



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 2, 2020

Day 61

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, November 2, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

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

Ms Elhard:

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us today are guests of the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane. Please welcome Earl, Bryson, and Caleb Hickok of Advantage Cogen. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Statement by the Speaker

Royal Canadian Legion Poppy Campaign

The Speaker: Hon. members, prior to proceeding to Ministerial Statements, the Speaker would like to make a brief statement. This is in particular for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. If you could all do me a favour, reach into your pocket, pull out your cellphone that is, I'm sure, turned off, open a text message on your private cellphones, not on any government cellphones as it doesn't work, and text poppy4YYC, if you're from southern Alberta, or poppy4EDM. I know that many of you have already swung by the Speaker's office to get yourself an extra poppy, and some of you say: I will pay tomorrow. In advance of that, if you text the poppy fund today while seated – again, 20222, poppy4YYC or poppy4EDM – my staff will be more than pleased to provide you with additional poppies. Please bring your cellphone as proof of purchase.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Community and Social Services has a statement to make.

Family Violence Prevention Month

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November is Family Violence Prevention Month, and all of us have a role to play in addressing an issue that crosses all cultures and stretches to every corner of our society. Today we wear the purple ribbon as a symbol to all who know the pain of family violence that they do not have to suffer in silence. Family violence is devastating and happens every day. During Family Violence Prevention Month I want to remind Albertans of what we can all do to help those experiencing family violence by knowing where to go to find help. This is not a situation to be suffered in silence or suffered at all. We must realize that it is in every community and can be experienced by anyone, young or old, regardless of gender, orientation, or ethnic background.

The daily toll of domestic violence escalated during the pandemic. Episodes of abuse increased in frequency and severity as families experienced the stress of job loss and/or isolation. While women and children are often the targets, abuse can happen to anyone. People may be caught between their abuser and the effects of COVID-19 such as fewer interactions with friends, colleagues, and other family members. While it may feel difficult or impossible to leave an abuser, particularly without financial security or support networks, reaching out to a local shelter by phone or text can help. Many shelters offer services and outreach programs, including help with planning to leave safely.

Now more than ever I encourage all Albertans to help put an end to family violence and show those in need that help is available. If you need to speak to someone, the family violence info line at 310.1818 is available in more than 170 languages to support Albertans at any time of the day. This year's theme, #wheretoturn, encourages you to learn what resources are available in your community to support those affected by family violence. Join the conversation and help make a difference.

Thank you.

Member Irwin: Family violence happens every single day in Alberta. Our province has the third-highest rate of self-reported family violence among Canadian provinces, and keep in mind that these are just the reported cases. We know that domestic violence has increased during COVID. This trend is incredibly alarming, so much so that the United Nations has labelled it a shadow pandemic, but we must be careful not to attribute this increase solely to COVID. Sadly, we've seen an increase over the last number of years. Women and children in particular are vulnerable as it can be extremely difficult to leave their abusers. We must acknowledge as well the disproportionate amount of violence that indigenous women and girls and two-spirit folks experience, and we must recommit to addressing the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls crisis. Family violence is preventable, and today as we reflect on the start of Family Violence Prevention Month in Alberta, it's more important than ever that we take this issue seriously. This is a time to speak out and to support each other. This is a time to increase awareness of the supports available and to highlight the dire need for more services and to act on this.

We've seen investments from the federal government in shelters and to organizations that are addressing domestic and gender-based violence, but we need to see the same from the province. This isn't a partisan issue. This is about people and ensuring that they are safe in their homes and their communities, and this is about making sure that all Albertans are able to participate equally in the economic, social, and cultural life of our province. We can introduce legislation to help survivors and those fleeing violence, but without a range of resources and supports that legislation is meaningless. This means that we need significant investments in child care, in affordable housing, and in wraparound services. With robust supports in place we can all work

together to care for each other, to uplift each other, and, ultimately, we can end family violence.

Thank you.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Suicide Prevention Initiatives in Medicine Hat

Ms Glasgo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to pay tribute to the community that raised me and supported me and the community that continues to have the backs of others when it seems like nobody else does. As a born and raised Hatter, I can say that throughout this year Medicine Hat has been through a world of hurt. Over the past few months our community has lost several young fathers, brothers, friends, sons, and neighbours to suicide. Suicide isn't something that comes easily for us to talk about. It's scary, unfortunately stigmatized, and the pain that lingers from it spreads like wildfire throughout our communities.

According to the Centre for Suicide Prevention men are four times as likely to die by suicide. Other statistics demonstrate that men are less likely to reach out for help because of negative stigma and perceived weakness. This has to change. Hatters spoke up in deafening volumes, advocating for resources and sharing their stories. They've held prayer gatherings, started community action groups, participated in government task forces, and gone all in to help their friends, neighbours, and for that, I am so proud of them.

1:40

I knew that my role as an MLA was to bring this to the attention of the Premier, the Minister of Health, and, most importantly, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and I am so grateful to say that as of last week an additional \$220,000 worth of support has been deployed to prevent and take action on suicide.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that Albertans are tough, but we all need help, and there's no shame in that. This announcement is a prime example of how reaching out for help can create change. Alberta's government saw a grief-stricken community and has taken action to increase access to services for those in need.

For anyone in Medicine Hat who is struggling, I want you to know that you have an incredible community that will support you and lift you up. You are not alone. There is hope. I am there for you. Medicine Hat is there for you. Your government is there for you. If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide or needs support, I urge you to reach out. You can call the mental health helpline 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1.877.303.2642.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

COVID-19 and Foothills Medical Centre Workers

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a deadly outbreak of COVID-19 at the Foothills medical centre in Calgary. As of Friday 47 patients and 43 health care workers have been infected; 12 people have been killed in this outbreak. Right now, as we speak, there are brave and hard-working Albertans cleaning rooms in the Foothills medical centre, changing sheets, and serving food. These Albertans are putting themselves and their families at risk to keep others safe. They're face to face with the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of them are my constituents, and I'm immensely grateful to them.

Some of the them are constituents of the Member for Calgary-Falconridge. I was appalled to see a video last week of that member

sneering at these courageous Albertans and telling the media that they are, and I quote, not front-line health care workers. End quote. Mr. Speaker, that's a disgraceful comment and an insult to the many Albertans in northeast Calgary and across this province who do critical work in our hospitals. Of course, the member was repeating the lines handed to him by the Premier. The Premier called these Albertans, who clean hospital rooms and beds during a deadly pandemic, bureaucrats. That's absurd.

Around the world people are cheering and thanking health care workers, but this Premier and that member insult them and are destroying 11,000 front-line hospital jobs across Alberta to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout. I challenge the Member for Calgary-Falconridge to spend a week cleaning rooms at the Foothills medical centre and then tell this House that these Albertans are not front-line health care workers.

Mr. Speaker, in the same video the member also told the media that these workers can be replaced. I hope he remembers those comments when the people of Calgary-Falconridge replace him.

Thank you.

Official Opposition Members' Remarks

Mr. Loewen: Day after day in the media, on social media, and even in this very Legislature we hear the NDP making statements that are completely false. In the next two minutes I'll rebut as many of the NDP lies as I can.

The Leader of the Opposition continually talks about this mystical \$4.7 billion handout to corporations. We all know that a tax reduction to major employers is not a handout. Of course, the NDP haven't met a tax they didn't want to increase, so it's easy to understand why they can't tell the truth on that one.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar continues to accuse the Environment and Parks minister of selling 184 parks. We all know this is not true. If the parks are being sold, he should be able to give listings or advertising or give examples of parks that are being sold. He can't because they aren't.

The Member for Edmonton-Glenora recently took to the left-wing cesspool of Twitter to misinform her followers of comments I made here. She said that I was discouraging handwashing. The fact is that I never even used the words "wash" or "washing" in my two-minute speech, so how could that be true?

The NDP say that education funding has been cut. Not true. Every school authority in Alberta received an increase in operational capital, maintenance and renewal, and PPE funding, and access to taxpayer-funded reserves.

The NDP say that the school re-entry plan was insufficient. The comprehensive plan was based on advice from the Alberta chief medical officer, and to date less than half a per cent of students and staff have tested positive for COVID-19, and many of these cases were contracted out of school.

The NDP claim that teachers are not involved in the new curriculum development. The truth is that the proposed curriculum will go to curriculum working groups this fall, which include hundreds of teachers.

The NDP falsely claim that the government is refusing to hire back education staff. The truth is that full funding was restored to school authorities on July 1, and every single school division in the province received an increase in operational funding, so rehiring is purely up to the school divisions.

Over and over again the NDP mislead Albertans about cuts to health care. The NDP spent \$20.4 billion in their last year, and we're spending \$20.9 billion, plus \$769 million for COVID. They suggest that we are Americanizing health care. That's false. We're using the exact same independently operated charter surgical services that the

NDP used. The facts speak the truth; the NDP, not so much. The NDP are running scared and cannot tell the truth. They are desperate. Desperation breeds desperate actions and words. I only have one thing to say to the NDP: tell the truth.

The Speaker: While the hon. member didn't necessarily make an accusation of an individual lying, I am convinced that the use of the word "lie" does not help the level of decorum be increased. I encourage him to find other creative ways to do so.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Provincial Parks

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last February while most of the world was bracing itself as COVID-19 began rapidly spreading across borders, this UCP government announced a plan to sell off or close 184 parks and wild spaces in Alberta. Since that announcement the UCP government has gone to such great heights to hide their plans by removing information from their website, playing with semantics, and outright denying what is plain to see in black and white. Albertans can see clearly now what is really happening. Parks are being closed, families are being forced to pay new user fees for trails, and there are fewer staff to maintain sites and keep them clean and safe across the province.

Parks and natural areas are part of Alberta's identity. In the famous words of DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince: this is something the UCP just don't understand. In order to avoid a total eclipse of our parks, Albertans have been speaking out. The defend-our-parks campaign has delivered over 12,000 lawn signs. We have collected over 23,000 signatures from Albertans saying: don't go breaking our parks. We've mailed out over 8,000 stickers.

Today, out of what can only be seen as desperado, the UCP launched their own campaign inspired by the infamous destruction of the *Titanic*. Now, the tragedy of the *Titanic* is no joke and neither are the UCP attempts to mislead Albertans and to sell off one of our most treasured assets. Protecting our wild spaces and pristine wilderness is a value that spans political lines, applies across generations, and reaches every part of this beautiful province. The message is clear: don't funk with our parks.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East has the call.

Petrochemicals Incentive Program

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the government announced new grants as part of Alberta's petrochemical incentive program, also known as APIP. APIP provides grants to companies to attract investment in new or expanded market-driven petrochemical facilities. This is a key part of Alberta's recovery plan and the natural gas vision and strategy to turn the province into a top global producer of petrochemicals.

Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association estimates that Alberta has the potential to grow the petrochemical sector by \$30 billion by 2030, resulting in more than 90,000 direct and indirect jobs over that period. In order to be eligible for the program, the project must be physically located in Alberta with a capital investment of at least \$50 million, and the facility must use natural gas, natural gas liquids, or other petrochemical intermediaries in the manufacturing of its own products. The most important part, however, is that the project must create permanent jobs in Alberta.

The grants are calculated based on 12 per cent of the estimated total eligible capital cost of the project. They are paid after the facility is constructed and only once operations with eligible feedstock consumption begins. This is all part of Alberta's recovery

plan, a plan that creates jobs, diversifies the economy, and drives investment. It's about accelerating and getting Albertans back to work.

The APIP is in addition to several other initiatives put forward by this government. These include the Geothermal Resource Development Act and development of a modern mineral strategy, which will help advance geothermal as well as Alberta's role as a preferred global producer and supplier of minerals.

I want to thank the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity for his hard work on this file. I look forward to seeing a more prosperous Alberta and a strong petrochemical industry.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Ms Notley: I want to start by acknowledging the Premier's healthy return from his two-week isolation.

COVID-19 Protective Measures and Economic Recovery

Ms Notley: Here's the thing. We now know that we have more than 5,000 active cases. Experts are saying that we could be looking at thousands of new cases daily by Christmas. We have the second-highest rate of new case growth in Canada, and it's growing. Manitoba, which is first, has just gone into lockdown, the very thing we must avoid. Premier, are you prepared to work with us on any of our recommendations to avoid another lockdown, or if not, will you tell this House what, if anything, you will do to reduce the number of cases and slow the spread?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier has the call.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the kind words of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

She's quite right to be very concerned about the growth in active cases that we've seen in Alberta, which is a trend we've seen all across the western world, North America and Europe in particular. This is one of the reasons why we are continuing to expand our Canada-leading contact tracing network, with 800 officials already trying to engage another over 380 staff. It's why we have taken measures to significantly accelerate our testing turnaround times and other measures that I'll address in a moment.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, these numbers are numbers that have been in place for months, and what we need is more.

As this happens, the risk to vulnerable populations actually goes up. Right now we have outbreaks in 31 seniors' facilities. The Premier's response: "The average age of death from COVID in Alberta is 83, and I remind the House that the average life expectancy in the province is . . . 82." That is cold. These lives matter. Premier, will you finally adopt a provincial staffing plan for continuing care facilities, or is reducing seniors to statistics just simply the new cost of doing business?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find the implication of the leader's question profoundly offensive but entirely predictable. By highlighting the unique vulnerability of the very elderly with multiple comorbidities to COVID-19, I was precisely underscoring the importance of emphasizing the protection of seniors, particularly those in congregate living facilities, nursing homes, long-term care, which is why our government has invested \$170 million to support those facilities, including through wage top-ups and other measures, which we will continue.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem is that it's not enough.

There is a crisis in staffing in these facilities, and we keep hearing it. Meanwhile, what the Premier seems to fail to understand is that by doing nothing, by pretending that it's everybody's job but his, we end up being in a situation where you can't avoid a lockdown. Look at what happened in the U.K. just this weekend. It is this Premier's responsibility to keep everyone safe and protect the economy. He's failing on both. When will we see significant new measures to keep Albertans safe? Up to this point it hasn't worked. Take responsibility.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it's regrettable, once again, to see this is the only party in the country which seeks every day to politicize this crisis. Her critique cannot be taken seriously when she says that Alberta has done nothing. We have spent over 700 million additional dollars in the health care system alone. We've led the country on PPE. We've had lower levels of fatalities than the other large Canadian provinces. Until the last few weeks: lower levels of infections, hospitalizations, and ICU admissions on a per capita basis and significantly lower fatalities in long-term care. Clearly, more must be done, and we will continue to make announcements to that respect.

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

Health Care Workforce

Ms Notley: The numbers are shooting up, so clearly what they've done has not been working, so what do they decide to do? Well, let's fire 11,000 front-line health care workers desperately worried about their jobs. During the record spread of this highly contagious virus, the Premier is telling Albertans that he wants to fire the folks who sanitize our hospitals. He's telling them to go to work and to risk their lives all while he's insulting them, calling them overpaid, and waving pink slips at them. Premier, how exactly does firing 11,000 front-line care workers help the pandemic or the economy?

Mr. Kenney: This government is doing no such thing, Mr. Speaker. This government was elected on an explicit commitment to move resources from support services by getting greater efficiency through competitive contracting, to move a hundred per cent of those savings to front-line clinical services, and that's exactly – we are going to keep that commitment to Albertans whereas the NDP would have us spend 200 million tax dollars to buy laundry machines, to turn the government into a provider of laundry just like they want us to nationalize auto insurance and follow the disastrous example of British Columbia.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier tries to claim that he's saving \$600 million by firing 11,000 workers, but that's not true, because that's what his documents say. More importantly, these front-line workers that he is calling overpaid are largely women and people of colour. Most of them work in rural Alberta, and most of them make around \$40,000 per year. These front-line staff walk into hospital rooms where COVID is present. They do it to serve healthy food, to clean up vomit, to care for Albertans. What exactly does this Premier think those front-line workers are actually worth?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there are no reductions in front-line clinical staff in the health reforms that this government ran on or that we are implementing. Sixty-eight per cent of the laundry done by AHS under the NDP government was done through private-sector contractors. Is the leader suggesting that that was somehow

unsafe? Why did she maintain it at 68 per cent? Because it was more efficient than giving her union boss friends union dues. That's all they're trying to defend. We want to move those efficiencies to support clinical front-line services.

Ms Notley: We are not here to defend union dues. We are here to defend those 11,000 mostly women, mostly people of colour, who go into hospital rooms, who clean up vomit, who make healthy food, who keep hospitals safe, who are at risk every day that they go into work, who he is threatening to fire and telling them that they just need to wait for the pink slip to show up in the mail. That, Premier, is who we are defending. Why won't you?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that that will be turned into an NDP fundraiser and that the union bosses will be very happy she's defending their access to those dues, but if that's really what the leader feels, then why didn't she nationalize the nearly 70 per cent of laundry services already performed by hard-working people, hard-working women and men? They have jobs in the private sector. The difference is that they're not forced to pay union dues. We want to use those cost savings to support clinical front-line services for patients because we believe patients and not union bosses should be at the heart of this system.

The Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Automobile Insurance

Ms Notley: Well, speaking about the priorities over there, while this Premier is happy to fire front-line health care workers, he sure is also happy to help his real friends: big insurance. That's who he's worried about. Albertans' car insurance spiked 24 per cent this year because of this government's self-interested decisions, but instead of capping rates like we did, the Premier is capping payouts to injured drivers. Shameful. Premier, if one of those 11,000 care workers you're firing is driving home from work, they're struck from behind, and they sustain a brain injury, are you seriously saying that they should be subject to a maximum \$5,000 in compensation?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what I'm saying is that under the NDP, auto insurance premiums ran out of control. They then imposed a cap, which was unsustainable, that caused insurance companies to start leaving the Alberta market. Ultimately, that would have resulted in even further increases. Now what is their solution? To nationalize it, which is a lovely word that basically means socialism. It means taking over the entire industry. What's happened in B.C.? They pay substantially higher premiums, and they still lose a billion dollars a year that taxpayers are on the hook for.

Ms Notley: What I want is the best deal for Albertans. This Premier wants the fattest profits for big insurance and the lobbyists who work for them.

Now, on top of capping payouts, this suit-happy Premier is looking at prohibiting injured Albertans from seeking compensation in the courts. How ironic. Premier, you already handed \$4.7 billion to large corporations, including these insurance companies. Why are you protecting them instead of protecting Albertans from skyrocketing premiums, premiums that you took the cap off?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, you know, this is coming from the party, by the way, that said that we could solve a \$24 billion deficit with a 1 per cent tax increase on people earning \$400,000 a year. That would still give us a \$24 billion deficit. Now what do they

want to do? They want to spend billions of dollars to create a new government company that will create socialism in terms of the auto insurance market. They did it in B.C. They pay higher premiums, and taxpayers are on the hook for a billion dollars a year. Thank goodness they're not in power to do it now.

Ms Notley: Well, they also did it in Saskatchewan. His friend Scott Moe has had 15 years to change it, and – strange – he hasn't. Why? Because it protects drivers. That's who you're here to represent, not the lobbyists, not the ones that ran your campaign, not the ones that you're listening to every day. Why does your plan include nothing to actually protect drivers from your skyrocketing premiums? You can afford \$300 more but most Albertans cannot.

2:00

The Speaker: Maybe I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition to address her questions through the chair.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, that wouldn't work for her because then she couldn't insult you.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is this, that what the NDP wants to do is to eliminate competition. They want to buy out private insurance companies. Boy, they would love that. Imagine the big compensation cheques that would come from the government to buy out the big insurance companies.

Mr. Speaker, premiums have been going up because injury settlements have been going up massively. Alberta managed to control premiums for a long time, not with caps but by properly managing those awards. It's the right thing to do, it's the advice of the expert panel, and it's what we're going to do.

Alberta Separatism

Member Loyola: Canada is better with Alberta as a part of it. As we get closer to Remembrance Day, I am grateful for the sacrifices so many Albertans throughout our history have made in the defence of this great country. Sadly, a growing separatism movement threatens our national unity, threatens Alberta's economy, and threatens Alberta's credibility on the international stage. To the Premier. You claim to be a federalist. Can you commit now to ensuring every member of your caucus supports a united Canada, and will you publicly condemn the growing separatist movement here in our province?

The Speaker: Happy to have the Premier respond. However, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is very aware that Motion 511 is on the Order Paper, and this is certainly very close to anticipating debate that will take place later today.

The hon. Premier has the call if he chooses to respond.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to put on the Order Paper the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) affirm its loyalty to a united Canadian federation, and
- (b) urge the government to obtain a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation.

We should all be concerned about that sentiment in this province. Let me suggest that the way to address that sentiment is not to insult people, it's not to divide Albertans, it's not to condemn people, but it is, rather, to celebrate the strength of unity while fighting for a fair deal for Alberta in the federation.

Member Loyola: We saw the pitfalls of separatism in Quebec as there was an exodus of businesses, jobs, and capital, and the real estate value drastically dropped. Our economy is already hurting so

much due to COVID-19 and this Premier's failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout, yet for all the damage the UCP has caused, members of its caucus continue to advocate for separatism. To the Premier: won't you agree that by not condemning the separatism movement and the very separatists in your own caucus, you're causing more damage to the Alberta economy at a time when we can least afford it?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, that nonquestion was an object lesson of the cynicism of Alberta NDP politics. If they were interested, actually, in reinforcing national unity, then why are they talking about attacking our fiscal policy in that question? Why are they attacking members of this caucus? Why are they attacking Albertans who feel very strongly about the unfairness of the federation? You don't win people over by condemning them, by calling them deplorables. All the NDP is actually doing is inflaming those sentiments, and that's irresponsible. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Opposition had her opportunity to ask questions. I'm sure that if she'd like to ask some more, she can make that happen as well.

