support it as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to address this motion, and I'd like to take my time to clear up a misconception that is being presented repeatedly on the government side about the intent of this motion and, in fact, the reasons behind the motion as well, and I do that from the perspective of a university instructor, having been an instructor both at MacEwan University and for many years at the University of Calgary responsible for student practicums, having taught both practicum placement classes and, of course, the classes that go along with that.

I think the thing that's most important here is that we separate out three pieces of work that could possibly be done at a work site, that are being confused by the government, for anybody who happens to be listening. I want to make it very clear that there are already rules and regulations that include, indeed, in labour relations law a separation between the three different ways in which students may be engaged in work at a work site. In my discussions I hope to clarify that a practicum is not the same thing as an internship, and it's not the same thing as an apprenticeship. There are three distinct entities. In this case, if you are arguing that we are going to limit practicums or limit apprenticeships, for example, then you are missing the point of the bill, and you're misusing the language that is readily available at every advanced institution in this province. But, you know, treading the boards at a university doesn't seem to be the favoured behaviour of many of the members of the opposite side.

5:30

So I want to clearly outline some of these things. In this motion "internships" does not refer to practicums because practicums have four components that internships do not have. First of all, practicums have the component of having an external supervisor, reviewer who is responsible. Now, in the case of the programs that I was involved in, of course, that was the program of study that the students were involved in, and that is true for practicum students in any program of studies. It doesn't matter what the nature is. So you have the external reviewer.

Secondly, within that external review you have a professional who is trained in the activity that is to be learned by the student, and that professional's goal is the accomplishment of the student learning the same professional standards and practices that they are in adherence to. So you not only have an institutional external, but you have a personal professional external.

The third difference is that you have explicit learning goals; that is, an explicit learning contract that is established by the external reviewer, that is supervised by the external reviewer in its application in the work setting.

So all of these things are explicitly different between the nature of a practicum and an internship, and at no point in this particular motion are we trying to limit practicums. Practicums can exist even if you have zero internships because they are a different entity, that is clearly described by the institutions that supervise them. I think it's very important that we keep those things separate from each other and that we argue what's actually happening here.

Now, what's happening here is that we are asking the government to ensure that there is not a situation that allows a young person to be involved in a place where they are explicitly hired to do work without pay on the idea that they somehow will be given the opportunity to gain experiences which will later lead to potential additions to their resumé and, therefore, potentially getting jobs based on having something on their resumé that other people don't have.

Now, you may ask, you know: is this a big problem or not? But I think the first thing we have to remember is that what we've seen under the UCP government is a constant, repeated attempt to bring into Canada American models of just about everything that they have looked at. They've brought in American models on the Chicago principles, for example, for universities, brought in American models for blood donations. They've brought in American models for health care and a variety of other situations. We know that they choose to do that, and we do know that unpaid internships are rampant in the United States and do exist here in Canada as well.

What the Member for Edmonton-Decore is attempting to do is trying to pre-empt a very negative situation happening before anybody gets exploited. I think that's a commendable, reasonable decision with forethought into what the implications are should we allow things of this nature to occur in this country because using people for free labour just because they are young, I think, is morally reprehensible.

I know that we're already concerned that this government has done a number of things to reduce opportunities for young people to get appropriate experience before they head into the workforce. We know, for example, that they have decreased minimum wage, so already taking advantage of youth as the only reason that you should get paid less. It doesn't say that you get paid less than minimum wage if you need a period of training. What it says is that if you are of a certain age, it doesn't matter how long you've been doing the job. We know that this government has already had a concerted attack on young people and their employment.

In addition, they've also killed the STEP program, which allowed many young people to get some of their first jobs, including the once Premier of this province and many other people. I know I had an opportunity, when I was in the workforce, to supervise students in STEP, and it was a great opportunity for students to receive some compensation and to also learn with some supervision at their work site so that they could go on and make choices around their career and increase the items on their resumé so they could potentially get more jobs.

Having seen the government do these things to attack youth wages has made us very concerned about what they're going to do in terms of bringing in yet another American-style, negative policy that will be detrimental to many Albertans. I think that we need to go back to the point of what this particular motion is about. This motion is about explicitly putting into regulation something that we know will protect young people from being exploited before it begins to happen. I think it would be a shame if we had to wait for exploitation to occur before we actually decided to try to prevent that exploitation. I think exploitation already is concern enough for us to have a bill, a bill that would help us to define things.

Clearly, the government is unclear on the definitions. As I've said, they're confusing in their conversations practicums, apprenticeships, and internships, yet much of that is already defined in terms of regulations or in terms of laws in this province. Yet they're already confused, thereby making it more important that we do have a bill that provides clarity on these issue and provides clarity about why the position called internship cannot be an unpaid internship.

