



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 14, 2021

Day 114

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 3

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 14, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, please remain standing for the playing of our national anthem.

Recording:

O Canada, our home and native land!
 True patriot love in all of us command.
 Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
 Il sait porter la croix!
 Ton histoire est une épopée
 Des plus brillants exploits.
 God keep our land glorious and free!
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Members' Statements

COVID-19 Vaccine Lottery

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, today we are less than 2 per cent away from passing the threshold to enter stage 3 of our open-for-summer plan. From day one Alberta's health care teams have worked hard to administer the vaccines as quickly as they've arrived in the province. This hard work has paid off, and today we have a level of immunity that would have seemed impossible a short time ago. Every day we see the number of active cases continue to plummet thanks to the effectiveness of these life-saving vaccines, but we're not out of the woods just yet. Right now we are projected to cross the 70 per cent threshold on June 18. If we are able to get to that level even one day earlier, we will all be able to celebrate Canada Day normally.

We want to give Albertans every reason we can to get vaccinated. Beginning today, Mr. Speaker, any Alberta resident 18 and over who has received a first dose of vaccine can register to enter for the first \$1 million prize. Eligibility for the first prize will close seven days after the province beats its stage 3 target of 70 per cent first-dose vaccinations of every Albertan 12 and older. The first winner will be announced when stage 3 of the Alberta open for summer plan begins. Following this first prize we will have two additional draws in order to increase the incentive for Albertans to get their second dose of vaccine.

Since Ohio began the Vax-a-Million campaign, their rate of vaccinations has increased by 55 per cent, and some counties doubled their uptake. Multiple states have now begun similar programs, and last week Manitoba became the first province to launch such a lottery.

Mr. Speaker, in the race against a possible fourth wave, ensuring that as many Albertans as possible are vaccinated in a timely manner is critical. This program will help encourage all eligible

Albertans to do their part so we can save lives, protect our communities, and get life back to normal.

Thank you.

Premier's Leadership

Mr. Dang: It was a sunny July day in 2017 when the current Premier stood at a podium and told Albertans that he was running for Premier in the spirit of servant leadership. Fast-forward four years, and Albertans can see clear as day that this Premier is all about serving himself. It's no wonder why the Premier is the least trusted and least popular Premier in Canada. From June 2019 until today his approval has fallen by over 30 per cent.

It's easy to see why when you remember that this is the Premier who handed out earplugs to ensure that the concerns of Albertans, concerns being conveyed by myself and others in this Chamber on behalf of our constituents, would not be heard by him or his cabinet; the Premier who fired the Election Commissioner investigating the leadership campaign that elected him; the Premier who spent tens of thousands of dollars flying his friends around on private jets so they could attend pancake-flipping photo ops; the Premier who left small businesses to struggle while he secured a taxpayer bailout for his fundraising machine; the Premier who fired 20,000 education workers because he didn't think they were working; the Premier who defended the rights of his staff, MLAs, and ministers to fly internationally after locking Albertans home for Christmas; the Premier who shut down this House for weeks to get himself out of a caucus crisis caused by his lack of leadership; the Premier who insulted Albertans upset by his liquor cabinet patio party and defended his rule-breaking while Albertans were still following the rules; and – let's not forget – the Premier who lost \$1.3 billion gambling on Donald Trump. And there's so much more.

During a time when Albertans have been working hard and helping each other through this pandemic, this Premier has fought harder to keep his job and to fund his white-linen patio dinners. After two years of this Premier's laughable attempts at servant leadership Albertans are looking for someone who is concerned about the well-being of Albertans. This Premier has shown that while he'll only do the bare minimum for Albertans, he'll go to the wall to ensure that he and his friends and partisan buddies are taken care of. Albertans deserve better, and come the next election, they'll get better.

News Media Reports on COVID-19 Response

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, on June 9 the *Globe and Mail* released a headline claiming that Canada has a gold medal vaccination rate, praising the federal leadership. Although Canada has administered a first dose to 63 per cent of its population and 29 per cent has been given a second dose, we're tied for 56th place in achieving a fully vaccinated population, alongside St. Lucia, Albania, and Brazil. This is concerning since other nations such as Chile, Mongolia, Hungary, and Uruguay all have over 40 per cent of their population totally vaccinated. This headline by the *Globe and Mail* is equivalent to awarding a 100-metre sprinter a gold medal at the 50-metre line.

The media, bought and paid for by this Liberal federal government, dares to brag up COVID response, which has been pathetic. The media continues to praise the federal leadership even after an embarrassing vaccine procurement process that saw Canada focus procurement from unproven sources, tap into vaccine supplies targeted for third-world countries, and, ultimately, it has been unable to leverage any vaccine development here.

Media bias is brutal. Don't believe me? Alberta has the lowest Premier ratings, again due to a hostile and critical media, despite the fact that from the beginning Alberta has secured adequate PPE and ventilators, shared them with the rest of the nation. We've managed our hospitalization numbers and haven't tapped into our surge facilities, yet we've maintained the highest level of freedoms, allowing small business and industry to remain open, minimizing the economic effects of COVID restrictions. Yet the Premier of Quebec saw the highest approval ratings despite the fact that Quebec saw the highest number of deaths, despite the fact that the residents and seniors facilities were abandoned, despite the fact that the military was brought in, despite the implementation of curfews, and despite the severe curtailing of personal freedoms.

News media should focus more on facts and figures by reporting on real events instead of pushing opinion by editors and supposed journalists in their left-wing propaganda that they try and peddle as the news. I suppose this is what \$600 million and a charismatic, silver-spoon, Laurentian, elitist, drama teacher gets a democratic society. It's a regime that endeavors towards a great reset with news media, showing that its purchased support with biased news is something that all Canadians should be wary of.

Economic Downturn in Calgary

Mr. Sabir: Calgary suffers while the Premier messes up. Jobs, economy, pipelines: that is what this Premier promised the people of Calgary in the last election. It was on every sign, every podium, every advertisement, and every piece of literature. He promised that he would create 55,000 jobs. He even claimed that the mere election of him as Premier would generate investment and create jobs.

What a joke, Mr. Speaker. After two years now Alberta sees, as clear as can be, that the Premier has failed. Jobs: this Premier lost Albertans over 50,000 jobs before the pandemic; he personally fired 20,000 workers during the pandemic. Economy: this Premier handed out \$4.7 billion in corporate handouts that failed to create a single job in Alberta but went to enriching foreign shareholders and creating jobs and investments elsewhere. He chased out investment with his embarrassing energy war room and his three-times-delayed inquiry, that promoted climate change denial. And pipelines: the Premier, whose diplomacy includes calling the Governor of Michigan brain-dead, gambled over \$1.3 billion on Donald Trump, a gamble he lost, that Albertans are paying for.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary is struggling. While our leader has committed to delivering a strategy to revitalize the downtown core and create jobs, the Finance minister told Calgary that their downtown was not his job, and this Premier's plan is simply to hit the accelerator on his failed policy and cross his fingers. In two years, at the next election, this Premier will need to explain to Albertans how jobs, economy, pipelines turned into 200,000 Albertans looking for work and 50,000 jobs lost before the pandemic. This Premier has broken his promises to Calgary, and Calgarians can see through it.

Thank you.

1:40

Seniors

Mr. Turton: Mr. Speaker, last week was Seniors' Week, and I felt it had a special significance this year. Like many people, I try to show my appreciation to the seniors I know in my life and those throughout Spruce Grove and Stony Plain every chance I get. Seniors have contributed so much to our society, the foundation of our economy, and our quality of life, which we often take for

granted. Seniors also inspire us with many insightful and wise stories based upon their decades of life experience.

But, Mr. Speaker, the last 14 months have been a difficult and lonely time for many seniors in Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. Our seniors are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19, which has led to most seniors being isolated from their family and friends over the past year for fears of their safety. Although that has kept many safe, it has also reduced many seniors' mental health and, in some cases, has even led to more senior abuse. Support workers have said that they have seen a disturbing rise in senior abuse, and this is not just physical or emotional; this also includes neglect and financial exploitation. Although abuse can be difficult to notice, there are signs such as confusion, changes in hygiene, unexplained injuries, depression, and increased fear around certain people or when talking about money.

Please know that there are resources available for you or your loved ones if you think that abuse is happening. I've included phone numbers for these resources on my Facebook, a recent opinion piece, and they can also be sent by e-mail.

But there is light at the end of this dark tunnel and brighter days ahead for our seniors. With record-setting vaccinations and our reopening plan at full steam, our seniors will be able to connect with family and friends the way they are meant to, in person and up close. Mr. Speaker, I yearn for the day when my sons can hug their grandparents once more, and I know that many others are looking forward to the exact same thing, and that day is fast approaching.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Coal Development Policies

Mr. Schmidt: This weekend I attended a rally in the Crownsnest Pass organized by the Mountain Child Valley Society to protest the proposed development of multiple coal mines in that area. The rally was attended by members of the Piikani First Nation, local farmers and ranchers, hunters, fishers, campers, hikers, all the people with an interest in maintaining a secure supply of clean water for that area. The rally began at Crownsnest Lake with prayer, songs, and stories shared by elders of the Piikani First Nation. We then drove our vehicles down to the entrance to Brocket, where members of the Piikani First Nation continued the rally.

I heard the many concerns that the people had about the project, concerns that this environment minister and the UCP government were taking water away from people and giving it to coal mines, concerns that the remaining water would be forever contaminated with selenium. People were upset about the potential effects on sensitive species like bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, limber pine, whitebark pine. People are right to be concerned. The disastrous effects of coal mining stare them in the face every day. The devastation caused by mining in the Elk valley is just a short drive away, and the rubble from the Frank slide should serve as a reminder that mining coal can have disastrous effects.

Notably, no one talked about potential benefits. Not a single person believed the coal companies' promises of jobs and investment. Not a single person believed that this UCP government would hold mining companies to account in fulfilling its environmental obligations. Everyone sees that this government is working hand in hand with Australian billionaires to strip-mine the Rockies, line their own pockets, and leave us to clean up the mess.

Albertans from all walks of life are working together to stop the UCP's terrible plan, and after the 2023 election we will end it for good.

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

Cochrane Immigrant Services Committee

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a remarkable organization in my constituency, the Cochrane Immigrant Services Committee. This organization works hard to provide newcomers with a warm welcome and to ensure that they are connected with the broader community and all the many services available. Cochrane Immigrant Services has partnered with several local and regional institutions such as Bow Valley College, the Cochrane library, the Cochrane English Language society, and local churches. These connections are important in assisting newcomers with educational needs, finding comfort in the community, and guiding them through the citizenship process.

CISC is also active with a variety of local initiatives and regularly hosts welcoming events, one of my favourites being the Christmas Jingle Mingle. Currently they are preparing to host Culture Fest, celebrating the rich diversity present in Airdrie-Cochrane. These initiatives not only help newcomers feel welcome but also give folks in the area a chance to experience world cultures right here at home.

I would also like to highlight the amazing contributions of Fleeha Ahmad. She has gone above and beyond to make the mission of CISC a reality. Her commitment to our community and being welcoming to all is commendable, and I am blessed to call her my friend.

Mr. Speaker, Cochrane Immigrant Services is emblematic of what it means to be Albertan. This province was built by the drive and determination of newcomers and those willing to lend a helping hand. Many generations of hard-working pioneers relied upon the support of their neighbours. That is the spirit that built this great province, and it is that same Alberta pride that will get us back on our feet as we move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Cochrane Immigrant Services.

Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, I rise today once again to speak to the increase of hate crimes in Alberta and Canada. Hate should have no place in our society, yet not only does it take up a place; it is increasing at an alarming rate. As our Muslim brothers and sisters are scared to walk in their neighbourhoods, white supremacist groups march freely in the streets, and while terrorists deliberately drive their vehicles to kill those who cannot defend themselves, black, indigenous, and people of colour are carded for simply waiting for the train or going to the store. This has to stop.

This government has decided to shift responsibility from itself to the very communities that are being terrorized. The new security grant will do nothing to stop these attacks. Instead of working towards dealing with white supremacy at its source, this government will give money to make community hubs, quote, safer. This government will make spaces safer from attacks instead of working at stopping these attacks. This is not enough. It's not a solution.

Members of various racialized communities have contacted myself and my office. Each has had enough with the inaction of this government. They are tired of just a thoughts-and-prayers approach. They want a policy-and-change approach. They have the right not only to feel safe but also be safe in their neighbourhoods.

That is why I'm again asking this government to create a bipartisan committee on antiracism. This committee would be responsible to develop and implement the strategies that have been

recommended by the Anti-Racism Advisory Council. Time is of the essence. We cannot allow more attacks to happen before we choose to act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Federal Equalization Program

Mr. Stephan: Mr. Speaker, Sir Thomas More was Lord Chancellor of England. King Henry wanted Thomas to recognize him as the supreme head of the Church. Thomas said no. The King beheaded Thomas for treason. While Thomas was executed for treason, was he disloyal? No. He was so loyal to principles that he gave his life for them. In adult relationships loyalty is not conferred; it is earned as adults are principled with each other, acting in good faith and with mutual respect.

Mr. Speaker, the Quebec Premier said that one of his favourite things about Canada is equalization. Ponder that. Quebec's loyalty to Canada is founded upon what it takes from other provinces. What happens when the welfare ends? To maintain the status quo, Quebec gets a de facto veto on changes to Canada's Constitution, a Constitution it never signed. How will a referendum to remove equalization from the Constitution be received if Quebec's transactional loyalty to Canada is founded upon it?