Member Loyola: Albertans deserve to know where their government and their representatives stand on Canadian unity. The Premier and the UCP have been scared to have this conversation about denouncing separatism in this Chamber. They have blocked our attempts to bring it forward in the past, but I'm scheduled to bring forward a motion today standing for a united Canada and condemning separatism, so I hope the Premier speaks to it and clarifies where he and his entire caucus stand. To the Premier: will you do your job as the leader of your caucus and speak to the motion this afternoon and join me in condemning any attempt to threaten our national unity?

The Speaker: Hon. member, even after providing caution about anticipation, you literally referred to the debate that is about to take place in the Assembly. If the Premier chooses to respond, he can, but otherwise that question is out of order.

Mr. Kenney: Yeah. Once again, Mr. Speaker, it's all about divisive political theatre. They don't care that they are seeking to inflame people's sentiments by, quote, denouncing them, denouncing them as deplorables. We think that we should listen respectfully to people who are frustrated with the federation, make the best case for unity while fighting for a fair deal, and that is precisely why I tabled the motion to affirm our "loyalty to a united Canadian federation" and to "urge the government to obtain a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation." I'm proud to lead a party that was created with a commitment to be loyal to a united Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has a question.

Automobile Insurance Premiums

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have been through trying times in recent months. The COVID-19 pandemic and the collapse in oil prices have impacted their pocketbooks. However, one of the impacts felt by many Albertans, including those in my own constituency, has been the rise in auto insurance premiums. In response to these increased costs, last week Alberta's government announced changes that will ease the cost of auto insurance premiums. To the Minister of Finance: what is our

government doing to make auto insurance premiums more affordable for all Albertans?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Unlike the previous NDP government, who merely slapped on a Band-Aid and didn't deal with the fundamental issues that are pushing up costs in our insurance system, our government is bringing forward common-sense proposals that will bring down insurance premiums. Last week I announced changes to the insurance system that will bring down costs for Alberta drivers and expand the scope of medical benefits for drivers involved in accidents. Again, unlike the previous government, who merely kicked the can down the road and did nothing to help Alberta drivers, we're bringing in reforms that will provide insurance premium relief.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his response. Given that there are many solutions to insurance costs and all are complicated and have risks and given that the NDP has called for nationalizing our insurance system, which will only drive up costs, and given that the Attorney General in B.C., where they have a government-owned insurance system, has described the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia as a, quote, Dumpster fire, to the same minister: can you please explain to the Chamber why a government-owned insurance system would be a terrible idea for Alberta?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nationalized insurance would be a terrible idea for Albertans, and the evidence speaks for itself. All we have to do is look to British Columbia to see the disaster that a nationalized system has on insurance premiums. But this isn't surprising coming from the NDP. If it were up to them, it would be auto insurance, driver testing, laundry services; the list goes on of the sectors that those members would want to nationalize. The members opposite believe the government should be meddling in every aspect of Albertans' lives. On this side of the House we believe in the entrepreneurial spirit and ability of Albertans and industry to manage, succeed, and prosper.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that there are many solutions to insurance costs and that all have complicated risks and given that the NDP have called for nationalizing the insurance system, which will only drive up costs, and given that we know that the B.C. insurance system has cost incredible amounts of money – in 2018 over a billion dollars' cost to the taxpayer, in 2019 over a billion dollars' cost to the taxpayer – can you explain to us here today, Minister, why this is not a good idea for Albertans?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't even begin to understand the way this NDP opposition thinks, but what I can say is that we only need to look, again, to B.C. for proof that a nationalized automobile insurance system would be a disaster for Albertans. A nationalized system in B.C. has resulted in the most

expensive automobile insurance premiums in Canada for many years. On this side of the House we're tackling the issue to bring down premiums, expand medical benefits for injured Albertans, and provide more options that best meet the needs of Alberta motorists.

Economic Diversification

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, the UCP's talk of diversification is fraudulent. The record has been to chase diversification out of the province. The UCP cut 1 and a half billion dollars from upgrading programs that would have employed thousands of people, many right here in Edmonton, adding value to our oil and gas resources, attracting more than \$10 billion in new projects and investments. Instead, they forced companies to delay investments due to lack of investor confidence. They chased jobs out. If the UCP's approach is working as they say it is, why do none of the big banks believe it? Why is Alberta's recovery forecast to be the second . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation.

2:10

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are making up numbers. It's not new to this Chamber, but one number that I want to hear from the members opposite on their diversification fund: how high are the taxes going to go under this NDP plan they have on their end? On our side, we have a natural gas strategy. We have a plastics strategy. We have a mines and minerals strategy, a geothermal strategy, the largest investment in a generation in agriculture, and that doesn't even scratch the surface of what we're doing in technology. How high are the taxes going to go under the NDP plan? On jobs, does their plan also include hiring people, literally, to come into your house to screw in light bulbs, like the old NDP plan? We need to know.

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that diversification has been dismissed by the UCP as a luxury that we cannot afford and given that, as a result, thousands of jobs in clean tech have been lost, that hundreds of research and development jobs have been lost, with \$20 million coming out of the University of Lethbridge over four years alone, out of a city of a hundred thousand, will the minister account for his trail of devastation and thousands of jobs lost and admit that his actions are responsible for the deepest recession in Canada? How can the UCP be proud of the second-worst economy in Canada?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, you want to talk about a trail of devastation? You just need to look at the four years when the NDP were in power and how they chased away investment from the province of Alberta. Just this last month we announced in Calgary the largest venture capital investments in technology in history, breaking the record from the year before. We are just scratching the surface on our potential in this province. Many people call us the Texas of the north, but Texas has been very purposeful in their approach. This recovery plan is that purposeful. Mines and minerals, geothermal, agriculture: those are strengths of our economy. We're going to build on them and make sure people have jobs for the future.

Ms Phillips: Well, Alberta led the country in '17 and '18 in economic growth.

Given that the minister's strategies don't actually address the reality for people who are losing their jobs, who are losing their income, and given that while there's a \$4.7 billion handout for

large, already profitable corporations but small businesses are now facing a second wave and are struggling to survive with no support or even empathy from the UCP, can the minister, using his inside voice this time, explain why his government has not put forward a thoughtful plan for small businesses to survive this second wave?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, 7,400 businesses have opened or reopened in the province of Alberta. That's 400 more businesses than we had at the beginning of the pandemic. Those are entrepreneurs that believe in this province. They believe in the future of this province.

Now, I want to talk about the members opposite and their allegation of \$4.7 billion, a made-up number, Mr. Speaker, a completely made-up number. Now, on their end: how high are the taxes going to go? They won't answer that question. They won't also answer the fact that we need to know and that it's incumbent on me to ask them: are they going to hire people to screw in light bulbs? Is that part of their plan? Are they going to hire people to put in shower heads? How high are the taxes, and are people going to be hired for light bulbs?

South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project

Mr. Dang: It's been 32 years since the Grey Nuns hospital was built, and it's straining under the population growth we've seen since then. Our NDP government committed to building a new hospital in south Edmonton, but this UCP government has pushed that project back by a decade, and I am deeply worried that the Grey Nuns will be overwhelmed well before then. No one in government could answer my question last week, so let's try again. Will the Minister of Infrastructure get this crucial project back on schedule and start construction as soon as possible?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. The government is looking after health care construction in a responsible way. I think most Albertans would agree, with \$24 billion in deficit this year, to staging out projects to a time when the taxpayers could more reasonably afford them. In the meantime the Grey Nuns continues to provide tremendous service to Albertans with the professional men and women there, and we thank those workers very much for doing that.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has said that infrastructure spending is essential for the economic recovery right now and given that Alberta is still in a deep recession, with hundreds of thousands of people out of work due to the UCP's economic mismanagement and \$4.7 billion in corporate giveaways, and given that the new south Edmonton hospital project would have created thousands of jobs in design, construction, and health care for years to come, what possible reason did this government have to delay a project that Albertans desperately need and that would create thousands of great jobs? Is it just that they don't care about south and southwest Edmonton?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite what the member opposite states, the reality is that we're investing up to \$10 billion in infrastructure this year. This infrastructure investment will improve our productivity and competitiveness, replace core

infrastructure across the province, and create tens of thousands of jobs.

Mr. Dang: Given that that sounds like "Yes, there is no care for south or southwest Edmonton" and given that the Infrastructure minister said on social media that he was thinking about using a P3 model for this hospital and given that my constituents know first-hand what a costly and unsafe failure P3 schools were – including runaway heating systems, drainage failures, mud pits, and dangerous security fencing – and given that a previous Conservative Infrastructure minister scrapped the P3 school programs and said that it didn't make any sense, why would the minister even consider a P3 approach that has already failed with schools and put our hospital at risk?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the hon. member didn't actually include the word "NDP." A previous NDP minister scrapped the P3 program. Under the P3 model Albertans have saved hundreds of millions, cumulatively probably over a billion dollars, on construction for roads, for hospitals, for schools. A P3 program needs to be evaluated like any other model of building things, but the fact is that on average Albertans have saved a lot of money and got a lot of infrastructure at a good deal. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock is the only one with the call.

Health Care Contracted Services

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government announced that it is proceeding with a portion of the AHS review implementation plan, which was prepared in 2019 by Ernst & Young. As part of this plan AHS will move to contract out services such as laundry, lab, housekeeping, and food preparation. Given that our government supports creating a more efficient health care system, to the Minister of Health: how will making changes to these specific services help our health care system produce better outcomes for patients as well as better value for taxpayers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta spends the most per person on health care, but our results don't match, as the member notes. Sixty-eight per cent of AHS laundry was contracted out to private vendors while the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was the Premier. The NDP wanted to spend \$200 million to buy new laundry equipment, they wanted to spend almost \$600 million on their superlab, and they had no problem throwing away \$50 million to nationalize DynaLife. This was all to keep their union bosses happy. AHS modernization will see nonclinical roles transition to the private sector to help make the system more efficient. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government continues to uphold the promise of maintaining quality patient care for all Albertans and given that in many rural communities the ability to outsource may be more difficult than in urban centres and given that some rural Albertans are concerned these changes may result in a reduced level of service, could the Minister of Health please confirm that these changes will not impact the overall level of service and care for rural Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're moving ahead with AHS modernization to get better value for our taxpayer dollars, as recommended in the MacKinnon panel report as well as the EY review of AHS. Despite outrage from the opposition the NDP also contracted out surgeries. They contracted out housekeeping, lab services, continuing care. There will be no overall reduction in nurses or other patient care staff. The unions were notified of this work in December of last year, and the first new contracts will not take effect until 2022, others in the years '23 and '24. Every dollar saved will go . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Albertans spend the most per capita of any province for health care and given that wait times continue to be some of the longest in Canada and given that changes to services such as laundry, lab, housekeeping, and food preparation are expected to result in up to \$600 million in savings annually, can the same minister confirm that the \$600 million will be reinvested into health care to improve patient care, improve patient service, and reduce overall wait times?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The AHS review provided clear evidence and opportunities where our health system can do better in terms of cost and results. Wait times more than doubled under the NDP despite one-time funding that provided no long-term solutions to these problems. AHS will continue the work that they've been doing since 2015 to better balance staffing with the needs of patients. We've been clear that clinical front-line workers like doctors and nurses will not be laid off, and any savings achieved through the modernization of AHS will be reinvested directly back into the health system to improve patient care and to reduce our wait times.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has the call.