Having said that, I think it's very important that we understand that this does not cover anybody in an academic program in an educational institution by design, that it does not in any way interfere with practicums because the conditions of practicums are different, as I've described, with the external review, with the external institution, with the explicit contracted learning goals that are all supervised by professionals in the field.

We also know that internship does not include apprenticeship, which was also addressed once by the Member for Cardston-Siksika. We know that that is not true because apprenticeships are also very clearly defined in labour relations law. The process of how one becomes an apprentice and how one is remunerated in apprenticeship is very clear within the law.

We know it doesn't include either educational institutions or apprenticeships, so the arguments that we've heard from the government side of the House on this, therefore, are moot. The question is: should we allow the potential for young people to be put in a situation of providing services to an employer without receiving remuneration? This side of the House says no.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar should there be time remaining.

Mr. Getson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Considering the lineup, I think we'll definitely have two opposite sides of the looking glass after the member follows up with me.

I do like the fact that the Member for Edmonton-Decore brought this forward. I know he's a thoughtful member of the Assembly, and I believe that he has some really good intentions. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford had some points that I might agree with. However, largely I'm in disagreement from him based on a perspective that I have that isn't completely lined up with socialism.

I rise today to speak on the motion from the Member for Edmonton-Decore. The motion reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to introduce a bill to expressly ban unpaid internships in order to support youth employment, strengthen fair pay, and improve labour standards and working conditions in Alberta.

Again, I think the member is bringing forward something with the best intents, but there are a few items in here where we're getting a little bit hung up on the wording, and I've got some concerns with that. I want to bring that to your attention if I may, sir. Our government believes in youth employment, absolutely, but it's not exploitation, as some of your colleagues have tried to say. Fair compensation, upholding the highest standards of labour and working conditions are critical to our success. These are things that we hold near and dear to our hearts. Again, we all came up through the process in one way, shape, or form or the other to get where we're at today. Again, coming back to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who had said that there was no exploitation up to the point, so, you know, I might offer: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Don't mess with things that are working pretty good right now.

5:40

The motion calls for the government to legislate unpaid internships. Internships, whether paid or unpaid, are excellent opportunities for students to develop skills and experience. These skills often give them an upper hand over their peers in the job market and upon graduation. Again, sometimes you actually have to get out there and volunteer, do these things, take an internship. It may not have the best pay or any pay at all, but again it's to receive that academic value and that accreditation in the field you're going into. Internships allow students to gain hands-on experience in different fields and industries. It's been a tried, tested, and true model for a number of years, not just in the U.S. but kind of all over the world. When combined with an official program, interns may receive academic credit for the internship experience.

My opposition to the motion stems from a few key concerns. I apologize; I'm getting a little tongue-tied. Not enough caffeine today. The first is that blanket ban on unpaid internships. In many cases interns don't have the full range of education, experience, or competencies to perform at the same work level as permanent staff. Again, leading into it, in fact, Mr. Speaker, that's the entire premise of an internship. More importantly, this is a nonissue. Again, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Let me explain why. In a 2017 article in the *Red Deer Advocate*, Charles Strachey, a representative of Community and Social Services, clarifies the following:

Alberta's Employment Standards Code considers an "employee" to be anyone employed to do work who receives or is entitled to wages. Work is defined as providing a service to the employer.

Accordingly, an internship may be unpaid only if the internship solely benefits the intern by providing [them] with training or skills without the employer benefitting from the intern's actions . . .

Again, the favour of having the internship is in the great advantage to the intern themselves, not to the employer. In these situations the employer is making an investment in the training and development of the interns. This often has a mutual benefit for employers who later rehire former interns as permanent staff. Again, they're getting a chance to educate them, to get them that experience, and if they make the cut and they're good, oftentimes those individuals form part of that organization.

I cannot quantify the cost for employers who dedicate time and effort in the employee resource training. Similarly, I cannot quantify the long-term benefits for the interns, especially when it comes to their future employment wages. My concern is for organizations that are willing to make that investment in training Alberta's future workforce. Many not-for-profits find themselves in this position. To be clear, however, interns who do provide a service that benefits their employer are already being compensated. Ultimately, a blanket ban on unpaid internship in every case would result in fewer real-world learning opportunities for youth and fewer opportunities for organizations to build up those workers of tomorrow.