It is not right to require Alberta businesses and families to have unconditional loyalty to a fiscally and morally bankrupt partnership that plunders and oppresses them. Mr. Speaker, unconditional, blind loyalty to imperfect individuals and partnerships will ultimately fail. Loyalty to the truth and its principles will in the end always prevail. Security is founded in a shared loyalty to the truth, trusting in the peace of its principles.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Federal Equalization Program Referendum

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, today federal Conservative leader Erin O'Toole was asked if he supports removing the principle of equalization from the Constitution. He ducked, he dived, he dodged, but what he didn't do is say yes. It's now clear that despite the result of any referendum there is no one in an actual position of leadership in Ottawa who will act on it. Why won't the Premier admit that this referendum isn't about Ottawa, that it's about giving the least popular Premier in Canada yet another stage from which he can sow anger and division in order to save his own skin?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the referendum on the principle of equalization will be for Albertans to decide based on their interests and their values, not based on what people in Ottawa think. We know what the values of the NDP are. They've always defended the broken status quo. Now the NDP is attacking us for keeping one of our central election promises, which was to allow every adult Albertan to pass judgment on the unfairness of fiscal federalism in equalization. I'll certainly be voting yes for that referendum.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the federal Conservatives aren't onboard now, just like they weren't when the Premier was at the federal cabinet table. The Premier helped write the equalization formula that he's now campaigning against to boost his popularity. If the Premier wants all Albertans to actually successfully engage in renegotiating this formula so it's more Alberta friendly, why won't he ask them about the formula itself rather than removing the

principle? Is he so scared of his own record on this formula that he's unwilling to put it to Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it's exactly what we are doing, putting the principle of equalization to Albertans, as we committed to do in the last election. I have our platform, a central commitment. Is the member suggesting that we should violate our commitment to Albertans? Is she suggesting that we should not consult Albertans on this important issue? Why does the NDP continue to defend a system where we pay more and more, even during tough times, and other provinces get more and more from Albertans even when times are better there? Why is the NDP continuing to defend the fundamental unfairness in fiscal federalism that has mistreated Alberta for so long?

Ms Notley: Why won't the Premier take responsibility for the formula that he helped write that throws Albertans under the bus? Why is that not the question being put to Albertans? Why are Albertans being asked to vote on something that we cannot fix? He's offering them no solution. He's just offering them anger. When will he stop doing that? When will he actually lead?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear about this. The NDP has always supported sending our tax dollars in increasing amounts to other parts of the country even when their governments impair our economy, block our pipelines, and kill Alberta jobs. Her Finance minister said that on an overhaul of federal equalization payments, on that question, he was, quote, agnostic. We know why the NDP is upset about this referendum. They don't want Alberta standing up and fighting for a better and a fairer deal in the federation, but this government will keep its commitment to do just that.

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

Ms Notley: When he held the pen, he did not get any kind of fair deal for Albertans, and that's what he's fighting against now.

Métis Consultation Policy

Ms Notley: Now, today I stood with the Métis Nation of Alberta as they launched legal action against the government of Alberta for failing to respect their constitutionally protected right to consultation, a process started under our government because we knew how important it was and is. Yet the Premier cancelled that process and is now refusing to engage with the Métis Nation. Indigenous consultation is not a nice-to-do; it's a must. Why is the Premier failing his responsibility to consult with the Métis people of Alberta?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on the earlier question, I'll remind the House that when I was a member of the federal cabinet, Alberta got full per capita funding for the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer, worth over \$2 billion a year to this province.

With respect to the Métis Nation, Mr. Speaker, this government has continued to consult with the Métis Nation on important matters. I just visited the special vaccine clinic that we set up in partnership with the Métis Nation. We provided funding for Métis Crossing, affordable housing projects, cultural outreach, ongoing supports during the pandemic. I look forward to continuing to work with the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Ms Notley: That is some gaslighting, Mr. Speaker.

Here is Audrey Poitras, MNA president, quote: lack of meaningful consultation endangers the economy; it creates

regulatory uncertainty; it scares away investment; nobody wants this. End quote. Yet today, Mr. Speaker, they're going to court because they are not consulting with them, they're not taking their calls, and they're not asking them about anything. These obligations are utterly crucial to set the stage for economic growth and job creation. Why doesn't the Premier understand that his disrespect is going to cost jobs, kill projects, and hurt the economy?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader just said that this government has consulted with the Métis Nation about nothing. That is categorically false. There have been ongoing consultations on a broad range of issues, funding arrangements. The most recent concrete example of co-operation was our work with them collaborating on outreach clinics for vaccines to make them available in a culturally comfortable environment for Métis Albertans. We hope to continue to work with the nation and with the Métis settlements to ensure that they can enjoy full prosperity in Alberta's future.

Ms Notley: For the record, Mr. Speaker, this government has ripped up any conversation about establishing a consultation policy as required under section 35 of the Constitution. What the Premier is saying today is that the new policy of the government of Alberta is to not recognize the people of Alberta and to not negotiate a consultation policy with them as required under the law. Why is he treating the Métis people as second-class indigenous citizens?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is doing no such thing. Alberta was the first province in Canada to give specific statutory legal recognition to Métis people. This province, under previous Conservative governments, provided access to hunting and trapping rights that were unprecedented in Canada. We provided unprecedented levels of funding. Now, it's true that at any given time there are hundreds of pieces of litigation between indigenous communities and the Crown, both federal and provincial. The member knows that very well. That should not impair us from a constructive and respectful relationship.

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

Ms Notley: The Premier should learn the file.

Anti-Racism Advisory Council Report

Ms Notley: Now, last week the Premier undertook some concrete steps towards addressing hate crimes in this province, especially in the wake of the attack on a Muslim family in Ontario, and I want to congratulate him for taking those steps. They will be very important. However, there is also more to do, as was outlined in a report from the Anti-Racism Advisory Council that was released a day later, that's been sitting on their desk for four months. The Premier and his ministers have had a lot of time to read that report. Will he commit to accepting and implementing all 48 recommendations? Yes or no?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we will closely review the report and likely will accept and implement some recommendations. Many of the recommendations are already implemented, in fact, I should say. I know that the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women working with the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General are reviewing the other recommendations in detail. We appreciate the work of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council. We were very proud last week to announce the special outreach efforts and more co-ordinated effort in law enforcement with respect to hate

crimes and to announce the security infrastructure project to protect communities that are victims of violence and vandalism.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his ministers have already had six months to review the recommendations. One of them is for the Premier to stop threatening the jobs of 11,000 front-line health care workers, workers who, as the council correctly noted, are, the majority, women from racialized communities, Albertans who just because of the colour of their skin will have a harder time becoming re-employed and supporting their families. Will the Premier accept that recommendation from the council and reverse his plan to fire thousands of racialized low-wage employees?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP knows perfectly well that there is zero racial criteria in government contracting and procurement, that the majority of our laundry and food services are already provided by private providers, that this government was elected on a commitment to maximize efficiency by increasing the percentage of those services that are offered out for competitive contracting. Many of the people who work in private companies delivering those laundry and food services as well are racialized people and women. We're just as concerned about their employment as well.

Ms Notley: The council specifically identified that reducing their wages is a form of racism, and they are doing it, and they're knowing it.

Meanwhile the council has recommendations to fix the Premier's broken curriculum, which, as we know, was heavily – heavily – influenced by the prejudiced views of one of his closest friends. The council recommends that students be taught about systemic racism, something the Premier needs to learn about as well, and they suggest that they should focus on ensuring our kids learn how to be antiracist. Now, would the Premier do that, or is that the woke activism that he fears so much?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there was a grab bag of jargon and personal attacks. I didn't really identify a question there. I have no doubt that all members of this Assembly condemn racism and hatred in all of its forms, including, as we did in the motion last week, condemning the violent murder of several Muslim Canadians in London, Ontario.

Mr. Feehan: Including systemic? How about systemic?

Mr. Kenney: I don't know why that would elicit heckles, Mr. Speaker. We should be united and not seek partisan division on these matters.

Calgary Storm Damage Recovery Funding

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday in this House I asked about the horrible inaction of this government to assist constituents of mine in northeast Calgary with their hail-damaged homes. It's been one year of pain and struggle for the people I represent, but you wouldn't know it from the garbage answers I got from the Minister of Finance. Today I'm going to try the Premier. Why did the Premier break the promise to fast-track insurance claims for Calgarians whose homes and vehicles were destroyed in the record June 2020 hailstorm?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. The Calgary hailstorm of last year was a significant event in Alberta. It created massive hardship for many Albertans, and that's why we pressed the Insurance Bureau of Canada, insurance companies to deliver expeditious, timely, and appropriate responses to those that were affected. I can say that as of December 2020, 80 per cent of automobile and 70 per cent of residential claims were settled. No doubt there have been many since then.

Mr. Sabir: The city of Calgary did step up to the plate with a program that will offer \$3,000 to every resident impacted by the record storm to help purchase impact-resistant materials for their homes. We called for this exact type of support in a letter late August to the Premier and the Prime Minister of Canada, but our call for help was ignored. Why is it that this government never steps up to do the right thing for my constituents and people in northeast Calgary, but corporate CEOs get billions of dollars from this Premier?

Mr. McIver: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, our government has taken action. Our MLAs in that part of the city have been very active working with people and helping them to get their insurance claims settled. According to the insurance industry there have been over 70,000 claims, about \$1.3 billion more than the initial estimates, and we'll keep working with those. But the other thing that the hon. member ought to probably remember is that the NDP really didn't do anything more than this government is doing when they had a chance. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sabir: My constituents couldn't access the disaster recovery program because the government excluded the hailstorm damage from coverage. That's why in our August letter we asked for a review of the disaster recovery program. Instead of a review this Premier decided to download more of the costs for the program onto municipalities and has now made it so that homeowners can only access DRP funding once for each property. Premier, why did you cut disaster recovery funding at a time when Albertans and my constituents need it the most?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Calgary hailstorm was a terrible event that our government has worked hard for. We feel terrible about the damage that was done and about the suffering that has happened. But even the people in northeast Calgary, like all other Albertans, would probably agree that if the government was to continue paying for the same property that floods over and over and over and over again, probably it would be time for the government to take a different approach. It's what we're doing. We think it's responsible, and we think it will save Albertans money over time. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Security Infrastructure Program

Mr. Turton: Mr. Speaker, we have seen a number of alleged hate-motivated attacks on Muslim Canadians in Alberta and throughout Canada, which seems to have increased over the past year. Last week a horrendous tragedy happened in London, Ontario, where four Muslim Canadians were apparently murdered just for walking down the street and being a Muslim. To the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: can you please tell this House what our government is doing to keep Albertans safe from these hate-motivated attacks?

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

Mr. Madu: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain for that very important question. Let me affirm that this government condemns all forms of hate anywhere in our province and certainly those against the Muslim community. This government also took historical and important steps to protect Alberta's cultural, ethnic, and religious groups from the scourge of hate-motivated crime. We announced the creation of a community liaison on hate crimes, the establishment of the hate crimes co-ordination unit, and introduced the Alberta security infrastructure program.

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

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that during the 2019 election the UCP promised to protect the safety and security of all Albertans and given that one of these promises was to establish a security infrastructure program to protect minority communities and given that this would allow these communities to beef up security around mosques, synagogues, temples, and churches, can the same minister please tell us more about this program?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to be joined by the Premier and members of the Al Rashid mosque here in Edmonton to announce the creation of the Alberta security infrastructure program. Starting this fall, religious and ethnic organizations and indigenous groups that are at risk of being targeted with hate crimes and vandalism will be able to apply for grants for security and technology improvement. Funding for upgrades to facility infrastructure, including security and monitoring systems, will help protect both individuals and property from vandalism and other criminal acts.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the economic impact of COVID-19 has touched all Albertan communities, especially religious ones, and given that some religious minority communities have asked about whether the funding outlined by the minister is a matched loan or an outright grant, can the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General please let this House know if these communities need to match those funds?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that Alberta's cultural communities, indigenous communities have gone through a difficult time as a consequence of this pandemic and economic uncertainty. This particular grant is a straight-up grant. There is no matching grant. There is \$10,000 available for training and education and a total of \$90,000 available for grant applications. In all this would be a nearly \$1 million grant. I am confident that all these programs put together will ensure the safety of our communities.

Métis Consultation Policy (continued)

Mr. Feehan: Alberta's NDP government, our Premier, cabinet, and specifically myself as Indigenous Relations minister worked closely with the Métis nation and Métis peoples right across this

province on matters of importance to them. This included the Métis consultation policy, which would formalize the process to consult with organizations like the MNA. Currently there is no formal negotiation process spelled out in law. We'd gotten close to the resolution at the time of the last election. Now we've learned that the government was walking away from discussions on this policy. In essence, they've thrown this policy into the trash. Why doesn't the minister feel he has a duty to consult with the Métis people?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's curious to me that the member opposite is always pointing fingers. Remember that you've got to have three pointing back at yourself. They had four years to get this done. Did it happen? No. A lot of talk over there, a lot of action over here, and that's what it's all about. We're going to carry on working with the Métis nation, a great bunch of people, and I love working with them.

Mr. Feehan: Well, that answer certainly shows their ignorance to the process that was undergoing and the waiting for the federal government to participate.