Calgary LRT Green Line

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The green line LRT is a crucial project that will support Calgary's economy and get Calgarians back to work. The project has been studied for the past decade. An overwhelming majority of Calgarians support it, and it's expected to create 20,000 jobs at a time when they're desperately needed in this province. Yet this government continues to delay the project. Why is this government continuing to delay a project that will create thousands upon thousands of jobs in Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listen, the green line is a project that—I agree with the hon. member—a lot of Calgarians, I think the vast majority, would like to see go forward, but they'd also like to get good value. They'd like to make sure that the risks there are being managed. The fact is that we had an independent assessment done where some of these issues are not fleshed out, and we have committed to working with the city to do that, to manage the risks, to make sure there's a credible plan for both the construction and the operational running of it. I think Calgarians really want that all to take place.

The Speaker: Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you. Given that this government likes to talk a big game when it comes to cutting red tape and given that Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi has characterized this government's inability to get on with the project as lots of red tape and given that the city of Calgary is just waiting on the provincial government to honour its side of the agreement and given that this government continues to throw up roadblocks delaying this much-needed project, will this government finally get out of its own way and let Calgary build this project and get people back to work?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo may think that making sure that a project doesn't go over by a couple of billion dollars, making sure that a project gets completed from end to end with a way to finish the middle is red tape. On this side of the House we kind of think it's common sense, so we're going to work with the city of Calgary and make sure that a project that they deliver is something they can be proud of, is something that Calgarians can be proud of, can use for decades and hundreds of years. Taking that time is not red tape; it's common sense.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Member Ceci: Thank you. Given that this government has prioritized corporate handouts over jobs, including the \$4.7 billion in tax giveaways to profitable corporations and given that these handouts have failed spectacularly, resulting in a shrinking economy, falling investment, and the loss of 50,000 jobs before the pandemic and given that we've seen companies like Husky and Encana take the handout and lay people off or disappear entirely, will the government admit that they blew the funding, the billions needed for the green line, on their failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, coming from the worst Finance minister in Alberta's history with 180,000 jobs lost before the pandemic, with a terrible record of just about every number that he touched, we in the worst time since the big Depression a hundred years ago are working hard to still deliver infrastructure, but we're working to do it in a responsible way. We actually took the time to have an evaluation done before we spend a billion and a half dollars, and that evaluation said: take a look at it with the city. We're doing that. It's the right thing to do.

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

Bill 32

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday marked a sad day in history for workers in Alberta. On November 1 a number of the worst changes made by this government came into effect. Thanks to Bill 32, the UCP have removed stat holiday pay for some, given employers new calculation options for minimizing holiday pay, and reduced Alberta's employment standards to some of the lowest levels in Canada, and all this just in time for Christmas. To the minister of labour. On your website you say that holiday pay amounts may change, but I ask you today to be straight with Albertans. Please tell them how much less they should expect in their bank accounts this Christmas.

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to be back in the House. Our government was elected on a promise to bring Alberta's labour laws back to balance, reduce red tape, and get Albertans back

to work, and Bill 32 was an important step in making that happen. On November 1 a number of changes came into place, and these changes provide flexibility for employers while at the same time protecting Alberta employees. This is about reducing the cost to employ Albertans. This is about keeping Albertans employed and getting more Albertans employed. This is important now more than ever.

Ms Gray: Given that throughout the debate on Bill 32 the NDP Official Opposition pointed out that it could take longer for workers to receive their final pay, given that right on the government website it's clear that employers can now take up to 31 days to issue final pay without penalty, and given that the number of Albertans living paycheque to paycheque is rising, to the same minister: can you explain to Albertans why during a pandemic you introduced, passed, and implemented legislation that makes them wait longer to receive final wages that they have already worked and earned?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, this question demonstrates why the NDP and all their changes simply increased costs and actually cost Albertans their jobs. Changes like we made in terms of the termination pay provide flexibility to employers to make that pay. We heard from employers who were concerned about making a payment that would be off cycle. These changes allow employers to make payments on cycle, will save employers \$100 million, but still employees will get what they're due. This is about reducing costs to employers, reducing costs for employment, and getting Albertans back to work.

Ms Gray: Given, Mr. Speaker, that changes from Bill 32 now allow averaging agreements with no input from employees, imposed with only two weeks' notice, arrangements which can now average hours across an entire year, essentially giving many employers a workaround from ever having to pay daily overtime, given that all these changes only benefit employers, and given that hard-working Albertans need every single dollar that they earn, to the same minister: will you finally admit that the changes you made were about taking money out of the pockets of workers, stripping away their rights, and tipping the scales in favour of employers?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, again, this shows a lack of understanding the other side had in terms of layering on red tape, which actually reduces the opportunities for Albertans to find work. These changes in Bill 32 reduce the red tape, increase flexibilities so that more Albertans could work. We put in changes for averaging overtime. Overtime still would be paid over 44 hours a week. This is something that employers asked for, this is something that they needed to be able to work through these very difficult times, and this is something that we delivered because we have Albertans' backs. We want them to keep working and get them back to work.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has a question.

COVID-19 Statistics and Health System Capacity

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While all the media focus seems to be on how many cases of COVID-19 are in the province and new each day and the overall numbers of those infected in Alberta but the news doesn't highlight the number of those who test positive for the virus and require intensive care or even those who require any hospitalization, the numbers from what I have seen in reports of the chief medical officer of health seem to be drastically different. I'm wondering if the Minister of Health can please tell the members of this House what percentage of those diagnosed with

COVID-19 in Alberta to date have actually needed intensive care treatment or any hospitalization.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to closely monitor the health system's capacity. The current number of hospitalizations is within our current capacity, and 36 per cent of our ICU beds that were set aside for COVID patients are currently being used. To date about 4 per cent of cases have required hospitalization and about .7 per cent of all cases have been admitted to ICU. Dr. Hinshaw and the health officials have been closely investigating, and we'll continue to follow the evidence and make decisions based on the expert advice of Dr. Hinshaw.

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

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Well, given that Alberta recently shut down many of our businesses as a response to the early stages of COVID-19 but that these types of shutdowns have widely contributed to the global economic collapse and given that fear and uncertainty surrounding our knowledge of COVID-19 were a driving force in our initial response but that many in Alberta are still living with that same fear, I'm wondering if the Minister of Health can please also tell the members in this Chamber and all of Alberta what the recovery rate is for those who test positive for the virus.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're taking a cautious approach. We're not panicking or giving in to knee-jerk reactions or hysteria. Rather than rushing to shut down businesses on a hunch, we're following the evidence. As of Friday 80 per cent of Albertans who had tested positive had now recovered from the virus. At this time approximately 43 per cent of active cases in Calgary and Edmonton are associated with household or social gatherings. As I said, we're following the evidence, which is why we have adjusted our restrictions in those zones to limit social gatherings and cohorts and to require masking in work settings.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. Well, given that the hospitalization rate for COVID-19, as we've just heard, is actually very low and that even fewer people in Alberta who test positive for the virus require ICU facilities, but given that our hospitals are still at over 100 per cent capacity, can the same minister please explain why this is and also explain how COVID-19 is affecting our overall health care system?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're heading into the busy winter season, and the system is already operating near its normal capacity. In recent weeks we've seen a rise in cases and hospitalizations in Alberta. The current number of COVID patients admitted adds to the demands on the health system even though they are well within our capacity. Moreover, the pandemic reduces the availability of staff and restricts admissions where there are outbreaks in acute-care settings. Overall, it's a major stressor in the system today even at current levels, and we'll continue to follow the evidence and listen to that expert advice, as I mentioned before.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a question.

COVID-19 Outbreak at the Calgary Correctional Centre

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I stood in this Chamber to ask about COVID-19 outbreaks in correctional facilities in Alberta. The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General was given three opportunities to provide specific details on action being taken to reduce the spread of infection and protect the lives of inmates and staff. He offered nothing. Now 60 per cent of inmates at the Calgary correctional facility have COVID. To the minister: why did you fail to act at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to work with the chief medical officer to make sure we have the best protocols in place here to make sure we keep people healthy and safe in this work environment. When people are admitted into these facilities, there's a 14-day quarantine period. We're going to continue to do everything we can to make sure that they have healthy facilities. We're going to continue to follow the health advice, making sure that we do everything we can.

In this situation here, I mean, we've had breakouts in correctional facilities across the country. We've been fortunate until this point, Mr. Speaker, in making sure we've done everything to control them. We're going to continue to listen to the health advice to make sure that we can help to contain this one as well.

Mr. Sabir: Given that staff and family members have referred to this government's response to the outbreak as badly mismanaged and stated, and I quote, the outbreak could have been mitigated with more clear direction, end quote, and given that the minister stated in this Chamber on October 28: "I am proud of the measures that we have kept in place, and the outbreak at the Calgary correctional facilities has been contained," to the same minister: are you still proud of the measures you have put in place? Why did you insist that the outbreak was contained when clearly it is not?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we thank every single person that is going in to work in these challenging times. We have to make sure that we continue to follow the health protocols that we have here in our province. We're going to do everything we can to make sure that the people on the front lines have the PPE, have the hand sanitizer, have the spacing that we require. We're going to do everything we can to support them and create as much of a safe work environment as humanly possible in a correctional facility. We thank them for all the work that they're doing. Let's make sure we keep the politics out of this. This is one of those situations where we have done everything possible with our health officials. We have the most capacity in the entire country in our correctional facilities. We're doing everything we can to keep people healthy.

Mr. Sabir: Given that correctional officers have now been ordered by AHS to only travel to and from the Calgary Correctional Centre because they could spread COVID-19 in the broader community – that's right; they may be infected, but are still required to go to work – and given that these front-line workers are being told that they do not qualify for hazard pay despite the very real threat to their health, to the same minister: will you explain to these workers and their families why you don't care about them at all?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, that question is ridiculous. We care about workers that are going into every single workplace. We're going to do everything we can to make sure that they have the resources they need. We're going to continue to listen to the health professionals, do everything we can to contain the spread in that one particular correctional facility.

But, Mr. Speaker, we need to take the politics out of this right now. We're doing everything we can. We thank everyone that's going into these situations. It's a tough environment right now, but we thank them. It's necessary. We're going to do everything we possibly can to continue to follow the guidance of the health professionals. Let's make sure we take the politics out of this.

COVID-19 Cases in Schools

Ms Hoffman: School districts across Alberta are reporting thousands upon thousands of students and staff forced into isolation by close contact with COVID-19. Some districts are reporting their cumulative totals and some are reporting their current numbers. Albertans deserve to know exactly how many students, staff, and families have been impacted in their education or in their jobs because of exposure to COVID-19. This is just basic due diligence. Is the minister tracking the total number of Alberta students and staff sent home to isolate, and will she report that number to this House?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation is rising.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll answer on behalf of the Education minister, who has put in place a clear and effective process to respond to cases in schools. The fact is that hundreds of thousands of Alberta students continue to learn in the classrooms every day. Unfortunately, it is unavoidable that schools experience some cases. Fortunately, we were well prepared to deal with the challenge of returning to school, and we will continue to work with the school boards and the teachers, who we trust to do a great job, and they're doing a great job.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the minister just tried to tap dance his way through open and transparent reporting of the numbers of people impacted by COVID-19 in schools – Minister, it's not a tough question – and given that the minister sent students and staff back into classrooms of 30, 40, or even more and given that a single case in those classrooms pushes those people into isolation and in high school a single case creates hundreds of close contacts, has the minister done her due diligence and calculated how many Alberta students, staff, and families have been forced into isolation and what could have been avoided if she would have capped class sizes at 15, as we recommended in July?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, talk about tap dancing.

The nature of COVID is that every day the number changes; some people get better, some people get sick. The hon. member knows that. I think it's the wrong time to propose trick questions when the hon. member should be asking serious questions about how to keep people safe, and maybe it's time she should show some appreciation for the teachers, the schools boards that are doing a great job. She knows that there aren't 13,000 more teachers to hire in order to do what that hon. member proposes. They know that over there, Mr. Speaker, but they keep saying it.

Ms Hoffman: Given that that answer is completely unacceptable to the staff, students, and families who've been impacted by your negligence, Minister, and the negligence of your government and given that the minister cut per-pupil funding to pay for a \$4.7 billion

corporate handout, a result of which is that Calgary public is considering closing schools like Rosscarrock, and given that the school closure will make overcrowding even worse than it is already today and given that COVID-19 isolation numbers will get higher, will the minister reverse her cuts to Alberta schools and restore per-pupil funding to the levels they received under the NDP? Yes or no, Minister?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know, because I've heard the Education minister answer before, that the amount of funding that goes into Education under this government is higher than ever happened under the NDP, higher not lower. Nonetheless, the hon. member calls it a cut. The folks over there should be taking this seriously instead of playing fast and loose with number games and trying to ask deceiving questions. We actually need to start thinking about the students, the teachers, keeping them safe rather than asking questions that the hon. member knows in some cases there's no exact answer to because it changes. I ask the NDP to start taking this seriously and start working with.

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

Economic Recovery Plan

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is experiencing high unemployment rates due to COVID-19, low oil prices, and an ongoing recession. Given that the quality of life depends on the strength of our economy and further given that the economic downturn has negative consequences on the well-being of Albertans, to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: what is our government doing to create jobs and improve the livelihoods of Albertans in the midst of this pandemic?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we're putting out the most detailed recovery plan in the country, the first one in the country laser focused on getting Albertans back to work, from our natural gas strategy, which includes plastics, hydrogen, recyclables, to mines and minerals as well as making sure that we have the largest investment in a generation into agriculture, and that's just building on our traditional foundation we have in this province. We've also put in place the job-creation tax cut to make us the most competitive jurisdiction in the country and on top of that, \$175 million to the Alberta Enterprise Corporation to encourage venture capital. To that member from Calgary: we just broke a record in Calgary for venture capital investment.

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

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that promoting and attracting global investment in our province creates economic opportunities for Albertans and further given that our government's investment of \$11.8 million to the U of C to support innovation and technology advancements is a step in the right direction, to the same minister: what else is our government doing to attract business investment in Alberta and promote our province in the global market?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to that member for the question. We have set up Invest Alberta to be the business development arm for the government of Alberta, to support the private sector to attract investment into our province. We've taken a different approach than the previous government. We believe that the private sector is going to attract that investment.

We believe in them, that they already have the networks, that they have that trapline to get investments into our province. Invest Alberta is there to support them and make sure that they have the information that they need to bring that investment into our province. We've set up the best framework in the entire country to attract investment from natural gas, petrochemicals, agriculture. We want that investment here in our province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that every sector is important for cultivating labour market outcomes and advancing our province's economy and given that one of the key points from Alberta's recovery plan is diversification of our economy, which is important for Alberta's economic recovery post COVID-19, to the same minister: what is being done to diversify our economy while creating and maintaining jobs locally?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people compare Alberta as the Texas of the north because of agriculture and energy. But Texas many decades ago was very focused in its approach to make sure that they were purposeful in their diversification efforts. Our recovery plan has done the exact same thing, making sure we build on our strength and our foundation from energy to agriculture, forestry. That's an amazing strength that so many people wish that they would have. Now we're going to build on that, making sure that we have our natural gas plan that builds on hydrogen, plastics, as well as making sure that we have the best possible corporate tax rate in the entire country with the job-creation tax cut. That's going to bring 55,000 jobs to the province of Alberta.

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

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) the daily Routine may continue past 3 o'clock.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has a statement to make.

Government Policies and Rural Albertans

Member Irwin: I'm so proud of my rural roots. I've spoken many times in this House about how proud I was to grow up, live, and work in various parts of rural Alberta. I'm proud to have friends, family, and supporters in all corners of this province from Patricia to Plamondon, from Fort Assiniboine to Forestburg. So many of those folks are reaching out to me and my colleagues to say that they're worried about our province. They know that their families deserve better.

So to all of you, here's our message. To the teacher in my hometown of Barrhead, feeling so defeated that the Alberta Distance Learning Centre is closing, a service that served urban, rural, and remote Alberta communities for over 100 years: although your MLA might not be willing to speak up, we will. To the health care workers who walked out last week in rural communities all across Alberta — Athabasca, Westlock, Whitecourt, Cold Lake,

Peace River, Fort Saskatchewan, to name a few – we stand with you and all front-line workers. To the mom from outside Lloydminster who's disgusted that she's got an MLA who continues to peddle conspiracy theories and deny the science of climate change: let me tell you that we believe in science, and we are here for you. To the queer man in Wainwright who works with the military and shared his story of heartbreak and feeling unsafe: I'm sorry that you've experienced that. We are here for you. To the young family from Medicine Hat who's panicked that one of the community's only maternity clinics could close: we are here.

These are just some of the countless folks across rural Alberta who've shared their stories with us. These are people that know that there's a better way. They know that their communities were built on values of looking out for each other, of compassion, and shared goals of prosperity and sustainability. They are among the growing group of rural Albertans who reject the idea that rural Alberta only votes one way. They reject hate. They reject the tax on health care. They reject cuts to education. And in 2023 they're going to reject the UCP.

Thank you.

COVID-19 Response in Lethbridge

Mr. Neudorf: Mr. Speaker, last week the Member for Lethbridge-West brought up a crisis in Lethbridge. She stated that we were struggling from “the worst outbreak of COVID-19 in the province.” She brought up the inability of Lethbridge to recover economically. I have immense respect for the member opposite – she is a fierce advocate for our community – but this was fear and misinformation.

I could spend the time addressing these boldfaced accusations, that are made to spread fear, anger, and discontent, but instead I'm going to read you a statement from a concerned family.

My wife received a disturbing phone call from her 91 year old mother . . . Out of the blue, a woman who identified [herself] as a representative of AUPE . . . phoned her and informed her that she needed to be concerned over the Provincial Government's plans to reduce the public service in a pandemic. The call was specifically meant to scare a vulnerable senior, who is very dependent on health care workers attending to her needs. Our concerns are legion. How did an activist get our mother's phone number? What right do these bullies have to make our mother upset, when her world continues to be restricted and controlled in ways she doesn't appreciate as a free citizen.

With nearly 20 per cent of Lethbridge's population being seniors over 60 and many of them living in seniors' communities, this type of bullying by the NDP's union friends is unconscionable and despicable.

We should be spreading the messages of safety and hope. As a government we are providing thousands of tests per day. We have established delivery services for food and medicine and phone calls for those who are in isolation. The efforts being made to invest in our communities and relaunch our economy have been vast. In Lethbridge \$17 million has been given for mental health and addictions support, 245 businesses received the small and medium-sized enterprise grant, and \$1.25 million was given to community grants, to only name a few.

Lethbridge is diversified and recovering. When will the opposition leave their realm of fear and division and come back to reality to do their job in this Legislature and denounce this kind of activity?

Bill 40 and Job Creation

Mr. Dach: Alberta's forest sector is a dynamic and vital part of the provincial economy, Mr. Speaker. This session the government

introduced Bill 40, the forests amendment act, and ironically named it Growing Alberta's Forest Sector. Despite its deceiving title, the ministry could not provide an economic analysis on the cost reductions to the sector and had absolutely no estimate on how much these changes would grow the industry. This legislation is a mere twig of what it could have been. Sadly, sawdust is the only thing that this government has been able to provide Albertans in Bill 40.

The forest sector is essential to our economy. It employs over 18,000 Albertans and generates \$6.5 billion annually in economic activity. We know that this UCP government has failed to create jobs despite promises to do so, and we fear even more job losses as we move forward. The UCP's Bill 40 has failed to set the table for the future of Alberta's forest industry and fails to demonstrate any real long-term vision for the men and women who work in Alberta's forest industry, who are at risk of being left behind.

Further to this, there are other major concerns. First Nations communities were not consulted about this legislation before it was introduced. This failure, Mr. Speaker, to consult with First Nations where treaty rights are potentially affected may lead to lawsuits, which could have easily been avoided. Why? After 50 years of the Forests Act remaining untouched, surely indigenous partners have thoughts on how best to move forward. This Alberta government has abrogated its duty to consult. There may be legal consequences.

This bill reads more like window dressing than a piece of legislation that's actually going to help grow our economy. I stand here today not only to make Albertans aware of what this government is trying to do to the forest sector but also to let the government know that we will not stand by and watch them continue to fail on creating good-paying jobs for Albertans and economic growth. We're keen to work with all Albertans. Go to albertasfuture.ca to find out more.