My second concern, Mr. Speaker, is how this motion may cause confusion around volunteer positions that help youth to develop those transferable skill sets for employment. For example, a young person who volunteers their time at a local not-for-profit may be tasked with – I don't know – answering the phone, as an example, responding to calls or e-mails. Administrative skills like these are foundational to any job. The volunteer positions also have many benefits for the community. They offer a youth to make tangible contributions to their local communities. They allow youth to develop skills that are transferable to that workplace. They provide critical support to organizations that could always use an extra set

of hands. This combination of altruism and practicality often results in a net benefit for the volunteer, the organization, and society as a whole. The implication of Motion 509 is that because work is being done without payment, it's automatically exploitive, and that's a bit of a reach. Again, understanding just the wording in itself, it's probably not the intent, but that's kind of the caution that I'm seeing here.

When it comes to volunteering, I'm sure the members opposite agree that this couldn't be further from the truth. You know, volunteer organizations definitely are not taking advantage of the individuals that potentially are under that internship model. This motion risks creating confusion for volunteers and for organizations, and honestly we don't want to see that happen because getting enough folks in those volunteer organizations, getting that skills experience go a long way down the road.

Alberta's youth have agency. They feel free to participate in many of the paid and, yes, unpaid internships that exist. In their own cost-benefit analysis they would consider the future benefit of participating in these particular positions, the connections they'll make, the skills and knowledge they'll gain, the individual policies of their academic institutions. Rest assured, they're already protected under the Alberta Employment Standards Code if they are asked to perform work that benefits their employer and aren't being paid for it.

This motion would ultimately take away the opportunities and options for our young people, and that's why, unfortunately, I won't be supporting it, but I do believe your intent, sir, was honest. It was trying to get the right intent there. There's just a little bit of hair on that dog.

Coming back to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, you know, he makes these assertions that our government is all about American style. Well, I might counter that point with: I'd rather have the American style than the Venezuelan style. So let's not get too fixated on those type of items and get up on our soapbox or we can definitely go down the rabbit hole there.

To the Member for Edmonton-Decore: I appreciate the motion coming forward, just a couple of those items, sir.

With that, I'll cede my time to the next speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, if you still wish.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer a few comments on the motion that my friend from Edmonton-Decore brought forward to urge the government to introduce a bill that would expressly ban unpaid internships in order to support youth employment. That's what I want to focus on in the brief time that I have today, because I think the motion that my friend brought forward really touches on a larger issue that many of the people who have intervened in this debate have identified, and that's the problem of youth unemployment here in Alberta.

The fact that we have such high youth unemployment makes youth extremely vulnerable to being taken advantage of by these kinds of unpaid internships that my friend wants to eliminate. I just want to stress that while I support this motion, I don't think it goes far enough. I think there is a lot of additional work that Alberta could do to enhance job prospects for youth.

Certainly, my friend from Edmonton-Rutherford highlighted that one of the things that could be done is to restore funding to the STEP program. That's an incredibly important program that provides a lot of youth employment opportunities, job training opportunities that have been taken away, unfortunately, by this government.

I also want to hearken back to the debate that we just completed around blood donations. Certainly, the members opposite used the country of Germany as a model for supporting their arguments in favour of paid plasma donations. I think Germany is an instructive model when it comes to tackling the youth unemployment problem because recent statistics prior to COVID reaching Germany: Germany had by far the lowest youth unemployment rate in all of Europe. They had youth unemployment of 6.2 per cent in January 2020, which was by far the lowest in the entire European Union and, in fact, I think probably one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the entire industrialized world. We would certainly be throwing a parade for any government that reached youth unemployment levels as low as 6.2 per cent, if they managed to achieve it.

Mr. Speaker, Germany's approach to youth employment is very different from the approach that we've taken here in Canada and particularly in Alberta. The Member for Cardston-Siksika talked about apprenticeships and identified that, you know, there was a difference between apprenticeships and unpaid interns in that apprenticeships go through a period of training before starting their apprenticeship period and they're only cleared to do a certain scope of work whereas unpaid interns don't necessarily have the education that the employer is looking for and need to be directly supervised. In order to defray some of the cost to the employer, he seemed to have suggested that it was fair to not expect the intern to be compensated for that. I think rather than defending the current system of unpaid internships, what the government should be doing is looking at expanding the model of apprenticeship here in the province of Alberta.

5:50

I know that the Minister of Advanced Education has embarked upon a project that was reviewing the apprenticeship program here in Alberta. I certainly encourage him to look at the German model of apprenticeships when he is undertaking that work because, Mr. Speaker, here in Alberta apprentices are confined to about 50 or 60 – forgive me; I can't remember the number of trades that are identified under the apprenticeship legislation – occupations that are identified as trades. Some of them are mandatory trades. Carpentry, welding: you have to be a certified journeyperson to be able to practise that trade. There are other voluntary trades that are identified, but there are a whole host of occupations that could be included in the apprenticeship system that aren't.