Given that this Premier pledged to build a new working relationship with indigenous people but given that the Métis Nation of Alberta says that things have gotten so bad that they're now taking the government to court and given that Métis Nation of Alberta president Audrey Poitras says that she's been waiting for two decades for the policy to be formalized, and now in just two years this government ruined years, even decades, of work and a critical relationship, Minister, how did it get so bad? It would seem the problem here is . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: It's curious. Once again the member just admitted they did nothing, again and again. Mr. Speaker, there is a process in place. It's called credible assertion, and we do have the Fort MacKay Métis nation that has got credible assertion. I actually got a call from them today thanking me for all the hard work that we've done to get them that credible assertion. Great bunch of people working up there with all of their industrial partners. We'll continue working with the Métis nations that want to work with us, and there are several.

2:10

Mr. Feehan: Clearly, this minister needs to read the file to know what's actually happened. Maybe that would help the progress. Given that this government also didn't . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, you know that the use of a preamble – and if there has ever been an example in the Legislature that is out of order, that certainly would be it. Please proceed immediately to your question.

Mr. Feehan: Given that this government also didn't consult with many indigenous leaders on their heavily criticized curriculum and given that Charles Barner, an 11-year-old Métis student from Edmonton, said that the curriculum didn't represent the history of the Métis people. He said:

I don't see myself in this curriculum, or my family, or those who came before me.

Barner said:

This curriculum teaches more about European history than about the history of the Métis people who share such a deep connection with this land.

Why does this minister continue to ignore the rights of the Métis people and seek . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very committed to consulting with the Métis Nation of Alberta to get their feedback on the draft K to 6 curriculum. I've been clear in my meetings with their president that we want to have meaningful engagement with the nation, so much so that we have offered them a grant of \$50,000 so they can consult with their membership for specific and detailed feedback on the draft curriculum and any changes that they might want to recommend to have authentic inclusion of Métis perspectives. We're committed to that. We'll continue to be committed.

Anti-Racism Advisory Council Report (continued)

Mr. Deol: I would like to start by offering the sympathies of myself and all members of Alberta's NDP to the victims of the racist attack in Edmonton on the weekend. On Friday the government released their draft antiracism report. This came days after the UCP mocked our caucus for urging this government to release this same report. This is a report that many Albertans have been waiting to see. Can the minister explain the decision to release this report with an announcement days after refusing to release it? Can she also explain why it took six months to release this report? We know you have had it since January.

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, this report was delivered to the office of the minister at the end of March, and I just want to say that the work related to some of the more pressing recommendations is in progress already, including establishing a hate crime liaison and a hate crimes co-ordination unit, formally recognizing First Nations policing under the Police Act, and more.

Mr. Deol: Given that the UCP released this report without an implementation plan, which is concerning as we see the increase in hate-motivated attacks, and given that Albertans need to see what resources this government is prepared to put behind the recommendations of this report to ensure they're fulfilled, will the minister commit that the government will accept every recommendation in this report and commit that the government will implement them before the next election?

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

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is classic of the NDP. For four years they did nothing. We now have a report. Guess what. We have acted and produced a lot of good programs that are in compliance with that particular report. I am looking forward to working with the ARAC and the fantastic minister of culture and multiculturalism to make sure that we get this right.

Mr. Deol: Given that tackling racism is something every member of this House should be working towards and given that finally releasing the report is a good first step, successful implementation is critical, and given that our caucus has been consulting with Albertans to develop policy solutions to address racism in Alberta, will the minister commit to a bipartisan committee to develop and oversee the implementation of an action plan? Will she commit to this basic level of accountability to Albertans? We need policy and action. Thoughts and prayers are good but not . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we took a historic step to ban carding, something that was not in the report but something that cultural communities came before this particular Assembly to protest about. Guess what. For four years the NDP did nothing. It's also why there was a noose that was posted at a hospital up north in 2016. Guess what. Under the NDP they also did nothing. We have done more in two months than the NDP did in their entire four years. We will deliver on that particular report. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Residential School Deaths

Mr. Rehn: Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure and an honour to know and work with many indigenous individuals over my decades of work in the forest industry. It is with a heavy heart that I rise to ask these questions. In Lesser Slave Lake there were six residential schools, representing just under a quarter of the entire province's residential schools. Would the Minister of Indigenous Relations please outline his plan to ensure that all children who suffered in places like that be named and remembered?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for such a timely question. The recent discovery of those graves of 215 children at Kamloops residential school was a horrific sight and deeply heartbreaking. I spent a lot of time grieving with many people at the memorial right out front here. My thoughts and prayers go out to all the families who've lost loved ones and are impacted by this devastating act. The treatment of children and families who were part of the Indian residential schools is a sad chapter in our history, and it has caused intergenerational trauma for too many, but Alberta is committed to funding for research on this.

Mr. Rehn: Mr. Speaker, given the tragic recent discovery of lost children at the residential school in Kamloops and given that it is expected that there will be more of these heartbreaking findings at other residential school sites across the country and given that there are a large number of these sites in our province and even in Lesser Slave Lake, could the minister please share with this House his work to ensure that all indigenous peoples can finally seek closure with regard to the deplorable conditions that their loved ones were subjected to at these sites?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you for the question. There were 25 residential schools operating in Alberta between 1862 and 1975. Some had graves and cemeteries associated with these schools. Some are maintained, but others, of course, are not. Alberta recognizes that this is a delicate matter, and decisions about how to proceed must be inclusive and community-led and reflect the perspectives of community members and elders. That's what I've been doing, reaching out to those community leaders and the elders to make sure that they're in the driver's seat; we're in the passenger's seat. They're leading this.

Mr. Rehn: Mr. Speaker, given that residential schools represent only one of the ways that indigenous peoples of this land were mistreated and given that injustices against indigenous peoples remain pervasive, both societally and systemically, and given that it is our duty to do all we can within our power to recognize the

horrors of the past and offer our support to indigenous peoples going forward, would the minister outline how the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report are guiding the government's policy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to ensuring the implementation of the relevant calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Calls to action 71 through 76 specifically address missing children and burial information. If requested by indigenous communities, we will also facilitate and support access to records held by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Alberta's Provincial Archives, and other relevant information potentially held by the government of Alberta. My dear friend Dr. Wilton Littlechild played a key role in contributing to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He attended a residential school, and I value his guidance in walking this journey of reconciliation.

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

Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The crisis concerning ambulance services in our province appears to be growing ever more desperate. Last week in both Calgary and Edmonton we were at red alert status for an extended period, meaning there were no ambulances available to answer calls. This literally puts lives at risk. We had record-high call volumes. At one point, we've heard, Calgary had more than 30 emergency calls pending, with no EMS available for dispatch. To the Minister of Health. The system is past the breaking point, and he's in charge. Will he step up to the plate, take responsibility for his failure, and fix this disaster before lives are lost?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, there has been no failure. We began this work, actually, in 2019. A lot of this in part began with the integration of our dispatch into the hospital system with AHS so we have an integration, we can have physicians in our dispatch helping with our calls, helping with the responses that are happening in the community. To add the number of PRUs, the ground ambulance reg that we passed in 2019, a number of initiatives that we are still in the works of being able to implement and announce in the coming days – we're really proud of the work we started in 2019 because of four years of the NDP ignoring this issue.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our legacy is the hospital emergency liaison officer program, which was bringing down wait times, which this minister's legacy has cancelled.

Given that EMS staff are overworked and facing burnout under this government and given that work-related stress is resulting in staff booking time off, which only exacerbates the problem, and given that keeping EMS response times fast is key to saving lives when every second counts and given that this minister couldn't even summon the courage to apologize to Albertans just now for his complete failure, to the minister: when can Albertans and EMS staff expect a real action plan?

2:20

Mr. Shandro: Well, now that there's a new government, Mr. Speaker. That's when it's going to happen. For four years the NDP ignored this issue. The HELO program was one of 100 initiatives

that failed and failed and failed because the NDP refused to deal with the systemic issues with ground ambulance as well as our helicopter EMS to be able to have an integrated system throughout the province that deals with it systemically. It's one of the reasons why we started this in 2019, to be able to do what the NDP failed to do, what they failed for four years to do, to be able to make sure that we're adding the resources that are needed in all of our communities so that everybody has the ground ambulance . . .

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this is just another fumble for this Minister of Health as he also sits on the report for helicopter EMS and refuses to release it but he's taken zero responsibility for his failure and given that Albertans want more than platitudes and talking points – they want real action – and given that the red alert status for EMS in Edmonton and Calgary means additional challenges to rural communities surrounding them as resources are diverted and given that this problem is just getting worse under this Minister of Health as the Premier labels him Alberta's best minister, something that no Albertan and no paramedic believes, to the minister: what about a red alert crisis leads you to deliver such an underwhelming response?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, response times are within target, and they're stable. This is a continued war that the NDP has had for two years on AHS and all the amazing people on the front lines doing the work that Albertans need to make sure that Albertans get the care that they need. The NDP failed for four years to address the issues, to be able to make sure that the resources are there in the communities that need the ground ambulance resources, failed to deal with the systemic issues. We saw them ignore for four years. We're going to fix it where they failed.

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

Student Loan Interest Rates and Tuition Fees

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government has announced that they will be freezing the student loan rates until March 2022, yet students in Alberta hear nothing but deafening silence from this UCP government. Alberta students carry the highest student loan debt rates in the country, and their tuition rates have shot up higher year after year since this government took power. When will the minister recognize that we are still dealing with the economic impacts from the pandemic? His government has not delivered on jobs for students. Give students a break on their provincial rates for interest for . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta has risen.

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, you know, the Minister of Advanced Education has been doing a ton of work to help ensure that our postsecondary system is designed to meet the needs of Alberta students, to make sure that they have a path to a productive future, a path to good, solid, quality jobs. His Alberta 2030 strategy, which is to ensure that our postsecondary institutions are focused on the best path forward in a sustainable way, to ensure that Albertans have a hope for a brighter future, is important work, and that is going to help to ensure that the students in Alberta who need help to get their education and to get a path to a productive future will have the help they need.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government has raised student loan interest rates during the pandemic to prime plus 1 per cent and given that this government gave students barely a six-month break on interest rates, reinstating their interest rates and student loans during the second and third waves of this pandemic, given that the highest demographic of unemployed Albertans are young people typically fresh out of school and given that you cannot go to an improved advanced education system if you simply can't afford it, when will the minister commit to freezing student loan interest rates until next year to give our graduates a break?

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, our balanced approach with respect to interest rates on student loans ensures that students will have flexible payment options and repayment supports, and most borrowers will have the same affordable monthly payment amount with a modest increase in their loan amortization. The key thing here is that the Minister of Advanced Education is working on significant supports and improvements in the overall postsecondary institution system to ensure that folks are able to get a path to good, solid employment while having an affordable, accessible system to . . .

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

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government removed the cap on tuition rates, allowing schools to increase rates by 7 per cent a year for the last three years, given that this government has also then cut postsecondary by \$690 million – a proposal from the U of C to increase tuition by as much as 32 per cent still sits on this minister's desk, waiting for approval. When will this minister see the light, freeze student loan interest rates, and rip up the outrageous tuition hike proposal?

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, the member talked a bit about postsecondary funding. Let me just assure all Albertans. We know that we need to have a postsecondary education system that is funded in a responsible way and that respects taxpayer dollars, provides students with great value for their investment, and ensures that we continue to produce a skilled workforce for the future, for the jobs of today and the jobs of tomorrow. That is the work the Minister of Advanced Education has been doing and continues to do. I have the utmost faith and confidence in the work he has been doing. We remain committed to ensuring that higher education remains accessible and prepares our students with the skills they need for the future.

Child and Youth Well-being Review

Ms Rosin: Well, Mr. Speaker, the effects of COVID-19 on the mental health and well-being of Albertans are tough to measure, but we know that it's been hard. It has been especially difficult on Alberta's kids, who have shuffled between in-school and at-home learning and have been unable to hang out and form friendships with their friends during the most formative years of their lives. I would like to ask the Minister of Children's Services if there's any preliminary data her department might have that shows the effect that this pandemic has had on our kids' mental health.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you to the member for that question. We do have some data that speaks to kids' health and well-being in Canada. For example, according to Stats Canada, before COVID 60 per cent of youth reported excellent or very good mental health; by July 2020 this dropped to 40 per cent. That is very concerning. This is exactly why we created this expert panel to research and identify

specifically how Alberta kids and youth have been impacted by the pandemic.

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

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Well, given that substance abuse and mental health are often interlinked and that children are not immune to either of these issues – in fact, substance abuse in children can have lifelong impacts by negatively impacting brain development – and given that research is emerging that suggests that there is a rise in substance abuse as well in our children and youth, can the same minister please tell Albertans if there is any preliminary data that may signal a rise in substance abuse in young Albertans due to COVID-19?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, mental health and addiction issues, including substance abuse, are always concerning, no matter what the circumstances. We will continue to monitor trends closely and in a fulsome way for all Albertans, including children and youth, and the panel will seek many data sets, including those related to addiction in young people. We've increased access to services and supports, making it easier for young people to get the help that they need.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Well, given that the formation of the child and youth well-being panel, as mentioned, was in direct response to the rise in children's mental, emotional, and physical health concerns and that these severe problems facing Alberta's youth need this co-ordinated effort with parents, schools, and governments, can the minister please tell the Chamber and finally clarify what the mandate is of the Child and Youth Well-being Review Panel and just how they plan to present their findings?

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you to the member for this very important question. The panel will focus on the impacts resulting from and related to the COVID-19 pandemic on the social, mental, physical, and educational well-being of children and youth under the age of 19. They will learn from researchers, educators, health care professionals, and mental health experts as well as Alberta parents and kids. The panel will then provide recommendations to government in the fall of 2021 to help support young people both now and into the future. Recommendations will explore opportunities as needed to leverage or shift programs and services.

Addiction Harm Reduction Strategies

Ms Sigurdson: The Canadian Psychiatric Association recently released a study which further proves that increased supervised consumption services save lives. In the midst of a deadly overdose crisis Albertans need a government that acknowledges the effectiveness of harm reduction. Unfortunately, Albertans are left with a government which is opposed to and spreads misinformation about harm reduction. Will the associate minister commit today to immediately expanding supervised consumption services and stop the closing of the Chumir site?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, as I said weeks ago to the same question, we did expand in Calgary, expanded to two sites.

Member Ceci: Where? Is it a secret?

Mr. Shandro: There used to be one; there are now going to be two. The NDP is going to continue to misinform Albertans and say that

support harm reduction. We do. What's offensive to the NDP is that we're also adding – we're not taking away; we're not replacing harm reduction with recovery; we're adding – a focus on recovery so that everybody who suffers from addiction can be integrated into the health care system and have the opportunities for recovery that they deserve.

Member Ceci: What's offensive is what you're doing.

Mr. Shandro: The NDP, for some strange and bizarre reason, opposes that.

The Speaker: I might provide some caution to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo with his off-the-record comments. Whether they're parliamentary or not, they should be curtailed.

2:30

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the experts I have spoken to believe the overdose crisis is only getting worse in part due to the high toxicity of current street drugs and given that the closing of the Chumir site and the lack of a plan to offer the critical services that were there and the constant disregard from this government for Albertans who desperately need help before they, too, die and become another statistic for this government to sweep under the rug, what is the minister going to do to address the rise in dangerously toxic drugs?

Mr. Shandro: I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, that, unfortunately, because of the pandemic there have been in Alberta and many other jurisdictions – we are actually trending similar to B.C. in proportional deaths, unfortunately, during the pandemic. I'll actually point out that proportionally B.C., in the two months of 2021 where we have the data from B.C., actually had higher numbers of severe outcomes for those who suffer from addiction, in particular to opioids. The NDP are not being truthful about what is happening here in Alberta. What we're going to do is allow not just for there to be harm reduction services available to those who suffer from addiction but also provide recovery options for those . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that Lorna Thomas from Moms Stop the Harm joined our call for an emergency action plan on Friday and given that she spoke about five Edmontonians under the age of 32 who passed away from this crisis last month in her own neighbourhood and given that it's clear now more than ever that substantial and immediate actions are needed and given that we called for drug testing to be introduced and implemented at supervised consumption sites so Albertans can at the very least know that what they are using is not toxic, will the associate minister support this reasonable and life-saving measure and . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: I can advise the member, Mr. Speaker, as well as everyone in the House that what we're doing is – unlike under the NDP, where those who sought treatment had to pay for it out of pocket, now under this government it is all, 100 per cent, publicly funded. Anybody who needs treatment or if a loved one needs treatment, no longer do you have to remortgage your house. No longer do you have to sell a car. You can have access to the treatment you need. We have passed the quality standards for our consumption sites. We have also integrated harm reduction services to the health care system so that everybody who suffers from addiction can get the care that they need. That's what the NDP oppose.

Energy Industry Property Tax Payments

Member Ceci: In the *Financial Post* last week we once again saw desperate farmers and municipalities crying out for this government to take action as some oil and gas companies refused to pay their taxes. Commodity prices are soaring. Companies are generating billions in free cash flow, but this government gives them a free pass. Don't pay your taxes? Don't pay your fair share? Just stick it to rural Alberta. That seems to be the policy of the day from this government. What can the Minister of Municipal Affairs possibly say to justify this government's slap in the face to rural Alberta?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that this is a real issue. The fact that the energy prices are higher makes it even more important. We have been in fairly constant contact with the RMA and other municipalities on this. We are actually working on some policy choices that we think will help with this. We haven't arrived at what they are yet, but I would say to the hon. member: stay tuned. We are on the file.

Member Ceci: Given that the Ponoka county reeve, Paul McLaughlin, is saying that he wrote off \$4.3 million in unpaid taxes last year and is projecting another about \$2 million this year, just one of many counties that are doing that, and given that energy prices are high so there's no justifiable reason that these companies can't pay their taxes and given that the outstanding tax bill is now, as RMA says, about \$245 million, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Rural ratepayers are seeing skyrocketing property taxes, huge cuts to services because your government continues to sell out to companies that break the law. This needs to change. When will it change? When will you finalize the work?

Mr. McIver: Well, as I said, Mr. Speaker, we are working on the file. We hope to have something else in the not too distant future to come forward with. But we haven't been sitting on our hands. We have in place the PERC file, where municipalities can get back the educational portion of unpaid taxes. We have of course tried to assist municipalities with a whole range of stimulus during the last year, too. But this is an important issue. We will continue to work closely with our municipal partners. As I said earlier, stay tuned. We have more coming.

Member Ceci: Given that farmers, ranchers, and municipalities are deeply frustrated with energy companies that don't pay their taxes and are equally frustrated with this government, that is not doing enough, and given that the best this government could offer was a line from a spokesperson that said that the government is committed to supporting landowners while doing absolutely nothing that we've seen yet and given that this type of tone-deaf response is exactly why this Premier has the lowest approval rating in the country, when is the Minister of Municipal Affairs going to force these companies, who are generating billions, remember, in free cash flow, to start paying taxes and back taxes?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, another good example of the NDP being all talk and no action. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs says, he's already working very, very hard on this issue. One of the examples was a historic investment by Alberta Environment and Parks and Municipal Affairs into the surface rights board, that has resulted in 1,400 backlog cases being removed from the system on the surface rights side. That is true action, and I am very, very confident that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is all over this and that you'll see real action, just like you just saw with the surface rights board, to be able to protect landowners.

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

Residential School Deaths

(continued)

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The discovery of 215 bodies of kids at the residential school site in Kamloops was a sobering and heart-wrenching moment for all Canadians and brought to attention the real focus, the real issue concerning the other missing indigenous children. In Alberta we know there are about 800 children that never came home. For the families and communities that lost these children, this is a terrible injustice that needs to be addressed. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what are we doing to find these gravesites to help our indigenous communities find closure needed for the grieving and mourning of these families?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very timely question. Again, it has been a difficult time for so many impacted by this discovery, and friends have told me that this has opened wounds for them. My thoughts remain with the families and all the communities still grappling with this news. On May 31 we committed to fund research into the undocumented deaths and the burials of indigenous children at residential schools in Alberta and to ensure full implementation of the relevant calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I'm working hard with ministry officials and my government colleagues and indigenous leaders to ensure that this is a community-based program. Residential schools were a dark part of our history, and we are definitely taking this seriously.

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

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that the use of ground-penetrating radar was extremely effective in the case in Kamloops and given that the use of this technology would greatly increase the speed in finding the gravesites for those missing children and given that this technology is typically too expensive for a single community with limited resources to employ, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what funding will be available to help recover the indigenous children that are still missing in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again for the question. As I already mentioned, we are committing to provide funding for the community-led research and engagement efforts. I was out at the vigil over the last few weeks and have been speaking with all the indigenous leaders in the province and those in attendance, and they have reiterated to me the importance of this research in the journey to finding closure. I am glad that the federal government responded to Alberta's and Saskatchewan's calls for funding on the residential school fund. I talked to the Treaty 8 grand chief this morning, and they're developing plans to research and find children that were taken. We'll do whatever we can to help them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given the importance of the grieving and mourning process with the lives lost and the identities lost as well and given that so many indigenous families continue to struggle with the ability to grieve and given that the records may be used to assist in the process of uncovering the names and locations of the missing children, to the Minister of

Service Alberta. Your department oversees vital statistics information. What work has been done to make these government records readily available to those seeking further information in regard to the whereabouts of their loved ones?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. In 2014 Service Alberta responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 71, and Alberta vital statistics sent the commission all records of, quote, segregated Indian deaths, end quote, from 1923 to 1945, when the data was no longer segregated from the rest of Alberta's population. Individual death records from Alberta are also available through registry agents or through individual requests to the Alberta archives, where they're available after 50 years. Service Alberta will continue to work with the Minister of Indigenous Relations to provide whatever supports we can to help with the healing process.

2:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of the daily Routine.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise to give oral notice of a motion to be put on the Order Paper in my name, Government Motion 88:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 70, COVID-19 Related Measures Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? No tablings?

I do have a tabling. As the chair of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services it's my pleasure to table a final report of the subcommittee to review the member expenditure guidelines, the caucus expenditure guidelines. This report includes a revised caucus expenditure guidelines document, which was approved by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services this morning.

Hon. members, Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

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

Bill 215

Seniors Advocate Act

[Debate adjourned June 7: Member Irwin speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has approximately eight minutes remaining should she choose to use them.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is, in fact, my honour, the honour I have to speak and use my remaining time on this incredibly important bill from my fantastic colleague from Edmonton-Riverview. She has done some fantastic work, and I am

quite proud of her for that. We all should be because she's been advocating for seniors and for housing and for all the things that are really important.

As is my tradition the first time I speak in the House in a week, I do want to absolutely give a shout-out to all those on the front lines, who continue to do incredible work in the toughest of circumstances. You know, I think about essential workers in all different fields, not just in health care but in retail, gosh, in education, in trucking – the list goes on – but given the content of this bill I think about those working in seniors' homes and in long-term care.

You know, it always gives me some pause. We're feeling really hopeful right now. Many folks have gotten their second vaccine. Many folks are fully vaxed. I'm not yet but hopefully soon. I was one of the ones who was in May because of my youthfulness despite what the wrinkles might say, and I'm excited to get mine later in June. There's a lot of hope out there, for sure. For that I'm grateful, but I can't help but think about folks who've struggled so much over the course of this pandemic, and I think about seniors in particular.

My riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is home to some incredible seniors' lodges, long-term care homes, seniors' organizations, and it's been – gosh, it's been hard for me not being able to visit seniors. I've got one particular seniors' home, Virginia Park – a shout-out to them in case anybody is watching – and they often invite me to birthday celebrations. One of the last events I was at in a seniors' home was a 100th birthday celebration. Yeah. I miss that, and I think: okay; well, it's obviously not about me. But I think about those folks who've experienced isolation and haven't been able to have visitors and guests. Of course, things have shifted over the last little while, but we know that isolation in particular remains an issue for a lot of seniors.

You know, I need to use this opportunity to talk about my riding because we do have some unique aspects to our riding. We have a lot of seniors who are in poverty and seniors who struggle, newcomer seniors as well, seniors that struggle with access to various things. I think, actually, about right now the fact that pretty much all the neighbourhoods I represent fall within the Alberta Health region of Eastwood, and it's tough because we've got some of the lowest vaccination rates in the city. I can't help but point to higher levels of poverty, a lot of single-parent families, and, like I said, a lot of newcomer folks for whom English is not their first language. I also think about seniors with lack of access and also newcomer seniors.

I think about all of these factors, and I can't help but imagine how important it is that we have supports for seniors. One of those tangible supports is exactly what Bill 215 calls for, a Seniors Advocate, somebody who could be their voice, right? I can absolutely try – and so can all of my colleagues – to do all we can to elevate these issues impacting seniors, elevate them here in the Legislature, as we were elected to do, but having an independent advocate could really make a tangible difference.

We've seen this. Actually, we've seen this in other jurisdictions. British Columbia is just one where their Seniors Advocate has been able to make policy better, make recommendations based on the evidence. One of the things that the B.C. Seniors Advocate was able to do was recommend the use of rapid testing in continuing care and vesting causes of outbreaks.

And you might say: well, that's the governing party's job; they are the ones that should be making these recommendations and putting this work forward. But the reality is that we haven't seen that from this government, so we're calling on this government to take this recommendation seriously. I know that when we were in committee, we raised a number of pointed questions to the UCP on

this file, and they claim that the Health Advocate, who happens to be a former UCP executive director, which – you know, on the surface you might say: well, maybe that's not necessarily a conflict. However, I think it is. It's a partisan use of an office. Have somebody who's independent. Have someone who wants to do the best for seniors.

I recall, too, that, you know, the positioning was that that director, the Health Advocate, can have the seniors under her portfolio, but the reality is that seniors are so much more than health, right? There are so many broader systemic issues that need to be addressed. Housing is just one example, and again I point to my fabulous colleague from Edmonton-Riverview. She's got both portfolios, and she is able to very much acknowledge the interrelationships between seniors and housing and the need for safe, affordable, accessible housing for seniors.

I think about – you know, I gave the example of my riding, where, obviously, we've got great diversity in socioeconomic status, but we truly do have a number of seniors who live in poverty. I think about – I've talked about them in this Chamber before – Operation Friendship Seniors Society, which is an organization based in the McCauley neighbourhood that does incredible things for folks over the age of 55. They're dedicated solely to helping those in the inner city. You can go by there any day – and I go by there a lot because it's on my biking and driving route to work – and see a whole lot of people outside hanging out. You can see them inside as well.

I see that I'm running out of time, but I would like to urge this government to adopt our recommendations on Bill 215.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika is next on the motion for concurrence. My apologies. Are you hoping to speak to concurrence? The unfortunate part about this circumstance is that you actually moved the concurrence, so you're unable to speak to it.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Rowsell: Mr. Speaker, I rise to object to the tactic employed by the NDP to persistently debate the motions for concurrence for each of their bills which the private members' committee has recommended be proceeded with. I understand why sometimes it is important to make sure that the Assembly does in fact agree with the committee's recommendations, but that isn't what is happening here. Currently on the Order Paper are half a dozen bills which have a higher priority than Bill 215 and deserve to be debated. Most important is Bill 207, which speaks to honour reservists who are prepared to defend our country if called upon.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:52 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Hunter	Schow
Amery	LaGrange	Schweitzer
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Luan	Singh
Fir	Madu	Stephan
Getson	Neudorf	Toor
Glasgo	Orr	Turton
Glubish	Pon	Walker
Goodridge	Rosin	Williams

Gotfried	Rowswell	Wilson
Guthrie	Rutherford	Yao
Hanson	Sawhney	
3:10		
Against the motion:		
Dang	Pancholi	Schmidt
Irwin	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.
Nielsen	Renaud	
Totals:	For – 32	Against – 8

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 218
Provincial Parks (Protecting Park Boundaries)
Amendment Act, 2021

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, on June 7, 2021, the chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills presented the report of that committee on Bill 218, Provincial Parks (Protecting Park Boundaries) Amendment Act, 2021, and requested concurrence of the Assembly in the report, which recommended that the bill proceed. As a member other than the mover rose to speak on June 7, 2021, debate on the motion will proceed today. The motion to concur in the committee's report on Bill 218 has already been moved, and I will therefore now recognize any additional members who wish to speak. Are there any members? I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Dang: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: I see a point of order has been raised.

Point of Order
Speaking Order

Mr. Dang: Mr. Speaker, this motion was moved by a member of the government caucus as the chair on the standing committee. It's a well-established practice and precedent in this Assembly that members of the opposite party are first to respond to motions that are moved. Clearly, I think, it is unprecedented that we be allowing government members to first reply to motions that are moved by the government members. In this case a member of the opposition caucus or independents should be allowed to reply first.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Well, a couple of points, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the interjection from the Member for Edmonton-South, but the mover of the motion for concurrence actually has the opportunity to speak. That person is the first speaker. That was made clear in the last debate, when I rose to speak on the previous motion of concurrence, and I had already spoken because I was the one who moved concurrence.

Second, there is no point of order that has been cited in the member opposite's objections, and, third, the first speaker today to the previous motion for concurrence was the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, who spoke to that elegantly, but if we are going back and forth in which members are being recognized first, that member was recognized, and then I rose and was now allowed to speak.

I would encourage you, Mr. Speaker, to speak against or, rather, to rule against this point of order, which I actually don't believe is, in fact, a point of order because no standing order has been cited.

The Acting Speaker: All right. First and foremost, I do not find that there is a point of order in this situation. However, I am listening to both sides of this debate on the point of order, which was found to not be a point of order. Typically I think it is quite naturally the case within the Assembly that a member of the Official Opposition would have an opportunity to speak in similar circumstances. As such, given that by my call I thought that it was pretty much a tie one way or the other with regard to who caught my eye, in this case I will give the opportunity to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to speak.

Debate Continued

Mr. Schmidt: I'm speechless, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] The backbenchers in the government caucus can calm themselves. I'm actually not speechless, and I have plenty to say on this matter. It's just that I am incredibly unused to the chair ruling in my favour, so this is – I'm going to have to write a letter to my mom and just let her know what happened here at work today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me on this incredibly important motion. What we have before us is a motion for concurrence on a private member's bill that I was proud to introduce to the Legislature, Bill 218, the Provincial Parks (Protecting Park Boundaries) Amendment Act, 2021. What this piece of legislation does is two things. First of all, it enshrines in legislation a consultation policy with respect to Alberta's parks' boundaries. This is important because for a very long time the government of Alberta's parks department had a consultation policy in place that set out who would be consulted when and under what circumstances with regard to changes to Alberta's parks system.

Now, unfortunately, this government saw fit to do away with that policy at some point between their winning election in 2019 and before they introduced their plan for so-called optimizing Alberta's parks, which was released at the end of February 2020. We don't really know when that policy was officially scrapped – let's just say that transparency and accountability are not the strong suit of the Minister of Environment and Parks – but we do know that this policy was scrapped at some point in that time because this optimizing parks plan was released at the end of February 2020, much to the surprise of everybody who has a vested interest in Alberta's parks. They had no idea that this proposal was coming. They were caught completely by surprise when the parks on the list were released, and they were gobsmacked to see that the government was considering closing down or selling off almost 200 different parks and recreation areas all across the province.

This piece of legislation that we're introducing and that I believe should be debated by all members of the Legislature corrects that error that the government committed and enshrines in legislation the need to consult so that they cannot get away with developing these plans for significant changes to our parks system without consulting Albertans first. I would hope that the members opposite would be strongly in favour of this kind of legislative change because I know that they got an earful from Albertans about how upset they were, not only as far as the plan to close down or sell off almost 200 parks but also on the process by which the government came to that decision. They left Albertans out in the cold entirely. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that all of the members opposite would like to avoid a circumstance in the future where tens of thousands of Albertans in every community across the province put Defend Alberta Parks signs on their lawns expressing their outrage at the government's cavalier attitude towards excluding the people of this province before embarking on these significant changes.

That's one piece of the legislation that I think is important for members to have an opportunity to weigh in on. I'm sure that millions of Albertans would be interested to hear what private members of the government caucus in particular have to say about consultation when it comes to proposed changes to Alberta's parks system.

Now, the bill does one other thing, Mr. Speaker, and that is that it essentially removes the ability of cabinet to change the park boundaries at the cabinet table. We all know that cabinet definitely has a significant amount of power given to it by the legislation regarding parks. One of them is that right now the cabinet can just change the park boundaries or eliminate a park entirely. They don't have to discuss these proposed changes on the floor of the Legislature. Theoretically, a quorum of the members of Executive Council could host a pleasant meeting out on the patio of the sky palace and in between bottles of whisky just decide to shrink or eliminate a park or hundreds of parks, as the case may be. I don't think Albertans think that this is the way that things should be when it comes to these kinds of changes with respect to our parks' boundaries.

3:20

I think that, at the very least – well, we know that Albertans do not want to see any changes to their parks when it comes to the possibility of closing down or selling off hundreds of them – the government could give them the treatment of making these proposals here on the floor of the Legislature and putting them to a vote of all of the MLAs here in the Legislature, not keeping that power to themselves in cabinet.

I would certainly hope, Mr. Speaker, that private members of the government caucus would want to weigh in on this potential proposal. I know that many UCP backbench MLAs caught a lot of heat from the government's plan to sell off or close down hundreds of parks across the province, and that decision was made without their input whatsoever. I'm sure that this decision caught many of the private members of the government caucus completely by surprise. I don't get the sense, from the reports that we hear in the media, that all is well in the government caucus and that there is a lot of ongoing discussion between Executive Council and private members of the government caucus when it comes to these critical decisions.

At the very least, Mr. Speaker, if Executive Council is failing to provide the leadership to the government caucus that the government caucus is expecting, this legislation would act as a backstop, if you will, that the Executive Council couldn't catch private members of the government caucus by surprise with these types of proposed park changes. They'd actually have to present a report to the floor of the Legislature, explain what it is, exactly, that they're planning to do, and then put that report to a vote of all members of the Legislature. I think this is an elegant solution to a problem that exists with the way the legislation currently gives power to Executive Council to make these changes. It will effectively remove Executive Council's ability to make these changes without consulting Albertans and without consulting even MLAs in their own caucus, much less the opposition caucus.

Moreover, I think, Mr. Speaker, that it would give all members of the Legislature a chance to stand up and be counted when it comes to saying where they stand on the issue of these potential park closures and sales. I know that I heard from hundreds of thousands of Albertans all across the province that they couldn't even get a meeting with their local MLA. You know, the speaking times don't allow me to give every example, but I know a couple of examples. One of the proposed park changes affected constituents in both Lesser Slave Lake and Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, and

I had hundreds of people coming to me and saying: we cannot get a meeting with our MLAs to talk about this issue. At least, they would be able to stand up and be counted and let people know where they stand . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen to join debate.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me and this opportunity to speak on concurrence for this bill. Certainly, it is a rare occasion when the Speaker's chair rules in favour of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. In his correspondence with his mother, please pass along my best regards. She should be proud. Genuinely, I say that.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I don't think any Albertan would be happy with the way the NDP is playing procedural games with private members' business as there are a number of bills that we have that have numerical priority over this bill that we could be debating, including Bill 207, which is the reservists' recognition act.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:26 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Schow
Amery	Luan	Schweitzer
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Singh
Fir	Neudorf	Stephan
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Toor
Glasgo	Orr	Turton
Glubish	Pon	Walker
Goodridge	Rosin	Williams
Guthrie	Rowswell	Wilson
Hanson	Rutherford	Yao
Hunter	Sawhney	

Against the motion:

Dang	Nielsen	Renaud
Deol	Pancholi	Schmidt
Irwin	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.

Totals:	For – 32	Against – 9
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[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 219

Workers' Compensation (Expanding Presumptive Coverage) Amendment Act, 2021

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, on June 10, 2021, the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills presented the report of that committee on Bill 219, Workers' Compensation (Expanding Presumptive Coverage) Amendment Act, 2021, and requested concurrence of the Assembly in the report, which recommended that the bill proceed. As a member other than the mover did rise to speak on June 10, 2021, the debate on the motion will proceed today.

The motion to concur in the committee's report on Bill 219 has already been moved, and I will therefore now recognize any additional members who wish to speak. Are there any hon. members looking to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise this afternoon on concurrence of Bill 219, Workers' Compensation (Expanding Presumptive Coverage) Amendment Act, 2021. You know, I've always said that sometimes there's a little bit of a trend that starts to form, and I think it's necessary to point that out, quite honestly, because likely, I expect, there may be somebody trying to shut down debate around concurrence shortly.

The reason being was that, you know, we've heard statements in the House here today that also affect Bill 219, that we're simply wasting the House's time talking about certain bills. You see, Mr. Speaker, because there is so much business on there, it is likely that when we actually get to the debate of Bill 219, we'll be out of time here in the House. We won't actually get to debate 219. The reason for rising on concurrence – just like the members of the UCP rose during concurrence of the bill to recognize rodeo as the official sport of Alberta, I too am rising during concurrence to be able to speak about Bill 219, the presumptive coverage for workers' compensation.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe – I've always held this belief – that WCB coverage was originally brought in to protect workers in the event that they're injured at work in some way, shape, or form. Now, what we saw, of course, over the years was that it started to morph into something that put workers at a great disadvantage. It made it so that they had to prove that they were injured. That was never the intention of WCB coverage.

Over the course of the years and, coincidentally, multiple Conservative governments, those things got watered down. Those things got changed to put workers at a disadvantage. Where we find ourselves during this pandemic, which has hurt all workers not only across the province but across the country, across the world, and while there are organizations out there that are specifically in place for workers, they're able to advocate on their behalf when a WCB claim is made and perhaps it's, maybe, not accepted. There are a lot of workers.

You know, I always find it very interesting, the power that members of the UCP seem to think that unions possess. The last time I looked, only, I believe, somewhere around the neighbourhood of 20 per cent of Alberta workers are actually unionized, actually have a group dedicated to fighting for their rights, things like safety, WCB coverage, good legislation that protects workers, benefits, good-paying jobs, things like that, which means that there are a lot of workers across this province that don't have that. They don't have somebody that's able to go to bat for them when they have to file a WCB claim. Of course, over the course of the last six years my office has received many calls around WCB and us having to help them with those claims.

3:50

Now, of course, over the last year and a half or so we've found ourselves in just absolutely unprecedented, extraordinary circumstances, where workers have been placed in a situation that they probably never ever thought they'd be in, around the pandemic and the different things that they have had to face over the course of the last year. Whereas I mentioned earlier that, you know, those unions are able to fight for their workers, I would say that it's been an uphill battle for them in places like meat-packing plants, trying to bring in safe working conditions so that you don't wake up in the

morning wondering: well, if I go to work, am I going to contract COVID, am I going to take that home to my family, and could that turn out very, very badly? No one should ever be placed in that situation where they're trying to decide whether they need to go to work or protect their family.

When I think about what we've deemed as essential workers – and that, Mr. Speaker, is everything from warehouse workers that are palletizing the goods that we need in the stores where we purchase. I'm thinking about the cashiers at the tills in those stores that are, you know, trying to bag those groceries for people. I'm thinking about the waitress that is serving food and that recent story that we saw of the one waitress who had asked a patron, "Please put on your mask; those are the rules of the establishment," and we all know how that turned out. She ended up getting a beer bottle smashed across her face. That creates trauma not only from a physical sense but also from a mental perspective as well. I can't even imagine the fight that went on in her mind now: can I go to work and do my job safely?

I've certainly seen over the course of the last two years health and safety legislation being watered down by this government, making it a lot harder for workers to be safe in their workplace. So when I look at Bill 219 and bringing in presumptive coverage in the workers' compensation, this makes absolutely clear sense.

Now, I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that when this bill went through the private members' committee, one of the things that the committee did not do which it should have done was to speak to workers directly. We could have brought in, you know, the Alberta Workers' Health Centre. They're always advocating for safer working conditions for Albertans, not just the unionized ones but the folks that don't have somebody to be their voice when they find themselves in a situation that is, quite frankly, almost too hard for them to fight for themselves. Why didn't we hear from that organization? I don't know. We'll never know because the committee voted against that. Well, I personally didn't. I wanted stakeholders to come in. I wanted to be able to invite the Workers' Health Centre so that they could talk to the 80 per cent of Alberta workers that aren't represented by a union.

I'll be honest. I would have loved to have actually invited my former union, UFCW local 401, because they happen to look after the two meat-packing plants here in Alberta which had some of the largest outbreaks in North America. Where were their voices around health and safety? They got put into positions of having to decide: do I go to work safely, or do I take my chances, roll the dice, and hopefully I don't bring it home to my family? And then people wonder why I'm standing up.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Peace River has risen.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the earnest desire the members have to debate concurrence, but the truth is that opposition members haven't had any opposition to the concurrence motion on this bill or previous ones that we've been debating today. They're going to be supported. It seems more like gamesmanship that reminds me much of my motion, Motion 518, that got delayed after a number of different procedural games being played a few weeks ago.

In light of that and with the intent of trying to move forward, Mr. Speaker, towards an important piece of legislation that honours and respects and does important work for our reservists in the province, I move that we adjourn debate.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:57 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schweitzer
Fir	Neudorf	Singh
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Glasgo	Orr	Turton
Glubish	Pon	Walker
Goodridge	Rosin	Williams
Guthrie	Rowswell	Wilson
Hanson	Rutherford	Yao
Hunter		

Against the motion:

Dang	Nielsen	Renaud
Deol	Pancholi	Schmidt
Irwin	Phillips	Sweet
Totals:	For – 31	Against – 9

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 207 Reservists' Recognition Day Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be made with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Peace River has risen.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise on this bill, an important piece of legislation surrounding the reservists who serve our country and create such an important link from the military, the Armed Forces in Canada, to our communities. I want to particularly thank the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing forward this legislation. In his role as liaison to the military for the government I think he's done a tremendous job of highlighting the important work that they do.

For me in particular it strikes home, being in a very northern community in the Peace River constituency. I live in the town of La Crête. Across the north we have a number of different reservist groups particularly associated with the Canadian Rangers, who are a little known but incredibly important group who volunteer their time and make many, many sacrifices for the importance of securing our northern frontier and northern communities.

As members of this House will know, the sacrifices that are made by reservists are meaningful because they create a link to our communities in so many ways with that direct connection. They are meaningful in terms of the strategy Canada and, more largely, NATO have when it comes to securing our communities as a defence policy, and it's also important to notice that these members of our reservists do it on a completely voluntary basis with small

remuneration, if anything at all, and often hold full-time jobs or will do so working out of secondary, postsecondary schooling, which are many of those in my communities as well.

Importantly, Mr. Chair, we must note also the sacrifice that families make when it comes to those reservists – it's not just the reservist who signs up; it's their family that does – the cold nights away, especially in communities like mine, where they are called out on exercise regularly for the importance of securing our north and even further north, into the Territories.

That's why I'm very, very happy to see that the Member for Leduc-Beaumont shared with the Assembly how the 2017 Strong, Secure, Engaged, Canada's defence policy clearly defined Canada's Reserve Force and identified their reserve participation as "full-time capabilities [through] part-time service." It just shows how imperative reservists are to our defence policy and to our partners across NATO. We know also that every single community across the province has men and women who have signed up for this important role and task in our society.

Now, it is also important to note that the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, through consultation with valuable stakeholders – including both Carolyn Paton, the Canadian Forces liaison; and With Glowing Hearts, an organization who works tirelessly to promote the exceptional benefits of employers hiring reservists; also Colonel Kevin Weidlich, regional liaison officer for the Armed Forces liaison council; and also Colonel Mike Vernon, commander of the 41st brigade in Calgary, Alberta's largest reserve force – was able to agree upon not only the date which this bill is going to recognize, the last Saturday in September, to celebrate our reservists, their families, and all the sacrifices made for Queen, country, and all the work that we put into making our province so great; they also discussed challenges the reservists face when managing their civilian lives in addition to completing the role with the Armed Forces.

It's in that light, Mr. Chair, that I'd like to move an amendment on behalf of the Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

4:20

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

For everybody's benefit this will be referred to as amendment A1. As is the case, you can raise your hands and receive a copy of the amendment. There will also be copies placed at the tables at both doors.

If the hon. Member for Peace River could please read it into the record for everyone's benefit and then continue with remarks, should you so choose.

Mr. Williams: On behalf of the Member for Leduc-Beaumont I move that Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act, be amended as follows: (a) by striking out the title "Reservists' Recognition Day Act" and substituting "Reservists' Recognition Act"; (b) by adding the following immediately after section 3:

Amends RSA 2000 cE-9

4(1) The Employment Standards Code is amended by this section.

(2) Section 53.2 is amended by striking out "26 consecutive weeks" and substituting "12 consecutive weeks."

Mr. Chair, this amendment would allow the reservist with full-time employment and a civilian job to go instead of 26 continuous weeks down to 12 continuous weeks after consultation with a number of our stakeholders, as I mentioned earlier in the speech, who are involved with the reservists either directly or with a support group in some way. The Member for Leduc-Beaumont consulted with a number of individual reservists as well on this point. This aligns with the federal guidelines and would allow support of the

goal of making Alberta an even more attractive place for reservists to join the Reserve Force and to complete their duties while maintaining their civilian obligations to their families and their communities.

Again I want to recognize that this important act is about the reservists in Alberta. I think it's very important that we recognize them in a meaningful way with a day but also with this amendment that I'm proposing on behalf of the Member for Leduc-Beaumont to recognize that these individuals work tirelessly. Anything we can do to reduce the burden on them so that they can step up to the plate and serve our country in the way that they're asking to is something that I believe is an obligation we have. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity in this Assembly to present this debate and to speak on behalf and move the amendment on behalf of the Member for Leduc-Beaumont. I could not be more proud to vote for and support this amendment and this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen on amendment A1.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm a little bit surprised by this amendment. I think it makes a quite substantive change, and certainly it's something that the opposition was not consulted on in advance of this. I think that certainly one of the things that I have considerable concern about around the proceedings that have happened today is that while the government obviously had an agenda, while the government caucus and government members obviously had an agenda to postpone the business that was typically in the standing orders under Standing Order 8, that would normally occur for concurrence so that we could rush forward to this amendment and rush forward to Bill 207 on this amendment in committee, it's something that if the government had been up front and the government had been fair about with the opposition, we could have considered this more thoroughly.

I think that at this point it's very clear that the government instead has chosen to use procedural trickery, has instead chosen to play games with this place, with the rules of this place, to use unfair manoeuvring, to manipulate the process in this place so that we could rush forward to this amendment, which makes substantive changes to the Employment Standards Code and does not have adequate consultation.

We had the opportunity when this was submitted to committee. Of course, we know that all private members' bills are submitted to the Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee. We know that all bills that are submitted by private members are then brought through a consultation process and then brought through a process in which the public can engage, in which stakeholders can engage, in which there's an opportunity to hear from, at this point, typically six stakeholders from each side. This is something that, if this was important and if this was something that the government was considering at the time, perhaps it should have brought forward at that stage, right? I know that the hon. Member for Peace River mentioned that consultation had been done with reservist groups and individual reservists. Unfortunately, we did not hear this consultation at the committee, which would have been the appropriate place for this to be done.

I think it's something that is a little bit disingenuous from the government, from government members, from the Member for Peace River and the member who moved this, to bring in such substantive changes using manipulation of the rules, using procedural trickery to come forward at this time. Really, Mr. Chair, it's alarming to me because it opens up an entirely new act. It

changes the name of the original bill. I think, certainly, it changes the intent of the original bill because it is now making substantive changes to policy.

Of course, one of the concerns that the opposition raised during the original consultation, when it was sent to committee, which is, again, the appropriate time for discussions like this to happen, was certainly that reservists were not actually being supported through this legislation, right? That's something that we maintain is a pattern with government private members' bills. With government caucus private members' bills we see time and time again that government members bring forward basically fluff pieces of legislation that don't actually bring in support measures or bring in policy that makes a difference in Albertans' lives, don't actually focus on making Albertans' lives better, whether that's investing in our economy or their jobs or their livelihoods, Mr. Chair, and that's something that we've seen time and time again from this government caucus and government private members' bills.

Instead, we now see these massive changes, substantive changes, being brought in at the eleventh hour in a very unprecedented manner, where we change not only the substance of the bill but we change the name of the bill. To make such a drastic change at this time, I think, is something that is very concerning. To make such a drastic change at this time without consultation with the opposition, without having done the work in committee, which, again, is the appropriate place, the committee on private members' bills, which was created by this government – I want to remind government members that the government members created the private members' bills committee so that these types of changes could be considered, so that these types of changes could engage with stakeholders, so that we could hear from the public, hear from Albertans.

In this case, if the hon. member is correct and reservists and reservist organizations were consulted properly, then they should have been able to do that process on the record in front of every single Albertan and in front of every single member of this House at that committee. Unfortunately, we are now moving forward with a change that was not considered properly in that committee, was not considered in the process that all members of this place have agreed to.

Instead, we are now seeing that the government is using procedural trickery to rush forward their changes without engaging on it, so I'm fairly concerned. I think that this is a bad precedent from the government. It's antidemocratic from this government. It's a pattern of behaviour for this government to use procedural trickery, to use processes that stifle debate in this place. Of course, we saw the government three times today shut down debate on opposition bills. We saw the government continue to move forward, shutting down debate and not allowing opposition bills to be debated.

Now, without adequate consultation, without any substance work being done on this, the government has decided to bring in this significant amendment that, again, if it was a change in the name, if it was a change in the dates, if it was a minor change – I think that that is something that was typical of committee here on Monday afternoons.

Instead, we're seeing substantive changes that deserve consultation, that deserve engagement, that deserve stakeholder work. We know they're substantive changes of this nature because even beyond just the clauses of the bill being changed, we're now even seeing the name of the bill being changed because those changes are so substantive that the name would no longer accurately represent the clauses, right? The name would no longer accurately represent – I know it's a short bill, Mr. Chair. It's only a couple of pages here, but certainly this is something that I think Albertans

deserve to have a say on. It's something that Albertans deserve to have an opportunity to be engaged on. That's why these government members, this House, created this committee process.

Instead, they decided to dance around that, to use procedural trickery to rush forward, and that's something that is very upsetting. It's something that this government is making a pattern of, and that's to not properly utilize the Assembly, to not work in collaboration in this place. That's something that's very disappointing, right? It's extraordinarily disappointing that government members would continue to act in this manner, that they would bring in these substantive changes without proper consultation, without proper engagement. Mr. Chair, I think that certainly when the member moved this amendment, he mentioned that the consultation had been done, but of course Albertans and members of this place cannot know that because we have not been able to have that proper engagement process, right?

4:30

We have not been able to utilize the committee process that was created in this place, created in this Legislature for this exact reason, right? When government members bring in these bills, time and time again we see these bills basically do nothing, right? We see the bills not actually bring in tangible supports for Albertans, not bring in tangible supports for jobs, not bring in tangible supports for workers.

That's something that we hear at the consultations as well. I know that time and time again we hear that in committee. We had the opportunity to address that in committee and make those recommendations in committee when those reports came forward. Of course, we had tried to make some of those concurrence debates today, and the government decided instead to shut down that debate and to stifle the opposition debate. Now we see that the government members have apparently made some sort of mistake, and instead they are moving forward with this substantive change without having done the proper consultation process.

So it is very concerning. I am particularly alarmed that the government chooses to move forward in this way, that the government chooses to move forward by utilizing their majority to shut down debate in this Chamber on private members' business that is from the opposition caucus and then rush forward to bring amendments to correct their errors in government caucus legislation. I think that's something that's particularly concerning. I think that all members of this place deserve the opportunity to properly review this, properly engage with stakeholders, properly have a discussion and debate about this. I think the Assembly is being cheated of that opportunity because this amendment was brought in at the eleventh hour without proper consultation, because this amendment was brought in without the proper stakeholder engagement, without the proper committee process. I think that the members of this place would be unable to make a fair assessment of this amendment. I think that we need to have more opportunity to consider this and to debate this.

With that, Mr. Chair, I would move that we adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:33 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Dang Phillips Sigurdson, L.

Deol Renaud Sweet
Pancholi Schmidt

4:50

Against the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schweitzer
Fir	McIver	Singh
Getson	Neudorf	Stephan
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Glubish	Orr	Walker
Goodridge	Pon	Williams
Guthrie	Rosin	Wilson
Hanson	Rowswell	Yao
Hunter	Rutherford	

Totals: For – 8 Against – 32

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. members.

I see that the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the limited time that I have left, I'll be really quick in trying to respond to some of the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-South. With regard to deserving consultation, I couldn't agree more. The member who moved this bill is a reservist himself and certainly understands that life. I know that he has done extensive consultation. Wherever he may be at this point in time, I want to congratulate him for all of the hard work that he has done in favour of reservists in this province. With regard to stakeholders I just said that that member has spoken with countless stakeholders that understand it very well.

Now, I do want to address something that the member said regarding the right place and the right time to address these kinds of amendments to a bill. The members opposite have never given us – frankly, I shouldn't say never; I should say rarely give us opportunities to see amendments that they move on government bills or on private members' bills, when they may be, to see the amendments prior, so to be complaining about that is a bit rich. I would say that it's not without precedence, though. I can say that we have – when I was working in opposition as a staffer, we certainly shared amendments with the members of the government of the day. But just because we didn't share it at this point in time doesn't mean that it's undemocratic. To suggest that would be, you know, wildly out of line.

But I will say this. When talking specifically about what this amendment does and having spoken with the mover himself, I asked. I said: why the change in the name? He said: because the amendment will encompass more than just a recognition day. I think that the member is right. I believe that he's right, and I support what he says in the fact that reservists have a day but also recognize them year-round for the contributions they make and for their hard work and for service to this province and this country.

With regard to what the member had talked about, you know, helping workers and that the government is not sharing this: this is not a government bill. To suggest otherwise would be, again, inappropriate. This is a private member's bill, Mr. Chair. The government is not doing anything here. This is a bill moved by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont on behalf of his constituents. Now, certainly, that member is a member of the government caucus, but this is not a government bill. I must make that very clear to the many people who might be watching this at home: understand

that this is a private member's bill, and that member deserves a tremendous amount of credit for his hard work on this.

Lastly, I will say that this is absolutely helping our workers as nothing is wrong with workers getting more access to leave and supports. That's exactly what this does, and I can tell you that the Member for Leduc-Beaumont understands this all very well. Again, I congratulate that member. I want to let all members of this Assembly know that I will be supporting this bill because I think that the Member for Leduc-Beaumont has done a tremendous amount of work. I want to thank him for his service as a reservist. I keep pointing behind me because that is where he usually sits.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but as we all know from Standing Order 8(6):

If the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole on Monday afternoon at 4:55 p.m. and the Assembly has not yet considered motions other than Government motions that day, the Chair shall interrupt and the Committee shall immediately rise and report without question put.

The committee will now rise.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane has risen.

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on Bill 207. I wish to table copies of the amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole for the records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. That is carried and so ordered.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to rise and report progress carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:56 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schmidt
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schow
Dang	McIver	Schweitzer
Fir	Neudorf	Sigurdson, L.
Getson	Orr	Singh
Glasgo	Pancholi	Stephan
Glubish	Phillips	Sweet
Goodridge	Pon	Turton
Guthrie	Renaud	Walker
Hanson	Rosin	Williams
Hunter	Rowswell	Wilson
Irwin	Rutherford	Yao
Totals:	For – 39	Against – 0

[Motion that the committee rise and report progress carried unanimously]

Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Water Allocations for Headwater Tributaries

519. Ms Sweet moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take any necessary steps to maintain the current water allocations for the headwater tributaries of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, including the Oldman River Basin Water Allocation Order (Alberta regulation 319/2003), pending extensive consultations with the agricultural sector, indigenous communities, ranchers, municipal districts, and the general public.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to move Motion Other than a Government Motion 519. It is now 20 after 5, and I can say that the government definitely has run away from the Chamber in the context of not wanting to actually finish and vote on this motion. I find it actually significantly disappointing that with an issue that is so important to Albertans right now, which is water allocation, purity of their water, access to water, an issue that Albertans are standing up and speaking out against loudly, this government would choose to try to eat up as much time so that they don't have to be on the record. It speaks volumes to the fact that the very issue that I am speaking about when it comes to making sure that there's appropriate consultation isn't happening.

In fact, this government is deliberately ignoring Albertans for the coal industry. How do we know that? Well, we've already seen water allocation being designed for coal. We see a government making decisions to allow coal to have water for free in the Oldman River basin while charging farmers and ranchers for the very water rights that they need for agriculture, very clearly. How do we know that? Well, we've seen people speaking out, Mr. Speaker. We've seen municipalities, including High River, like Clearwater county, the minister of environment's own riding, where clearly these municipalities have said: the issue that is happening with coal, the access to water, the potential risk to our water sources is a very concerning issue. Yet what do we see? The government biding time, trying to waste time, trying not to be put on the record when they apparently don't want to be supportive of the current motion. It's disrespectful, it is shameful, and it ignores the very voices of rural Albertans.

What is the real issue here? Well, the real issue here is that we know that indigenous communities have come forward and they have said that they are concerned about the contamination of their water and the access to their water because of coal. But what do we hear? Nothing.

We know irrigation: significant investments by the federal government, smaller investment by the provincial government, huge investment when it comes to supporting farmers and ranchers. But what is this government doing? Putting that very water at risk, the same water that provides drinking water to municipalities like Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, Medicine Hat, yet we don't see any members in this Chamber standing up and speaking about that; in fact, again trying to avoid the very vote on this motion to have their voices clearly standing up for their constituents. That's not going to happen today. In fact, the government will stall this out as much as they possibly can, so there is zero accountability for the decisions

that this government is making when it comes to water for southern Alberta. It's disgusting.

I would love to see some of the members opposite maybe stand up and speak about why they don't want to have their voices heard, why they don't want to be on the record, why they don't want to stand up for their very constituents and make sure that those municipalities are being heard, that those farmers and ranchers and rural Albertans who are concerned about the contamination of their water, those voices, are being heard. I'm going to assume that's not going to happen. Maybe I'll be surprised. Maybe I'll see a member stand up and actually speak to the current motion in front of them, stand up for Albertans and care about the fact that the decisions that are being made, the allocation of water for Albertans, is a serious issue and is being taken for granted by this government.

5:20

The minister of environment is on the record repeatedly contradicting the very issue that I'm talking about today. We saw at one point back in March, when we first heard about coal, that there were going to be no changes to water allocation. Well, then someone needs to explain to me how coal is going to be mined in the southern slopes if there are no changes to water allocation. Someone from the cabinet could stand up and explain that, because we know that water is required. We know that water needs to be used. We know that there is a consultation that went around southern Alberta that actually indicated that 80 per cent of the water allocation for southern Alberta was going to be used for anything other than the water for municipalities and farmers and ranchers. Eighty per cent.

Well, who's going to get that 80 per cent? Do those people have to pay for it? Farmers and ranchers do. Farmers and ranchers are to the point right now in southern Alberta where they have to negotiate with their neighbours to have access to water. They have to purchase water from their neighbours because of the allocation that currently exists. So wouldn't it be great to see a government go: "You know what? We need to make sure that we're doing extensive consultation when it comes to water allocation. We need to make sure our farmers and ranchers, our agricultural producers know what's happening, that they are able to continue with their generations of farming, and that rural Albertans' voices are being heard, that our indigenous communities who are on those waterways know that their water is not going to be contaminated, that there won't be selenium in their waterway if coal is to go forward"? I think that's pretty important.

I think Albertans in general would like to know that their drinking water will be safe and that the irrigation networks and the expansions that are being invested in currently aren't going to be for naught, because right now rural Albertans are telling us that they don't know. They are not confident in this government. Why would they be? We are already at a point where this vote isn't going to happen today because we're going to run out of time because the government is so terrified of standing up and having their voices put on the record to say that they will not support this motion. It's weak.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Point of Order

Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." The

Member for Edmonton-Manning is the first speaker on this motion. That member is suggesting that members on this side aren't going to speak on it. She is suggesting that we might not even get to a vote. We know that we don't presuppose the outcome of any votes or potential votes in this Chamber. I don't understand why she's saying that the government is afraid of speaking. I suspect that there are a number of members on this side of the Chamber who are going to speak on this motion, so maybe that member would like to get back to the substance of the motion that she has moved rather than nitpick as to whether or not members on this side might and cast aspersions on our side based on assumptions like that.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is clearly not a point of order. The hon. member is simply referring to the events that transpired today. It is very clear that procedural trickery has been used today to delay the outcome of my colleague's motion. It's very clear that due to a division being called on concurrence on which all members were in agreement – as you'll note on the record, it was unanimous – we will no longer be able to have a vote before 6 o'clock on this motion. Clearly, if government members are choosing to use these procedural tools to delay the business of this Assembly, that is their decision, but it is one that they have to live with. My hon. colleague is just making that point.

Thank you.

The Speaker: In the interest of time, this is not a point of order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Debate Continued

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another example of the government trying to eat up time so that there isn't any more opportunity to speak.

Again going back to the eastern slopes of the Rockies, which we know contain the headwaters of the river that supplies water to the prairie provinces and to the Northwest Territories and, in fact, down to the United States and into Saskatchewan, we don't know if there's been any consultation with any of those groups, but I can tell you that we've heard very clearly around the concerns for coal and the potential for selenium in the waterway.

I can also speak to the fact that we know that there is a risk – and it's a very serious risk and a risk that rural Albertans continue to talk about, to the fact where they've actually asked the government to call a referendum on the very issue of whether or not coal should occur because it is such a serious issue. Since the government thinks that's a really democratic process, I would love to encourage them to stand up and say that that referendum will happen. Let's hear from rural Albertans. Let's hear about what's going on in the southern slopes and access to water and what that means.

Fun fact, Mr. Speaker: I was born in Sparwood, B.C. Guess what happened in Sparwood? Coal mining. Guess what happened to the water in Sparwood? It was contaminated, \$60 million, by Teck industries. The very acreage that I was born on and grew up on now has to have water shipped on to it because their water is contaminated and is no longer drinkable. We've seen diseases in livestock because of the coal industry in Sparwood. To say that this is an issue for me is absolutely true. It has impacted the very community that I was born and raised in. Coal and the ability to access clean water can devastate a community. It can devastate the Crownst Pass. It can devastate southern Alberta, Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, where my family were farmers. It is a very serious issue.

The government can continue to buy time and not get their voices on the record and not vote on this very motion, but Albertans deserve better. They deserve to know that their community and their water are going to be safe and that we're not going to see what happened with Teck in Sparwood and have to see that people's water now has to be shipped onto their land because their waterway is so contaminated that they can't even drink it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an amendment to bring forward.

The Speaker: Hon. member, if you want to pass the copies to the page, have that forwarded to my dais and the table. Then prior to proceeding, I will likely make some comments. You're moving this on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore?

Mr. Neudorf: Yes.

The Speaker: Does the mover of the motion have the amendment?

Speaker's Ruling Amendment to Motion other than a Government Motion 519

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed with the debate, I'd like to make some remarks about the proposed amendment to Motion Other than a Government Motion 519. As members will know by now, amendments to private members' business are not or at least they should not be a common occurrence. During the 30th Legislature I have made three rulings on the admissibility of amendments proposed to private members' motions, on October 28, 2019, March 2, 2020, and most recently on June 7, 2021.

In the first two instances I ruled the amendments out of order because they significantly altered the intention of the motion whereas in the last ruling the amendment was determined to be in keeping with the intent of the motion. I'd like to provide some context on occasions in which the amendment has been ruled both in order and times it has been ruled out of order.

Since last Monday, June 7, I have undertaken extensive research to look into the frequency of amendments to motions other than government motions to investigate how previous Speakers have handled the matter of admissibility. On the matter of frequency I found that amendments to private members' motions have been proposed four times since 2016, including the three times that I have ruled on admissibility. Prior to 2016, dating back to 2008, no – that's zero – amendments were proposed to private members' business from 2008 to 2016. My conclusion is that, generally speaking, amendments have been proposed infrequently.

5:30

In addition, starting in 2007 with Speaker Ken Kowalski, a practice has developed whereby the Speaker in some instances but not in all instances has asked the motion's sponsor whether the proposed amendment is in keeping with the intent of the motion. It would be most unfortunate if a member who had proposed a motion would, in turn, have to vote against a motion in their own name. This tradition of asking the member has happened in approximately one-third of all of the instances, five out of 14 times, in which an amendment has been proposed. Therefore, I think it is very safe to say that this practice has been inconsistently applied.

The amendment being proposed today seeks to have Motion 519 revised such that, among other things, the words "take any necessary steps" would be struck out and substituted with "continue

its ongoing work." In addition, "pending extensive consultations" would be substituted with "and recognize that no decision on changes to water allocations will be considered without extensive consultations."

I want to reiterate that the chair makes or takes no position on the content of the motion or the amendment. For the benefit of members with respect to guidance on the admissibility of amendments to motions, it is provided on pages 540 to 542 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, which is as follows:

An amendment is out of order, procedurally, if:

- it is irrelevant to the main motion . . .
- it raises a question substantially the same as one which the House has decided in the same session or conflicts with an amendment already agreed to;
- it is completely contrary to the main motion and would produce the same result as the defeat of the main motion;
- any part of the amendment is out of order; or
- it originates with the mover of the main motion.

In my view, none of these elements is applicable in the proposed amendment that is before the Assembly.

An additional authority cited in this Assembly in the past can be found at 567 of *Beauchesne*, sixth edition.

Moreover, it should be noted that this amendment is the first amendment to motions other than government motions that has been subject to the new Standing Order 41(5.2), which provides the following:

An amendment to a motion other than a Government motion, moved after the motion has been moved, must

- (a) be approved by Parliamentary Counsel no later than the Thursday preceding the day the motion is moved.

As noted on the amendment, this has in fact taken place as it was approved last Thursday.

- (b) be provided to the mover . . . no later than 11 a.m. on the day the motion is moved.

The implication of this standing order, which was recently adopted by this Assembly, is that the mover of the amendment has had Parliamentary Counsel review the amendment to ensure that it is in the proper form and has provided a copy to the mover of Motion 519. I'd like to confirm with the hon. member that at some point she did receive a copy of the proposed amendment.

Accordingly, I find the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore and to be moved by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to be in order. However, before proceeding, I wish to reiterate remarks which I made earlier in the 30th Legislature about the significance of private members' business.

As I indicated in my ruling on October 28, 2019, it is my role as Speaker to defend private members' business. It is my belief, as it was with previous Speakers, that all members of this Assembly ought to show a great deal of deference to private members' business. The opportunity to move a private member's motion is a rare privilege for private members, arising only once or perhaps twice per Legislature and in some instances only once or twice in a member's career. Therefore, it is important that private members' motions proceed as much as possible without amendment so that the Assembly may debate the substance of the motion rather than an amendment.

Hon. members, I am sure that if you were a private member who had your motion to be debated here today, you would likely not be very keen to see an amendment to your motion and would prefer that the motion itself be debated in the limited time allocated for the motion under this item of business. What my expectation is now, in the time that we have remaining, is that we will spend significant periods of time debating the motion, that is, in fact, in order, by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, much to the disappointment of

the chair, because it's my expectation that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, as a private member who may have never moved a motion in this Assembly prior to this afternoon, will not have the same opportunity to debate the motion as she had intended. With that said, the standing orders do not prevent the admissibility of this amendment.

With that said, the intent of the motion is likely significantly unaltered, and the application of the Speaker's ruling to provide opportunity for the individual to state whether it is or isn't in order has been applied infrequently or at least in only approximately one-third of the occasions and particularly where there is significant change in those motions. As such, I have ruled that this amendment is procedurally in order, but I hasten to add that in keeping with the long-standing tradition to maintain the sanctity of private members' business, I urge members to sincerely consider the parliamentary practices that emerged here in Alberta before proposing amendments to private members' motions.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Debate Continued

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise this afternoon and speak to Motion 519, put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Manning, and to thank her, through you, for putting this motion forward. I do hold that member in high regard for the work that she has done and for the passion in which she holds this particular issue.

Water is our most essential resource in this province. We are very fortunate to have access to some of the cleanest, most widely available fresh water in all of Canada if not the world. However, we also have a responsibility to protect our water and ensure that it is used safely, appropriately, and sustainably. The Member for Edmonton-Manning has done a great job highlighting the importance of water allocation as a tool to ensure that Albertans have sustainable access to water. I fully appreciate the member's work on this motion and share her concern to keep our water clean and accessible. However, we must ensure that any conversation in the Legislature about something as important as our water reflects the reality.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table this amendment brought forward on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. For the record in the House the amendment reads that Motion Other than Government Motion 519 be amended as follows:

- (a) by striking out "take any necessary steps" and substituting "continue its ongoing work";
- (b) by striking out "pending extensive consultations" and substituting "and recognize that no decision on changes to water allocations will be considered without extensive consultations";
- (c) by adding "industry" immediately after "the agricultural sector";
- (d) by striking out "the general public" and substituting "Albertans".

Mr. Speaker, from day one of representing Lethbridge-East, I have pushed to ensure that southern Alberta is recognized as an agricultural hub for our province. With that goal, I have and will always stand for strong environmental stewardship and protections for our most essential resources such as water. Alberta has a long history of responsibly managing our water resources, ensuring healthy, secure, and sustainable water for our communities while prioritizing the environment. The amendments that I'm bringing today affirm the ongoing good work to support water quality and availability in Alberta.

5:40

It is important to note that no changes have been made to the Oldman water allocation order. The order remains in place, and existing sector-based water-use limits are unchanged. No changes to the order would be considered without extensive consultations with stakeholders and Albertans if changes are made at all. We are recognizing this established practice of consulting stakeholders by specifically acknowledging them here in this amendment and then using the feedback we receive to ensure we strike the right balance between supporting economic opportunities and protecting our invaluable water resources and aquatic species.

In November 2020 Alberta Environment and Parks held early conversations with municipalities to get input on proposals to set aside 20 per cent of the original unallocated order volume to be used for aquatic environment needs. This would further protect our waterways right now. These conversations also covered proposals to replace specific water volume limits for irrigation, industrial, and other purposes with one overall limit for listed users. This proposal helps drive all our rate users towards increased conservation, innovation, and efficiency. To be clear, Mr. Speaker, these proposals do not in any way increase the water available for water allocation or any specific uses.

I will say it again since it is extremely important to be clear on this: no increase is being proposed for any specific industries, including coal. These early conversations were about ensuring there is enough water available for the health of Alberta's fish and other aquatic species, an issue that is not addressed in the current water allocation order. Maintaining the quality and availability of our water is another essential responsibility that our government takes seriously. The protection is not just for consumption or agricultural use, two areas I have heard an incredible amount of feedback on this year. We are also looking after our province's diverse aquatic life, from fish to plants to even micro-organisms. Clean water is crucial to fish and wildlife, farmers and ranchers, irrigation and industry, not to mention as a drinking source for towns and communities downstream.

I am pleased to see the work that Alberta Environment and Parks have been doing directly with stakeholders regarding water quality and availability in southern Alberta communities. As stated in these amendments, I urge the government to continue this critical work. I think this amendment acknowledges the great work of the original document and provides specific language for the procedures that already exist.

Thank you again to the Member for Edmonton-Manning for bringing this motion forward. I believe that these amendments fit reasonably within the existing framework of the motion and follow the spirit and intent in which it was brought forward. There are some topics like clean water where nearly all Albertans are aligned.

On that note, I humbly ask that my colleagues accept and support these amendments that I am bringing forward on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, should she choose, on the amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: I'll be really quick. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to just indicate that it totally changes the intent of my motion. I will take your advice and say that it doesn't, but as a human being and someone who wrote the motion, I believe it does. I think that when you take "the general public" out and substitute "Albertans," you're ignoring the concerns of the Saskatchewan River and where it runs: in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, B.C. There is serious impact on other people that this government needs to be

having conversations with, who have openly criticized the decisions made by this government when it comes to water allocation and the potential contamination.

I appreciate that the hon. member spoke about fish. If he wants to go back and read the Teck report and what happened with Teck in Sparwood: the waterway, the fish, all of the wildlife were impacted by coal. It impacted.

I'm going to sit down and allow my other member to speak, but the complete disrespect of the intent of my motion and why I put it forward – I think it is being completely ignored by the government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by a government private member should there be one.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of opinions on the amendment that was brought forward by the Member for Lethbridge-East on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. I think what we saw here today from the Member for Lethbridge-East when he moved this amendment was his effective resignation letter as the MLA for Lethbridge-East because he's not standing up for his constituents. He has instead decided that it's more important to him to carry the water for the Premier's office and move this amendment than it is to represent his constituents and what they're telling him about what's going on with the proposed changes to the Oldman River basin allocation order. So when the next provincial election rolls around and that member finds himself out of a job, I think he can look back to this day and not wonder why it is that the people of Lethbridge-East have rightfully sent him packing.

This amendment, as my friend from Edmonton-Manning says, significantly changes the intent of the motion that she brought forward. I'd like to offer a few comments on some of the changes here that are being proposed. First of all, by striking out "take any necessary steps" and substituting "continue its ongoing work" – well, Mr. Speaker, as my friend from Edmonton-Manning said, we are not interested in pursuing the ongoing work that the government is taking in fiddling with the Oldman River basin allocation order.

To dispute what the Member for Lethbridge-East said, you know, he's parroting the minister of environment's lines that all they wanted to do was change the in-stream allocations for the health of the aquatic environment. Well, that's entirely within the minister of environment's ability to do without changing any of the other allocations that are currently in the order. You can still maintain an amount of water that's allocated for irrigation, you can still maintain allocations for municipal use, you can still limit the existing industrial use allocation that is in that order, and you can still provide for in-stream flow needs. But what the government is doing is fiddling with the order to make it look like they're not changing anything while allowing themselves to give coal companies a whole bunch of free water.

I take particular issue with the member's motion to include "industry" immediately after "the agricultural sector" as an amendment. If there is one area of Alberta that does not need to have any more input into what the minister of environment is doing on the Oldman River, it is industry. We know that from the very day that this government was elected, they have rolled out the red carpet to the Australian coal company billionaires. We have countless meetings. We know that economic development, tourism, and trade was meeting with coal companies from the very day that she was appointed to that ministry. We don't know how many meetings the other members of cabinet have had with coal companies. We know the minister of the environment wrote a letter in 2019 saying that he would do anything he could to make sure that the coal companies could have their way.

Nobody else has had that kind of access or input into the decisions that the government has made, so for the Member for Lethbridge-East to stand up here and say, "Oh, we better not forget about industry; they need to have their voices heard, too," is absolutely outrageous. That's why I say that he's not representing his constituents. They know that industry has their thumb on the scale of the decision-making process here, and that's one of the reasons that they're so outraged. I expect that a lot of that outrage will be directed at that member for proposing this amendment and ignoring their voices when they say: "You know what? Industry has had enough say. It's time for the people of Alberta to have their say." Apparently they can't count on the Member for Lethbridge-East to do that work for them. Thank goodness my friend from Edmonton-Manning is here to do the work for the Member for Lethbridge-East because he refuses to do that.

Anyway, I am quickly running out of time, Mr. Speaker. In an attempt to at least make this amendment somewhat palatable, I would like to propose a subamendment.

5:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, this will be referred to as SA1 to amendment A1. I think this is a perfect example of what happens when we make decisions to not maintain the traditions of the Assembly with respect to how we handle private members' business. As such this amendment will also be ruled as being in order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has approximately five minutes remaining to speak to the subamendment.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To read the subamendment into the record, I move that amendment A1 to Motion Other than Government Motion 519 be amended by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:

- (a) by striking out "the current water allocations" and substituting "water allocations current to May 1, 2020."

Now, the intent of this amendment is to address a significant concern that people have with regard to their ability to trust the minister and Executive Council, well, the minister in this particular case, to actually do what he says he is doing. The Member for Lethbridge-East in moving this amendment has gotten up and said in his comments that the minister hasn't actually changed any of the allocation orders.

Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. I would challenge the member to let us know how he knows that that's true. One of the issues with the way that ministerial orders are dealt with here in this province is that a ministerial order can be issued and never published. It boggles my mind that that is the case, but that is the case. The Minister of Environment and Parks could have done whatever he wanted to do to the Oldman River allocation order, but because it's a ministerial order, that didn't have to be made public. In fact, I can't find any record on any government website whatsoever that there has been a ministerial order published to that effect. That doesn't mean that the minister hasn't changed anything. All that potentially means is that the minister has refused to publish that particular allocation order. If the Member for Lethbridge-East knows something that the rest of us don't, I invite him to let us know exactly how it is that the Minister of Environment and Parks hasn't changed the allocation order.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps some people could be watching this debate and wondering: well, how could we possibly doubt the Minister of Environment and Parks? Well, I only have approximately four minutes left to make that case, but I think it's clear to anybody else – I have two minutes left to make that case –

that there is no one who is less trusted on Executive Council, I would submit, than the Minister of Environment and Parks.

Speaker's Ruling **Allegations against a Member**

The Speaker: The hon. member should probably be much more cautious with the accusations he makes about any member of Executive Council. I'm sure there are many ways to state things, but to make a statement like that probably would be a point of order, so I'll provide him caution.

Debate Continued

Mr. Schmidt: Well, I appreciate your point of caution, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that I have heard from a number of people, not just my constituents but residents all across Alberta, who have told me that they do not trust this Minister of Environment and Parks. Why would they? When we brought the issue of the changes to the allocation order that the government was considering, what did the minister do? Well, first of all, he said that those consultations never happened. He flat out denied that he was touring southern Alberta, talking to municipalities about potential changes to the order. Then when we tabled those documents here in the House showing that his department was in fact conducting those, he reverted to this old talking point of: oh, well, we're just changing the in-stream flow need allocations.

On Twitter in response to a member's statement that I made with respect to the Oldman River basin water allocations, the minister of environment altered reality, let's say. He said: "There's nothing going on here. Nothing to see here. What you think is happening, what we've actually told you is happening: that's not happening. Don't worry. All is fine." So there's no reason to trust this minister when it comes to discussions around what's going on with the Oldman River basin allocation order.

This particular subamendment at least provides the clarity needed by making water allocations current to May 1, 2020. We reasonably

suppose that the minister hadn't made any allocation order changes under that order prior to that date. I mean, we know that the minister and we know that Executive Council had been having extensive meetings with coal companies, but we suspect they hadn't made any changes by that date, and that's why we're submitting this.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise and speak on this subamendment moved by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. As always, I appreciate his thoughtful remarks. I will rebut, though. I find it a bit rich, coming from that member, when talking about trust in the Minister of Environment and Parks. I have two words: Bighorn.

Mr. Schmidt: That's actually one word.

Mr. Schow: Well, we split them up down south.

Here we go. Mr. Speaker, the Bighorn consultations were an absolute disaster. A nightmare. And for that member to stand up in here and talk about trust in the Minister of Environment and Parks when the previous Minister of Environment and Parks is able to hear these comments and talk about trust – let's ask the RCMP about trust in the issue of the Bighorn consultation. It is absolutely rich talking about trust.

I don't think there is any way possible for the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to stand up here, in this Chamber, and, first, talk about how the Minister of Environment and Parks on this side of the House, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, Sundre's favourite son, Mr. Speaker, and talk about trust. I do . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(1)(c) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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