Small Business

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, over the summer I had a chance to sit down with some of the small-business owners in the constituency of Calgary-Cross and listen to their struggles and concerns for the future. This year has been one of the most challenging in recent memory. We inherited a system from our predecessors that had driven away hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions in investment, and we knew that we had an uphill battle when we assumed office. This year has added even more challenges with the unprecedented downturn in our oil and gas industry and the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been the most dramatic downturn in our economic productivity since the Great Depression, and it has hit local businesses particularly hard.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has produced some of the most harrowing numbers about the economic reality in our province. As of September 1 only two-thirds of the businesses in this province are open, and less than 40 per cent are fully staffed. Less than 30 per cent are at normal sales levels, and nearly 1 in 7 say that they will have to close up shop in the next couple of months. The tourism and hospitality industries have been hit particularly hard. It is projected that up to 70 per cent will permanently close without help. This number does not include the thousands of businesses that have already shut their doors since March.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, small business is the backbone and engine of this province. Small businesses support our families, friends, and our neighbourhoods. These shops and restaurants do not have the massive reserve funds to lean on like large corporations. I believe in the resilience of our small businesses, but right now they are

struggling, and our government must continue to support them and ensure that they are included in our province's economic recovery. Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of two bills. The first is oral notice of Bill 43, the Financing Alberta's Strategic Transportation Act, sponsored by the hon. the Minister of Transportation, and also Bill 44, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, sponsored by the hon. the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks has an introduction.

Bill 42 North Saskatchewan River Basin Water Authorization Act

Mr. Jason Nixon: I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I rise today to introduce Bill 42, a special act to authorize two interbasin water transfers.

Mr. Speaker, this is a special act of the Legislature to approve two interbasin transfers from the North Saskatchewan River basin to the Athabasca River basin to address drinking water challenges in two communities. This act will allow these two small communities to connect to the regional waterline operated by the West Inter Lake District Regional Water Services Commission, providing residents with a reliable supply of high-quality drinking water.

Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 42.

[Motion carried; Bill 42 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has some tablings.

Ms Phillips: I do indeed. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the five copies of a letter from Mandy Mikhail on the topic of making sure that we continue to invest in and keep our parks system safe and high quality.

Similarly, I have another letter, from Ryan Leavitt, a constituent of Lethbridge-West, thanking the opposition for their work on parks and expressing his dismay with the government's plans.

Similarly, I have a letter from Paul Lacroix expressing same, expressing dismay over closure, partial closure, and privatization of 184 provincial parks.

Similarly, I have the requisite copies of a letter from Jan Langford, a constituent of Lethbridge-West, urging the government to abandon plans for closure, partial closure, or privatization of provincial parks.

Similarly, I have a letter from Doris Austin from Lethbridge-West encouraging the government to continue to invest in parks and protected areas.

I also have a letter from Judy Grant, who is also opposed to the plan to, quote, optimize Alberta parks and thanking the opposition for their work on the matter.

I shall now table these.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a tabling.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'll table three letters. They all have the requisite number of copies. The first is from Jacob in Lethbridge, who is a parent who is deeply concerned about the proposed changes to curriculum being considered. Jacob says: "My son is 8 years old. Does he fully understand the legacy of residential schools? No, but he understands that residential schools were wrong because they were vicious institutions. And that's more than your advisor does."

There's also one from Scott, who's in Calgary, who talks, again, about how he's deeply concerned that ideology is driving changes in curriculum, not evidence, research, and not the best interests of children.

The last one today is from Avery, who writes to the Minister of Education, the Premier, myself, and the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Official Opposition and talks about how deeply concerned she is that Chris Champion continues to remain in his position, giving advice on something so crucial as our curriculum. She calls on the Premier to fire him and . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member will know that she doesn't need to read the content of the letter but can just provide what the topic of the tabling is.

Do you have any other tablings, or is that all?

Ms Hoffman: That's all, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Perfect.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has a tabling.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table the requisite number of copies of an article entitled Province Rejects P3 Approach for Building 19 New Schools, which outlines Minister Wayne Drysdale of the PCs rejecting P3s.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College of Alberta Psychologists 2019-20 annual report; pursuant to the Health Disciplines Act the Health Disciplines Board 2019 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act the Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis annual report 2019-2020.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

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

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 204 Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act

The Chair: There are 14 minutes left in this debate. I see the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure today to speak in support of Bill 204, the Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act, which my good friend and colleague from the riding of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has previously introduced. Now, it is well known that there is an urgent need for blood plasma globally and within our province. The demand for plasma continues to grow by 6 to 10 per cent per year globally, and the United States supplies approximately 70 per cent of that demand. Blood plasma is especially important in Canada as we constantly rank as one of the top three countries in the world for per capita plasma and plasma product use. A secure and safe supply of plasma is more important than ever, especially because of COVID-19.

Now, honestly, I never quite understood the reasoning the previous government had for passing Bill 3, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, back in 2017, but I can understand the sentiment behind the previous government's bill. I will admit that there were good intentions from the previous government and continued good intentions from the members opposite, but good intentions do not always work with the reality of the situation when lives are at risk, including the residents in my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

When it comes to the medical needs of Albertans, we must be thoughtful and pragmatic. I realize that although we would like to have our plasma supply come entirely from voluntary donations, that idealistic scenario just does not exist in reality. It is our duty as elected officials to adapt to the realities of today and to ensure that our constituents have the medical resources they need. I am afraid that there was a strong sense of false moral legitimacy in the explanation given by the previous government when this bill was passed and even within the debates over the last few days.

The current legislation has the intent of not relying on paid donors, Madam Chair, and that has failed. Canadian Blood Services does not pay for plasma donations within Canada, and less than 20 per cent of the plasma that Canadian Blood Services uses comes from donations within Canada. Let's think about that: less than 20 per cent. Eighty per cent of the plasma that Canadian Blood Services uses today is bought from paid donors within the United States. So the intent of the Voluntary Blood Donations Act was not to allow paid donors, but it does allow paid donors and perpetuates the role of paid donors, just not Albertan or Canadian donors. This furthers a false myth that somehow we have a high moral ground here in Alberta.

Madam Chair, it is intriguing to see the opposition to this bill, particularly because of the urgent need for plasma within our province and the fact that the status quo is clearly threatening the long-term stability of the plasma supply, which our residents and the residents in my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain depend on. The current legislation will not meet our current needs or the needs of tomorrow, and that places our residents at risk.

3:00

In a presentation to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills the Network of Rare Blood Disorder Organizations said the following:

Does the province of Alberta's current Voluntary Blood Donations Act limit access to life-saving blood products? – the answer is yes. As the 2013 Health Canada round-table discussion on compensating plasma donors concluded, no country in the world has been able to meet their need for plasma with a solely volunteer model. Compensated collection of plasma can help

with the global and Canadian plasma supply shortage, helping to ensure that patients can access plasma-derived medicinal products when they need them.

The representatives from this organization went on to say:

The Voluntary Blood Donations Act is a good example of legislation with worthy goals; however, it has unintended negative consequences, notably condemning Albertans to be overly reliant on American plasma and exacerbating the inadequate world supply of essential medicines like immunoglobulins. Therefore, the members of the NRBDO unanimously agree that no evidence of safety risks and no evidence of threats to the voluntary collection of blood, compensated collection of plasma can help with the global and Canadian plasma supply shortage, helping to ensure patients have access. Therefore, we support . . . Bill 204, the repeal of the province of Alberta's Voluntary Blood Donations Act.

Madam Chair, I want to draw attention to that quote, especially for those who may not have been watching the committee proceedings on Bill 204. Again this demonstrates the support that patient groups – patients – have for Bill 204.

One common objection to compensating for plasma donations is a concern over the safety of collected products. Now, this stems, of course, from the tainted blood crisis in the 1980s, that tragically resulted in the infection of many Canadians with HIV and hepatitis. I do not want to diminish this incredible tragedy that the tainted blood crisis was for many Canadians and their families.

However, we have come a long way from the crisis of the 1980s. Since then, technology has advanced to ensure the safety of these products. In fact, there have not been any cases of hepatitis B, C, or HIV transmission through plasma products in the past two decades. The plasma collection industry is well regulated in Canada, requiring licensing and authorization from Health Canada, and this ensures that donors are screened rigorously and often. The collection facilities must also meet the safety requirements under the Food and Drugs Act. Furthermore, on the subject of safety, the government of Canada's website outlines the following: "Potential donors must also give two donations with negative disease test results before they are considered qualified and, for donors who do not return for their second donation, the plasma from their first donation is destroyed."

As you can see, Madam Chair, the level of rigour and scrutiny over the safety of these products is well established. While safety concerns are understandable in light of historical events, the reality of today is that these donations are safe for Canadian patients, which include patients from my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain. Taken together, the support from patient groups and the improvements to safety for plasma collection in recent decades show the value of Bill 204, and that is why I'm proud to support this bill and encourage other members to do the same.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to provide a few thoughts on this private member's bill before the House and provide some suggestions for what could in fact be a better piece of public policy.

A couple of things here. First of all, it is not, in fact, unlawful to compensate donors in Alberta under the current law. In fact, what is an unlawful activity is for private companies to pay donors to sell their plasma and turn that plasma into profit and into a commodity. That is why plasma has become such a large industry in the United States, and that is one of the reasons why Canadian Blood Services opposes this piece of legislation and efforts to bring in for-profit plasma collection in other places in Canada, in Saskatoon in 2016

and in New Brunswick in 2017, for example. This is a relatively new phenomenon in Canada, and that is why, you know, it's a bit of a red herring for an hon. member of this House to suggest that there haven't been any issues related to safety and security of supply given that we've only been having these experiments in a very small way since '16 and '17. That is the first piece of the debate that falls down upon a bit more careful analysis.

The other piece that is deeply problematic is that this bill purports to cede all governance of plasma collection to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which effectively allows cabinet to make regulations regarding blood plasma collection and compensation thereof and the activities of private operators thereof. That is a deeply problematic thing. We see in the United States, for example, that there are indeed high barriers to entry into this industry given that, generally speaking, it's supposed to be a highly regulated industry and transparently regulated, too. That's what came out of the tainted blood scandal and why we have Canadian Blood Services in the first place, Madam Chair.

The other piece is around levels of compensation and frequency of compensation. What we find in the United States is that we do not know a lot about the long-term health consequences of chronic donation, and this has been an underregulated area in the United States and is certainly something that – we do not want to, I think, compromise the public interest, public safety, or public health by not having adequate regulations around this.

Generally speaking, pharmaceutical companies are announcing their intentions to expand various applications for blood plasma, and the medical importance of plasma has increased over the last decade or two. That is why there has been such pressure to introduce a profit motive and a subsequent sort of ability to corner the market on supply.

There is no question that Canada ought to be able to guarantee its own supply and certainly for Alberta as well, so that is why Canadian Blood Services has undertaken some efforts to this end, Madam Chair. Those efforts are just beginning, and certainly Canadian Blood Services has been communicating with all MLAs on this. They, of course, are the regulated authority, empowered by an act of Parliament in the wake of the tainted blood scandal in this country to regulate and ensure the safety and security of supply of our blood services. That is why they are opening a plasma clinic in Lethbridge, for example, imminently, in December.

The point here is that they are doing that to ensure, first and foremost, security of supply to Albertans and also to Canadians because this is a pan-Canadian approach. Canadian Blood Services is empowered to ensure the blood supply for the whole country. Indeed, Madam Chair, it may come as some surprise to some folks, but we are a country, and we take care of one another across provincial borders both in our health care concerns, in our mobility, and with respect to our access to life-saving medications, of which plasma can be one, particularly if one is a hemophiliac. I note for the record that the B.C. chapter of the Canadian Hemophilia Society, in addition to Canadian Blood Services, is also steadfastly opposed to this piece of legislation. They very rarely wade into public debate in this fashion, but they have in this instance.

For that reason, I certainly as a private member will be responding with a vote against this piece of legislation. I believe that it is not appropriately structured, for starters. To simply shunt off regulation-making authority over something as serious and foundational to our health care system as our blood supply, I believe, is a not well-thought-out piece of public policy. It cannot end well, Madam Chair, to be simply providing cabinet with these kinds of blanket authorities to write regulations behind closed doors.

3:10

I do not believe that a piece of legislation that is so vociferously opposed by the one main regulatory and public safety and public health stakeholder ought to be considered in a positive light by this House, so I believe that this piece of legislation obviously requires more work and thought by the private member who brought it forward. But it ought to be rejected by this House based on its rather cavalier approach to what we know are looming challenges with respect to plasma and its role in public health and public safety.

With that, I shall conclude my comments, Madam Chair, and urge all members of this House to vote against this piece of private members' business. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to join debate in the last minute and 20 seconds?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 204 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader to rise and report?

Mr. Jason Nixon: That's a fair point, Madam Chair. We will move to rise and report progress on Bill 204.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 204.

The Speaker: Hon. members, all those in favour of the report, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Any opposed? In my opinion, the ayes have it. That motion is carried and so ordered.

Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Alberta and the Canadian Federation

511. Member Loyola moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly affirm that it is unquestionably in Alberta's interest to remain part of the Canadian federation and unequivocally denounce calls for Alberta to become a state that is independent of a strong and united Canada.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great honour to be able to introduce this motion today. It's my intention here that we use this time in the House today while we debate to unequivocally communicate to all Albertans that we all believe that Alberta is stronger as part of Canada. Now, I understand that several members from across the way have issue

with how Alberta is treated in the federation. We understand these things. They're the things that we need to debate. But in my own personal and humble opinion, to go so far as to suggest that Alberta should actually leave Canada and become an independent state unto itself: although it's an opinion and everybody has a right to express their opinion, here in this House I believe that we should all be standing firm that Alberta should remain a part of Canada, because we can agree that Alberta is stronger as a part of Canada.

But right now, specifically with the economic crisis that we're going through, Mr. Speaker, to even move in this direction would cause problems. It would cause even venture capitalists and even the big corporations that the members across the way are so desperately trying to attract here to this province with their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout – even suggesting that Alberta should separate from the rest of Canada would further inhibit those individuals from wanting to invest here in the province of Alberta.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, that this opinion for separating from the rest of Canada is not only detrimental in terms of political debate or even, like, to go so far as cultural – we could even get into that, but what I'm really focused on here this afternoon is making the case that this is actually detrimental to Alberta's economy, especially now.

As we all know, prior to COVID even beginning and even with all the promises that this government made, that this party made, that this United Conservative Party made, to the electorate, saying, "We're going to bring jobs back," 50,000 jobs were lost in this economy prior to COVID, and that's only made it worse. It's only made it worse.

Now, we have a government that on top of providing a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout to big corporations – and those same corporations left this jurisdiction. They're, like: sure, we'll take the money. And I get it. The idea was that this government was going to give out this money, and that was going to translate into more jobs for Albertans, but we are not seeing that take place whatsoever, and now we're falling even deeper into this economic crisis.

This government since then has brought in a number of pieces of legislation that further negatively impact the pocketbooks of Albertan families. Just like they didn't campaign on separatism, they also didn't campaign on taking Albertans' pensions, yet here we are. I mean, just over the weekend Albertans found out that they even have to pay a user fee to go ski in their national parks . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Provincial parks.

Member Loyola: Provincial parks. Pardon me. Thanks for the correction there.

This is the kind of thing that we're seeing. We're seeing more and more user fees being passed through the pieces of legislation that this here government is bringing into place. You know, they have their majority, Mr. Speaker, so they can do so. Great. But I get phone call after phone call after phone call from Albertans complaining about one aspect or another or one piece of legislation or another that this here government has brought into place, and instead of making the economy better, they're actually making it worse.

Now we have this group of people – and, like I said, they're entitled to their opinion. They are entitled to their opinion, but as I've spoken about at length in this House many times before, Mr. Speaker, as representatives inside this House we have a responsibility. You know, I'll be the first one to tell you that, yes, there are certain things that with the Westminster parliamentary system there are challenges when it comes to our democracy, but to go so far as – and we've seen some of the members from across the

way actually do this either on social media posts or in direct quotes to media – suggesting that Alberta should seriously contemplate becoming independent and separating from the rest of Canada: what's this doing? What's it doing to the electorate as a whole? Is it a viable idea?

3:20

Now, I get that members across the way have issues with how Canada is being treated and the whole issue of equalization payments and this and that. I get it. Do I agree on how they perceive equalization payments and what they're trying to create in the minds of the electorate on how equalization payments actually work? Absolutely not. But that's the prerogative of the members across the way. If they want to create misunderstanding instead of further education on issues of equalization, well, that's up to them.

It's within this vein and almost, like, this disdain for the federal government – don't get me wrong. I don't agree with everything that the federal government does all the time. I agree. We disagree on these things, especially being here representing Albertans. But, you know, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has gone so far as to say: I think Alberta should be the freest and most prosperous place in North America. "If forced to seek its independence, Alberta should not fear for the future." It is a direct quote from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

What I see is that these kinds of comments are actually fanning the flames of an argument that really doesn't even deserve to be in this House. That's why this motion is coming forward, Mr. Speaker, so that we can all unequivocally agree that Alberta should remain a part of Canada and that even allowing, you know, ideas of separatism to distract us from the economic crisis and the reality that we need to be standing in here – focusing on Albertans and Alberta families and creating a more prosperous economy for all those Albertans as we move into the future is what we should really be talking about.

I encourage all members to vote in favour of this motion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and speak today. Before I get into my remarks, I would like to note that myself and other members of the Chamber are wearing poppies. It is the month of November, and it is in remembrance of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and the opportunity to stand in the Chamber and speak. I do encourage members of the Chamber and all those outside watching to donate to the Legions or the poppy funds wherever possible. You can go to legion.ca.

I would also like to go ahead, then, and begin to speak on Motion 511, moved by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker, through you to him, I believe he drew Motion 511 the last session as well. That's impressive. If correct, if I'm not mistaken, he should buy a lottery ticket.

I do feel it appropriate to say from the outset that I will not be supporting this motion because it is, in my opinion, an attempt to upend the true nature of our relationship as MLAs with our constituents.

To make that point, I'd like to rewind a little bit and go back to how I got here. In 2016 I was a political staffer for Member of Parliament Garnett Genuis for Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan, a good friend, a credit to the conservative movement, and an all-around mensch. In the spring of that year of 2016 Mr. Jim Hillyer, the Member of Parliament for Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner, tragically passed away, leaving a vacancy in the House of Commons and an even bigger hole in the hearts of southern Albertans. I decided to put my name forward for the Conservative

Party nomination, where I would spend the next several months knocking on doors and listening to voters across the riding from Medicine Hat to Cardston and everywhere in between.

I would ultimately come up short in that nomination. It was an experience I would never forget and promised myself I would never repeat. Flash-forward two years, and I'm eating my own words, Mr. Speaker, out knocking on doors in the constituency of what would be Cardston-Siksika, having similar conversations with the people at the doors that I only had two years prior. Only this time I came out on top, and all the emotional, physical, and financial sacrifice paid off.

Why do I tell you that, Mr. Speaker? Because as I knocked on those doors every day in the rain and the snow and the sun and the sweltering heat and the climate change that happens on a momentary basis in southern Alberta, I made one promise to every single person I spoke to, and that is that I would listen. It was the only promise I knew that I could keep and make as a private member in this Legislature.

This was on full display last Friday, when I held my first town hall in months since our government had begun to loosen COVID restrictions throughout the rest of the province. I started with a short speech that included my ultimate goal, which was to listen, and finished with a casual reminder that I work for them, not the other way around. It being November 2, I suspect that members of this Chamber would recall that they recently received a paycheque, and that paycheque, Mr. Speaker, comes from the people of Alberta, the people we work for, our bosses.

This motion asks that "the Legislative Assembly affirm that it is unquestionably in Alberta's interest to remain part of the Canadian federation and unequivocally denounce calls for Alberta to become a state that is independent of a strong and [free and] united Canada." This language is unfair to constituents like mine, who expect their representatives to represent their views in this Legislature. We do not dictate to our constituents what they should think and what they should believe. We have a duty not to shy away from these tough, important conversations, and denouncing those who would hold these views only alienates them, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure members of this Chamber that calls for greater independence are real in this province. They are not the cries of some irrational fringe group in Alberta that some may characterize them as. They are the passionate voters who feel that they are not being treated fairly, Mr. Speaker. I know that members in this House, on our side included, or members on the other side do not support or may not support an independent Alberta. We feel there's a great way to get a fair deal, and it's our job as legislators to consult our constituents to find out how to get that better deal.

Motion 511 seeks to shut down debate on these issues. We do nothing to improve the governance of our province by cancelling those who disagree with us. Mr. Speaker, this motion only reflects how out of touch some people have become with regular Albertans who feel the real frustrations towards the federal government and our place in Confederation. Denouncing these frustrations of these real Albertans seeking a better deal is disrespectful. Ridiculing their views is also disrespectful. Many Albertans are frustrated, and rightfully so. Alberta has made huge contributions to the federation, but we have also been treated unfairly time and time again.

As the representative for Cardston-Siksika I will not deride, dismiss, or ignore the views of my constituents and the thousands of other Albertans. This debate on Alberta's place in federation is a serious one. It deserves to be debated freely, and Albertans ought to be respected no matter where they stand on the issue. Our government is focused on the issues that matter to Albertans, including getting a fair deal in Confederation. We will not do a disservice to Albertans by ignoring their real concerns for the province they love and build

every day. I, Mr. Speaker, as the representative – and I mean that: a representative – of Cardston-Siksika will not dismiss the concerns of my constituents and the constituents across the province of Alberta.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I move pursuant to Standing Order 8(4) that Motion Other than Government Motion 511 be moved to the bottom of the Order Paper, Motions Other than Government Motions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 8(4):

Before the mover closes debate on a motion under suborder (3), a Member may move a motion, not subject to debate or amendment, that provides for the motion under consideration to be moved to the bottom of that item of business on the Order Paper.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to move Motion Other than Government Motion 511 to the bottom of the Order Paper carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:30 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Madu	Toor
Amery	Neudorf	Turton
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Dreeshen	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Ellis	Pon	Wilson
Fir	Savage	Yao
Goodridge	Sawhney	Yaseen
Long	Schow	

Against the motion:

Dach	Loyola	Schmidt
Feehan	Notley	Sweet
Goehring	Phillips	

Totals:	For – 23	Against – 8
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[Motion to move Motion Other than Government Motion 511 to the bottom of the Order Paper carried]

Government Motions

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

Alberta and the Canadian Federation

29. Mr. Madu moved on behalf of Mr. Kenney:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly
- affirm its loyalty to a united Canadian federation, and
 - urge the government to obtain a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I think that it is important that I inform this House that, you know, I listened to the comment made by my colleague the Member for Cardston-Siksika about Motion 511, that was before the floor of this particular House, and it was important that the House be informed that there were two competing motions before this Chamber, Motion 511 and Government Motion 29. As a result, we have found ourselves where it is very important that we then proceed with Government Motion 29.

Mr. Speaker, now, I want to, you know, preface my moving of Government Motion 29 by saying the following. I came to this country from a faraway country called Nigeria. I am a proud Canadian. I have seen the ravages of a civil war, of disease, and of bigotry and discrimination. At that point in time myself and my wife made the decision to come to this amazing country called Canada, and I do regard myself as a proud Canadian. In my visa, that brought me to this country – it was boldly stamped on my passport, a Canadian visa. It was Canada that offered myself and my wife and our young family hope and opportunity, so I am eternally grateful for this country.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, I also say this as someone who comes from a region of Nigeria that witnessed three long years of bloody civil war, that cost the lives of 3 million of my fellow citizens from that part of the country where I come from, so I know what it feels like to be a federalist, to believe with all of the bones in your body, to have faith in your country. You know, yes, I am a Canadian by choice because I was not born and raised here. But I love this country, and I would not want to do anything that impairs the unity of the amazing country that we have and have built.

Mr. Speaker, on that particular note, it is my great honour and privilege, with humility, that on behalf of the Premier I move debate on Government Motion 29. Since the 2015 federal election some in Ottawa have seemingly pursued policies with the aim of pushing Albertans out of Confederation. They implemented a ban on tanker traffic on the west coast that discriminates against only one product: Alberta oil. They killed the Northern Gateway and the Energy East pipelines, and they did so with the full approval of that NDP.

They also rejected the democratic will of Albertans, who have voted not once but twice on the carbon tax. Albertans rejected the NDP's re-election bid in 2019. Albertans made their views known in the 2019 federal election. The carbon tax was decided at the ballot box twice, yet Ottawa continues to plow ahead. Despite that, the government of Alberta continues to challenge the legitimacy of Ottawa's carbon tax, having already won our reference case at the Court of Appeal of Alberta. And we intend to win at the Supreme Court of Canada, where we recently concluded arguments and await the decision of that highest court of the land.

Mr. Speaker, Ottawa has also rejiggered the approval process for major energy projects to scare off investors and potential proponents with simply unreasonable requirements like assessing downstream emissions. This is yet another discriminatory act by some in Ottawa to push Alberta out of Canada. Could you imagine imposing a downstream emissions test on Toyota or Ford for building an auto plant in Ontario or Quebec? No. That is simply irresponsible. In fact, I too would be outraged on behalf of the working people of Quebec and Ontario if Ottawa did intend to impose such a regulation. Of course, Ottawa isn't proposing such an absurd, job-killing requirement on that industry, but they continue to target Alberta and the Alberta economy. This strategy of divide and conquer will not work today, and it will not work in Alberta.

Some in the federal government are so blinded by their own progressive ideology that they refuse to accept the consequences of these actions, namely policies that kill jobs in provincial economies that rely heavily on responsible resource development. However, Mr. Speaker, I refuse to be driven out of my country, this country, where I worked so hard to become a citizen, just because one party happens to be in power in Ottawa.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

In the last election Canadians said that they had enough of this federal government. Canadians said: "Enough already. We are not giving you a majority. We are tired of the games, we are tired of the virtue signalling, and we are tired of your attacks on Alberta." Unfortunately, some good-faith voters were duped by a dodgy and desperate federal NDP party that continues to bail out the federal government. Those who voted for the federal NDP were hoping their party would act as a check. Canadians elected a minority Liberal government, and what they got, because the federal NDP remains a rudderless, out-of-touch party comprised entirely of the left-wing special interests and agitators, was an arrogant government in Ottawa acting as if it has a mandate to govern like a majority.

Madam Speaker, the issue facing Albertans is not Confederation. The issue is one of personality and party. No government or party stays in power forever in Ottawa. These are matters that can and will be dealt with in time. This government in Ottawa will eventually lose, and they'll be replaced with a government that better understands Confederation and Alberta's role within this amazing country.

Madam Speaker, I agree that the current situation is less than ideal for our great province of Alberta. However, Albertans have the resolve to endure and triumph over whatever Ottawa throws at us. Now, I truly understand the frustration that many Albertans feel towards the federal government, but I ask that they indulge me a moment as I explain why I came to this country and why I chose Alberta as my home.

You know, Madam Speaker, as I said in my opening remarks, I came to this country with nothing. When I boarded that plane a decade and a half ago from Lagos, that plane was bringing me to Canada, not any of the provinces even though my final destination was Alberta. It was to Canada, my own promised land, fleeing all of the hardship and the lawlessness of that country of my birth in pursuit of hope and opportunity in a place, a country where I could be myself, live up to my dreams, build my family, and achieve my God-given potential. That was the country that I came to, and that is the country that I have worked so hard in since the very first day I arrived in this country to help make a better country, a more perfect country, a more perfect union.

Madam Speaker, if we carefully listen to the concerns of the people of Alberta, each and every one of them is rooted in their dissatisfaction with a government at the federal level and an out-of-touch NDP at the provincial level that forgot what it means to have a Confederation, forgot what it means to have a strong province with a strong people.

Now, Madam Speaker, the government of Alberta has pursued numerous projects to ensure that our province receives a fair deal from Confederation. This is the responsible and loyal way to ensure that Alberta's place in Confederation is respected. I recall the recently referenced decision rendered by the Alberta Court of Appeal on the Liberal carbon tax saying, "the federal government is not the parent; and the provincial governments are not its children." The federal government appears to have forgotten this fundamental principle of Confederation, but the government of Alberta remains loyal to this principle.

4:00

Upon election we struck the Fair Deal Panel. Tens of thousands of Albertans participated in this process, which set a road map to secure a fair deal for our province. Our government, that I am part of, Madam Speaker, has taken significant actions to date on those recommendations. As I previously mentioned, Alberta's government has repealed the NDP carbon tax and joined Saskatchewan and Ontario in challenging the Liberal carbon tax.

On pipelines the government of Alberta has filed a constitutional challenge against the Liberals' no-new-pipelines bill, also known as Bill C-69. The Alberta government proclaimed into law the Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act to defend the value of Alberta's resources against provincial governments that seek to block pipelines. The government of Alberta created the indigenous litigation fund to support prodevelopment indigenous communities like the Woodland Cree First Nation as they challenge the constitutionality of Liberal attacks on our resource sector.

Alberta's government continues to push the Liberals to abandon the CMHC stress test for Alberta's residents, which makes it difficult for Alberta's homebuyers to qualify for mortgage insurance.

In a fairly significant move, Madam Speaker, the Alberta government announced this summer that the province would create its own parole board to ensure a fairer, faster, and more responsive justice system. The revolving door currently enables repeat offenders to target Albertans, particularly in rural areas.

On free trade within Canada the Alberta government continues to lead with the freest provincial economy in Confederation by scrapping 21 of the 27 exemptions under the CFTA.

Madam Speaker, the Alberta government is already undertaking a transition study to explore how and how much it would take to bring in a provincial police service, a service that could be better suited to serve Albertans in every region of our province.

Further to that, Madam Speaker, Alberta will also be administering the Canadian firearms program by appointing its own chief firearms officer rather than having it administered by the federal government. This is a critical move that gives the province a greater role in administering firearms. With our own firearms officer the province will also have increased responsibilities to reflect Alberta's long history of firearms use and ownership.

Madam Speaker, the fact is that the Alberta NDP set this province back significantly during their one-and-done term. Ottawa pursued disastrous job-killing policies, but the Alberta NDP piled on Albertans by calling them sewer rats, xenophobes, and the embarrassing cousins of Confederation. I can tell the Member for Edmonton-Glenora that, no, I am not a sewer rat, have never been; I came to this country with nothing but my education and a desire to work hard. To the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona: I am also not a xenophobe; I am working hard every day to ensure that all Albertans of all backgrounds can succeed in our good province. Again to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona: Albertans are not the embarrassing cousins of Confederation; we are a generous province that has for decades contributed so much to Confederation and our great country.

Frankly speaking, Madam Speaker, I find it a bit amusing that the NDP would put our government's loyalty to Canada and the project of Confederation into question when their party's loyalty to Alberta

has been proven time and time again to be a matter of political expediency. Many of their members have actively protested against Alberta pipelines, including the NDP leader. More concerning is the fact that the NDP will always put its party before the best interest of our province.

Now, Madam Speaker, I could go on at great length about how out of touch the NDP is with Alberta, but it's already a well-established historical fact. So though that NDP will continue to wage a campaign of fear and smear, divide and conquer, the Alberta government has tremendous work to do as we reassert ourselves within Confederation, as previous Conservative Premiers have done for our great province. We will get a fair deal, we will succeed as a province, and while the people of Alberta wait for the shelf life of the current government in Ottawa to expire, the government of Alberta will remain loyal to the project of Canada's Confederation while pursuing a fair deal from it.

Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Motion 29.

Ms Sweet: Point of privilege, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry?

Ms Sweet: Point of privilege.

The Deputy Speaker: A point of privilege has been called.

The hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. According to 22(2) I am notifying you today that I will be calling a point of privilege. I am not ready to debate, but I will be ready to debate it tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. A point of privilege has been noted.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of this Assembly that notwithstanding standing orders 8(1) and (7)(d) the Assembly proceed to debate of third reading on Bill 204, the Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing that there's no more private members' business, then, this afternoon, I will move to adjourn the Assembly until 7:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:07 p.m.]

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