Certainly, Germany has a much broader apprenticeship system than ours currently does. There are over 350 different types of occupations that are considered under the German apprenticeship model. You could be a bank teller and work in finance and go into that occupation through an apprenticeship system in Germany, and that's not open to Canadian students here. I think that's one of the reasons that Germany has one of the lowest youth unemployment rates, because of the massively expanded apprenticeship model that has been used in that country quite successfully.

One of the other things that has made youth unemployment so low in Germany is the open co-operation between corporations and the trade unions that represent their workers. Workers have important roles to play in the decisions that companies make in Germany. I know that my friend from Edmonton-Decore has worked for a long time to give workers a stronger voice and say in the decisions that corporations make and certainly staunchly defended the safety committees that our government advocated.

I think, Mr. Speaker, experts agree that the German model of corporate governance, which gives a larger voice to workers, results in lower youth unemployment because they are able to correctly identify the needs of the company and be able to identify the educational needs of the country so that those corporations are

never left searching for people to train because the school system in that country is training those people who are ready to go to work in the system.

I would also urge members opposite to look at giving employees a stronger voice in the governance of the corporations that are operating here in Alberta. Now, I don't hold out much hope that this current government will actually take that approach, but it has definitely worked for the people of Germany, and I think that it could work for Albertans as well.

Now, there are some problems, Mr. Speaker. I'm well aware that we can't just copy and paste the German model here and superimpose it onto the Alberta school system. One of the significant problems of the German model, as I see it, is that they stream students far too early. I think that by the time they're 11 or 12, they've taken a number of tests to determine whether or not they're bound for university or they're bound for a skilled trade or some other kind of vocation. I don't think Albertans would accept that. I certainly have never heard any of my constituents demanding that their kids be tested in grade 6 to determine whether or not they'll be eligible for university – they're not – but one of the things that I think many constituents would support is a broader exposure after the age of 12, perhaps, to the kinds of vocations.

I thank my friend from Edmonton-Decore for bringing this motion forward. I think the problem of youth unemployment has some solutions that I've outlined, and I hope that the government votes in favour of this motion and looks at those . . .

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would now like to invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore to close debate.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate all of the comments this afternoon around Motion 509. As I was taking notes – I would probably have started at the top, but it was interesting. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar said something that I feel maybe that I'll start back there, and that was around whether the motion goes far enough. Listening to some members opposite around that there may be some concerns about what the motion might do, I think that where we find ourselves here is a kind of confusion a little bit about what a motion is supposed to be able to do versus what a private member's bill would be able to accomplish. I would have certainly loved to be able to address some of the things that members have brought up this afternoon, but I think what we would have started to do is tread into the territory of a private member's bill, which, of course, is not what we have here this afternoon. We merely have a motion.

I think what this motion would have allowed the government to do, as it said, was "to introduce a bill to expressly ban unpaid" – and as the motion goes. I think this left a lot of latitude for the government to be able to look at unpaid internships and how we can address that. I know that the Member for Cardston-Siksika said that, yes, there is a big problem down in the U.S. – I would absolutely agree – around unpaid internships, but to say that we don't have a problem up here in Canada I don't think is entirely accurate.

I guess I'm wondering why we find ourselves in this day and age where we seem to want to wait until things go sour, wait until things go wrong, wait until people are negatively impacted before we're willing to do something. You know, why is it that we're going to wait for the federal government to finish up what they're doing before we say, "Well, we don't need to act," or "We do need to act a little bit"? Let's not wait. We finally always seem to catch ourselves in that type of cycle.

At the very least I think that the motion allows the government to be able to address the concerns around unpaid internships. I will thank the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for pointing out that distinction between the three different categories that we're looking at here. Again, using those, we will get the opportunity with which to address that through a bill that the government was able to bring forward.

I guess I would like to express some disappointment when I hear things from members about socialism. There's always that berating tone towards the members of the Official Opposition. I don't think that's productive, and at the end of the day this is about me as a private member, Mr. Speaker, and wanting to bring forward the ability for Albertans to prosper just like anybody else in this province,

and I think it's incumbent upon us as an Assembly to be able to do that.

I do appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to present Motion 509. I hope members will reconsider and allow the government to explore this further through a piece of legislation that will address unpaid internships, and I would ask all members of the Assembly to support Motion 509 this afternoon.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 509 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) it is now 6 o'clock and the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca